

**T.C.
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**CYBERSPACE AND FAKE NEWS:
A NEW PHENOMENON IN ELECTORAL POLITICS IN GHANA**

MASTERS THESIS

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Department: Sociology

Thesis Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Adem BÖLÜKBAŞI

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**“The examination was held online on 03/09/2020 and approved unanimously
by the following committee members ”**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFAG	: Alliance for Accountable Governance
CDD	: Center for Democratic Development
CERT	: Computer Emergency Response Team
CECE	: European Committee of Experts on Crime in Cyberspace
CODEO	: Coalition for Domestic Election Observers
CPP	: Convention People's Party
EC	: Electoral Commission
ECOWAS	: Economic Community of West African States
GSS	: Ghana Statistical Service
ICT	: Information and Communications Technology
ISP	: Internet Service Providers
LIO	: Liberal International Order
MP	: Member of Parliament
NCCE	: National Commission for Civic Education
NDC	: National Democratic Congress
NPP	: New Patriotic Party
SWAT	: Special Weapons and Tactics
TLS	: Transport Layer Security
UDHR	: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USA	: United States of America

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**Sakarya University
Institute of Social Sciences Abstract of Thesis**

Master Degree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ph.D.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Title of Thesis: Cyberspace and Fake News: A New Phenomenon in Electoral Politics in Ghana				
Author of Thesis: Mariam MOHAMMED Supervisor Asst. Prof. Adem BÖLÜKBAŞI:				
Accepted Date:		Number of Pages: vii (pre text) + 92 (main body) + 7(app)		
Department: Sociology				
<p>The electoral processes of Ghana have transformed tremendously with the emergence of cyberspace. The electoral commission of Ghana has engaged in the dissemination of information, compilation of registration data, and electoral results are all exhibited on social media today through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter platforms. There is also an easy way of campaigning by political parties with civil societies and citizens registering their protest on social media and mainstream media. Irrespective of the gains in the democratic dispensation in Ghana, recent electoral skirmishes and disagreement due to fake social media news has ignited a debate to reassess cyberspace through which information circulates, especially, social media and mainstream media to guard against misinformation and possible electoral violence as transpired in various circles of Ghanaian elections from the referendum, general elections to by-elections in Ghana's democratic development. Thus, this work discusses the issue of Ghana's electoral development, fake news, and the way forward for knowing and understanding fake news in the age of cyberspace which is vital for democratic development. The thesis utilizes content and discourse analysis in an Internet Mediated Research (IMR) with a cyberethnographic design of a qualitative approach in analyzing the impact of cyberspace in electoral politics in Ghana. The findings of the thesis reveal that cyberspace have great influence on electoral politics in Ghana both negative and positive.</p>				
Keywords: Cyberspace, Fake News, Election, Democracy, Ghana.				

Sakarya Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Özeti

Yüksek Lisans	X	Doktora	
Tezin Başlığı: Siber Uzay ve Yalan Haberler: Gana Seçimlerinde Ortaya Çıkan Yeni Bir Olgu			
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<p>Gana'daki seçim süreçleri siber uzayın ortaya çıkmasıyla muazzam bir dönüşüm geçirdi. Gana Seçim Kurulu, bilginin yayılması ve kayıt verilerinin derlenmesi süreçlerine müdahil oldu ve bugün artık seçim sonuçlarının hepsi Facebook, Instagram ve Twitter platformları aracılığıyla sosyal medyada ortaya konuluyor. İddia ve itirazlarını sosyal medyada ve ana akım medyada ifade ederek orada bir etki oluşturan siyasi partilerin sivil toplum kuruluşları ve vatandaşlarla beraber kampanya yapmasının önü de daha çok açılmış oldu. Ancak Gana'da demokratik düzen bakımından elde edilen bazı kazanımlar olsa da, son zamanlarda seçimlerden kaynaklı çatışmalar ve sosyal medyadaki yalan haberler sebebiyle ortaya birçok anlaşmazlık çıktı. Bu durum bilginin dolaşımını sağlayan siber uzayın ve bu kapsamda bilhassa da sosyal medya ve ana akım medyanın yeniden değerlendirildiği bir tartışmayı ateşledi. Bu tartışmalar özellikle yanlış bilgilendirmelere ve seçimlerde yaşanabilecek olası şiddet hadiselerine karşı nasıl mücadele edileceği sorununu ele almaktadır. Nitekim Gana'nın demokratik gelişim sürecinde referandumlardan tutun da genel seçimlere ve ara seçimlere kadar çeşitli seçimlerde bu gibi hadiseler vuku bulmuştu. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma seçimler bağlamında Gana'nın demokratik gelişimini, yalan haberleri ve demokratik kalkınma için hayati önem taşıyan siber uzay çağında bu yalan haberleri bilmenin ve anlamının yolunu tartışmaktadır. Tez, Gana'da seçimlere dayalı siyasette siber uzayın etkisini incelemede kullanılan nitel bir yaklaşım olan siber-etnografik araştırma tasarımına dayanarak, İnternet Aracılığıyla Araştırma (IMR) kapsamında içerik ve söylem analizinden faydalanır. Tezin bulguları, siber uzayın Gana'da seçimlere dayalı siyaset üzerinde hem olumsuz hem de olumlu büyük etkisi olduğunu ortaya koyuyor.</p>			
Anahtar Kelimeler: Siber Uzay, Yalan Haber, Seçim, Demokrasi, Gana			

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Introduction

This part of the thesis provides a brief view on the subject of the study which highlights on the changing dynamics of democratic development and electoral politics in the age of cyberspace. It therefore provides a historical, sociological, political and international background to the subject of inquiry. This background takes into consideration Ghana, the study area which is the focus of the study as example within the broader democratization and development in Africa. The challenge posed by the cyberspace in electoral politics is problematize as a critical issue worthy of observation and studies in sociology not only in other social discipline like political science. Recognizing Ghana as part of the sociological world offers a different perspective to the study of cyberspace is crucial to understanding the recent cyberspace electoral conflict in the global world. Thus, chronological headlines such as the background of the subject of the study, Statement of problem, objectives, research questions, the significance of the study are laid out to present the graphic explanation of the study. It finally, provides the structure of the thesis as holistic comprehension of the study.

Background of the Study

In the course of human history time herald change which shapes human development. A phenomenon whose pervasion wades across every endeavor of life which include politics, economic, social, and cultural in every society's past, present, and future. The changing dynamics of the world have prompted sociologists to look beyond the old existing physical space and examines the impact of cyberspace on the social phenomenon of the world. The intensification of globalization coupled with the expansion of the internet and the proliferation of mobile phones have affected social and political relations in the developing world. As a result, social scientists have questioned the nature of our world and seek to evaluate the changes that are creeping into society. Man seeks to understand society to maintain, protect, and control that which is around him. To do this, society has crafted his web of social and political rules and systems of governance through which the world is governed. Governance systems do not only define the type of society but provide indications of the progress direction and, predict the future of society. An autocratic state,

a theocratic state, and a democratic state, present different characteristics for survival, diplomacy, development, and stability. This thesis presents a scholarly platform to understand and contribute to the study of the nature of man in a world of anarchy amidst limitless cyberspace with specific reference to democratic development in Africa using Ghana's electoral politics as a case study.

Democracy is election and election is democracy. Democracy thrives on electoral politics and reinforces choice which is basic element of democracy. Certainly, choice is a precondition for development as argued by Staudt (1991:28-29). With the democratic stability and development witnessed in West African regional hub, particular Ghana, there is enough justification to review and study the changing dynamics of processes of electoral politics in the age of cyberspace. This is not just a new challenge to understand the relationship between election and political parties, but extend the scope to observe new forms of electoral management, through space, time, and degree of resource, technology and professionalism. Elections influenced the behavior of political parties and these political parties survives on electoral politics. There is no functioning democracy without political parties of which elections determines legitimacy of political power and authority (Sartori, 1976: 64). Political party's success in election depends on campaigning, resources, and the electoral managing body. These are regulated through cultural and institutional norms of the country documented as part of the country's constitution to guide them. The thesis focuses on the mode political party's campaign and the electoral management body in this case the electoral commission of Ghana since there is no data on political party's resources in Ghana. It is interesting to note that political party's campaign in today's world of cyberspace cannot be limited to party's message, resources, charismatic leader and the professionalism of a political party.

Obviously, two major events have transformed campaigning in elections; the television and the internet communication system. The television usage in the 1992- 2008 election was very effective and influential to the winning party success. Thus, fairness and transparency had little space to thrive since government in power tends to abuse incumbency in terms of media space and resource. Ghana as 1992 only had state television and radio broadcasting cooperation whose space largely was flooded with government of the day advertisement. Although broadcasting in Ghana started in 1935, it

was not until 1994 and 1995 that the media was relatively liberalized for the first private radio and Television to establish, respectively (Ghana Ministry of communication document, Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) Broadcasting Policy. Page, 5. <http://moc.gov.gh/>). The Ghanaian media landscape is now characterized by media pluralism with about 345 FM and radio station privately owned, 31 public radio and 79 community radio stations (The African Media Barometer (AMB), 2017:7). In fact, it was the repeal of the Criminal Libel and Seditious Libel Laws (Amendment Act 2001) which came to force in August after the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) had won the year 2000 election that gave many respite of freedom of speech. The irony is that many are now calling for a certain securitization to restrict publishing of information deemed fake and injurious to the security of state and social media in the cyberspace.

Besides, Ghana became connected to the internet from 1989-1990 one of the few in the continent and has since set the pace in digital age by digitizing the country in most area of development including their electoral system. Internet Usage was limited to public office and expensive for private users in the early 2000s. By 2007 the number broadband subscribers were 16,200, at the same time Ghana had internet subscribers of 23,400, with internet users standing at 880,000 (International Telecommunications Union, 2009). As the complex of cyberspace transformed many Ghanaians now own mobile phones and subscribes to the usages of social media. This has forced political parties and the electoral management body to reform and improve the democratic development in the country. Although the Ghana electoral commission has not implemented electronic voting, high technological finger biometric and facial recognition tools are employed in their electoral process. Interestingly, political parties now campaign vigorously in all social media platform including the mainstream media widening the space on which electoral process takes place. The age of cyberspace has brought about changes in the electoral phenomenon of Ghanaian electoral politics and democracy affecting both positive and negatives ways. A challenge Ghana has surmounted setting the example for other African countries in the democratic development in Africa and the world at large.

Notwithstanding, Ghana is an overwhelmingly pan African country whose policy is driven by African consciousness and considers herself as the star of African challenge and success. As the “Blackstar” of Africa, popularly known, it has an enviable democratic

record of electoral politics devoid of political truncation of the fourth republic. Therefore, it is not farfetched to examine her democratic progress in the current cyber democratic complications and its impact on electoral development. It is a known fact in the 2018 freedom index that presently, Ghana is ranked first and twenty-third in Africa and the world respectively, thus making democratic civil organizations regarding Ghana as the beacon of democracy in the African continent. Many Africans pride their hope in Ghana's democracy and it is expected to be solid as a test case for democratization and development in Africa.

Irrespective of the gains in the democratic dispensation in Ghana, recent electoral skirmishes and disagreement due to fake social media news has ignited a debate to reassess cyberspace through which information circulates, especially, social media and mainstream media to guard against misinformation and possible electoral violence as transpired in various circles of Ghanaian elections from the referendum, general elections to by-elections in Ghana's democratic development.

The 21st century ushered in a new age of cyber development where electoral conflicts have ensued recently. The new technology of mass production of computers and the expansion of the internet provided a space to reduce challenges of democratic and electoral issues, mitigate human interference for transparent and objective elections, increase participation, and improve the credibility of electoral commissions, and fast-track electoral results. Although there have been contributions to democratic election and development, especially, in the case of Ghana, there are still lingering concerns due to the recent proliferation of fake news and hacking allegations. This new space of cyber contest where attempt made either to hack or spread fake news to influence electoral fortunes of competitors has sparked international and diplomatic attention where questions of dissemination of information and possible securitization of the domain of cyberspace are discussed and debated in the context of human rights and democratic development. This thesis seeks to discuss issues of Ghana's democratic development and recent elections, the role of cyberspace, and how the media's dissemination of fake information caused electoral tensions, hostility, mistrust in the electoral process and left a shade-torso of a certain democratic image with the propensity to soil the Ghanaian standard which is considered as matured and successful one.

Statement of Problem

The colonial transition to postcolonial regimes under the tutelage of early African leaders in most cases was given the mandate of legitimacy to lead the early independent countries through the ballot box. Paradoxically, these early independent leaders rather considered the ballot box as a threat to their power and argue that multiparty electoral democracy is an affront to the unity of the country. By 1964 Ghana was virtually under a one-party rule of Kwame Nkrumah. This culminated by a myriad of democratic development challenges from 1966 to 1992 due to incessant coup d'état in Ghana. It is worthwhile to note that Ghana's soft power's strength is rooted in her enviable democratic values. Ghana is regarded as the Switzerland of African diplomacy. Ghana is also the second biggest economy in West Africa besides Nigeria, with a strong democratic record of development since 1992. Ghana has witnessed political and economic stability for twenty-seven years after a series of military interventions for two decades until 1992. With a new uncontrolled and unregulated cyberspace as a result of internet development, elections are also conducted in this new cyberspace to ease physical disruption with electronic technology. However, in recent time, issues of hacking, manipulation of electoral electronic data, stealing of internet data to influence elections, the mainstream media, and the social media have also abused the freedom space through the presentation of fake news raising false alarms which nearly marred the sanctity of Ghana's democratic development and the elections from general elections, referendum, and by-election from 1992-2016. The electoral commission has used cyberspace to update citizens on registration of eligible voters, collating and announcing of results and providing relevant pieces of information through press statements to ensure transparency, fairness, and integrity. Unfortunately, fake news to a larger extent has undermined the electoral process in recent times. The effect of this sparked intermittent hostilities around the electoral areas impacting on an electoral turnout and citizens' participation of elections. It is against this background that this work discusses the issue of Ghana's electoral development, fake news, and the way forward for knowing and understanding fake news in the age of cyberspace which is vital for democratic development.

Objectives of the Study

The study's ultimate objective is examining the implication of cyberspace and fake news on democratic development and electoral politics employing accounts of general elections, referendum, and by-elections in Ghana. To achieve this objective; the following specific objectives were highlighted in the study.

1. Identifying the cyberspace's role in Ghana's elections
2. Appraising the relationship between cyberspace and democracy
3. Examining the role of democracy in Ghana
4. Understanding the concept of fake news
5. Discussion of illustrated cases of fake news around the world and Ghana
6. Analysis of the impact of fake news on Ghanaian elections
7. Deliberating on the impact of Ghana's electoral politics

Research Questions

1. What is the role of cyberspace in Ghanaian elections?
2. What is the relationship between cyberspace and democratic development in Ghana?
3. What is the role of democracy in Ghana?
4. How is fake news conceptualized?
5. What are some of the cases of fake news in Ghana?
6. How do fake news impact on Ghanaian elections?
7. What are the implications of cyberspace on Ghana's electoral politics?

Significance of Study

The work takes into consideration the relevance of democracy and seeks to understand the nature, evolution, and prospect of Ghanaian democratic development and elections

amidst cyber technology which is clouded with uncertainty, anarchy, and fake news. The thesis highlights the contribution of computer and internet technology to democratic development in Ghana. However, the thesis draws the attention of the world to the changing times, and the threat of dissemination of information on social media possesses a free and fair election in the cyber-age world. The work seeks to contribute to the literature of cyberspace, democracy, election, and Ghanaian democracy. Further, the work serves as a blueprint for policy decision-makers to securitize the cyberspace for sanitization of treacherous dissemination of information.

Structure of the Thesis

The work is divided into six part. It constitutes the introduction which include the background of the subject of the study, Statement of problem, objectives, research questions, the significance of study. Then followed by chapter one which discusses literature review and conceptual framework with emphasis on overview of literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework, cyberspace, and cyberspace and democracy: a quintessence of politics and legitimacy, cyber security and democracy, fake news, understanding fake news: a typical case of anarchy in democracy, illustrated cases of fake news around the world, the case of Africa, the Ghana example. Chapter two discusses research methodology with qualitative research approach in focus, general profile of Ghana, religion in Ghana education in Ghana, media and communication in Ghana (communication), preparation for the fieldwork, study target, target population, sampling size, sampling technique, primary data collection design, secondary data collection design, ethical issues in the research, data analysis design/technique and the challenges of the study with limitations emphasis. Chapter three analyzes research findings data and discussions with specific reference to electoral parties in Ghana and cyberspace, electoral commission of Ghana and cyberspace, cyberspace and democracy, and finally, future-based analysis on the prospect of cyberspace using 2012-2016 data. Chapter four focuses on case study on Ghana's democratic and electoral politics, Ghana and democracy, general elections in Ghana, by-elections in Ghana, implication of fake news on the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election, referendum in Ghana. The final section with summarizes the discussion with conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the subject of study. The thesis succinctly and tacitly expounds on the existing literature available through library books, research findings by reputable organization, institutions and internet material sources. The work traces back to the early post-Cold War material to comprehensively bring to fore the trajectory of study in the area. This chapter present an opportunity to understand that cyberspace and election are closely link to cybersecurity and democratic development. Further, concept such as cyberspace, cyber security, democracy and fake news are well explained within the context of the study. For a better understanding of this chapter the topics discussed are outlined in the following: an overview of the literature, theoretical and conceptual framework, cyberspace, cyber and democracy: a quintessence of politics and legitimacy, cyber security and democracy, fake news, understanding fake news: a typical case of anarchy in democracy, illustrated cases of fake news around the world, with the case of Africa and the Ghana example.

1.1. Overview of Literature Review

It is a known fact that cyberspace has become part of social negotiation as a result of social interaction and its incidence which affects everyday lives. Although the issues of cyberspace have been with the world in the 20th century. For instance, the 1968 espionage case, the first threat where the Eastern German Spy was arrested in the West of Germany during the Cold War era (Warner, 2012: 784). It was not until 2007 during the Estonian hacktivist attack on the sensitive security part of the country such as the economy disrupting the political infrastructure that cyberspace assume a critical position in international politics. This provided scholars an avenue to reshape policy debate, theory, and practices of international politics. Suffice to argue that there is enough literature on the international politics (Nazli Choucri, 2012: 1-3). Studies on cyberspace and election became dominant after the end of Cold War. The New World Order was followed by the more than 90,000 internet connected Computers. An improvement from the 1980's where only 300 computers were connected to internet and by 1998 more than 40 million

computers were connected to the internet. Fifty percent of cyberspace activities were concentrated in United States alone (David M and Farrell Paul Webb, 1998/2012). Equally, important study is the work of Western whose findings indicates that the inception of “digital age” which influenced studies on cyberspace started in 1995. In his finding he claims that computer age ended the television age. Sales of Personal computers increased, dwindling the sale of television, broadband, data traffic and E-mail messages took over the international system (Western, 1996:59). Farrell highlights another interesting finding suggest that World Wide Web (WWW) was the largest contributor to cyberspace expansion. Thus, 20-25% American citizens had access to internet. A remarkable improvement from 1993 and 1996 where available websites were 130 and 230,000 respectively (Ibid, Farrell et al: 1998). Interestingly, scholars around this period rather focused on the modules of operandi employed by political candidates in presidential campaign in United States. Research also focused on how to raise campaign funds during election. In the Pew Research Centre (1996) indicates that only 12% had their information from the internet during election, translating into 21million persons. Only 3% appeared to receive information from the internet after election. This means that voter population monitoring of information circulating in the cyberspace is more persistent during election than after the election. Obviously, a recognition of intense political activities in the future within the emerging domain of cyberspace in a cyber-world. Other scholars such as Barnes and Kaase (1979) Corrado and Firestone (1996,) and Dalton (1996) are some of the studies on cyberspace which predicted the impact pf cyberspace on electoral politics in the future election. Margolis et’ al (1997:59) claimed that the cyber-world will replicate the real-world in its own space. A new equilibrium which will be controlled by political parties. As a result, Corrado, A. and C. Firestone (1996) reveal the need to draft a law to control future challenges emanating from the new cyberspace in American election.

From the above review on the existing literature it is clear that majority of the study concentrated on Europe and largely U.S elections. Thus, not much study from the non-western world was conducted. The works also focused on electoral campaigns within the cyberspace. It is worthwhile to note that Sam van der Staak and Peter Wolf (2019) rather focused on the multiple approach to the study of cyberspace, democracy and elections on the relationship between cybersecurity and elections while seeking to manage security

challenges employing interagency cooperation to address challenges of election in cyberspace. The work recognized the challenges of elections in cyberspace and provides guidelines against cyber-attack. By studying 20 case studies including South Africa, this work present illustration of experiences from different countries as guide against cyber risk and cyber threat in election.

However, the literature on cyberspace incidence on electoral politics is fragmentary, sketchy, and brief on the study of its impact on elections, especially in Africa. In Africa today, there have been many accusations of electoral fraud using the cyberspace domain to hack, fabricate, and generate false figures to win elections. Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Kenya are typical example wherein each occasion it was their respective apex court which resolved the issue. Dun-Cavelty's (2010) work was no more than a rehearsal of daily crimes transpired within the domain of cyberspace. What is obvious is that not much attention has been given to the domestic politics of the general society. The study of cyberspace and its incidence has permeated every discipline of social science including sociology. Nevertheless, there is a fragment of study literature on the relationship between cyberspace and its political nexus in relation to democracy, cybersecurity, and legitimacy in African election. Here legitimacy is used in the sense of Max Weber's *Economy and Society*. The work, therefore, inquired the field to provide related literature for the case of Africa using Ghana as case study. The overconcentration on studies in the West and exclusion of African context deny us the non-western perspective and broader view to cyberspace in election. The current broader discourse on cyberspace and electoral politics is increasing and getting intense in electoral politics after the election Donald Trump and the accusations of a Russian intrusion in the U.S electoral process. Although electoral dispute in relation to cyberspace had surfaced in the world of electoral politics, it is the "Russian gate" crisis which popularized the subject. The popularization highlighted the relevance of the study and the need interest stakeholders of democracy in the United States after the Donald Trump election in 2016, and other democratic community to take cyberspace serious to prevent crisis in the electoral process.

1.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study realizes the threat posed by disinformation in an unlimited virtual world where anything goes in the dark web to adopt the realist assumption of anarchy. This is to explain

that the world of cyberspace activities is similar to a world where there is no authority and which is anarchic. The greedy nature of man to satisfy his need will attack other men either covert or overt to realize his dream. Thomas Hobbes (1651) in *Leviathan* argues that the sense of glory, fear, and competition are the elements that cause conflict. These same elements are key to the survival of the authority of a regime or government. And since the election is a competition to control what is in the world of domination to borrow Max Weber (1922) there is bound to be deceit, propaganda, and falsehood in communicating one's objectives in any space of which cyberspace is no exception. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, provides that opportunity for such fabrication of information which shakes the foundation of social and political organization; in this case the roots of democratic society and its foundational institutions. It is within these foundations, humankind incessantly, reproduced themselves through order in a socially constructed society.

The dialectics of right and wrong, subject and object, traditional and modernity has frequently generated ontological, epistemological and methodological discourse in social science. Thus, critique of subject contradicts the existing knowledge believed to be rational and truth. This worldview to truth has always been challenged since enlightenment age where Marxist, relativist, postmodernist/poststructuralist have held alternative understanding to the rationalization of knowledge. Scholars such as, Horkheimer and Adorno (2001) and Jürgen Habermas (1989) critique that people in power holds on to power by manipulating public opinion through the mainstream media. These actions according to Marx becomes an alien power opposed to which enslaved him instead of being controlled by him. (Marx, 2000:185). Cyberspace is not just a reproduction of man but the actions in the space has produced a new dialectics. The truth of the bourgeoisie, (the aristocrats/government perspective) and the truth of the proletariat (the masses, the governed perspectives). The current development of hostility between the regulated mainstream perspective and unregulated social media perspectives, government accounts and the masses accounts generate complex discourse which some scholars attribute to the age of post-Truth. The usage of social media rather mainstream media by Donald Trump is considered as the peak of post-Truth. For some scholars, although post-Truth interpret and present alternative to knowledge of truth and reality of the world, it is nothing new but a product of postmodern theory. Categorically, post-Truth

discourse simmer biases, political polarizations, islamophobia, racism, mistrust and the competing claim to legitimacy and authority. It is this attempt to understand the meaning of reality and bridge the gap between theories and practice that fake news takes center stage as an alternative to that which is propagated as the rational truth regardless of the facts on the ground.

1.2.1. Cyberspace

Cyberspace is coined as far back 1984 by William Gibson in his *Magnus Opus, Neuromancer*. This term is not used as a definitive term rather is applied to describe patterns of virtual space in which domain an intense interaction of computers takes place for communication through audio, video, and electronic print. This space is not the physical realm but a virtual domain which unlimited and broad. In this thesis, the word cyberspace is used interchangeably with the term internet and to some extent extends to social media. Cyberspace is not a mere reference of a vacuum of the internet but exhibits social, cultural, and political interaction of which social beings transact business, communicate concerns and struggle for power as a means to an end in the physical world. This means that the virtual world is a real-world since what transpired in the cyber realm tends to manifest in the physical world. This emphasizes the relevance of the term in the study. Cyberspace is the breeding pot of globalization and the driving force of multiculturalism in a world of Liberal International Order (LIO). The relevance of the term for this study underscores the domestic and international role of cyberspace where diplomacy, elections, a transnational crime such as sex, slave and drug trade, and terrorism. Although Ghanaians use the internet for education, commerce, consumption, and update on daily news, the objective of this study concerns domestic virtual space activities where in this context democratic electoral politics. The study acknowledges the positive contribution in developed countries where cyberspace becomes the main platform for mobilization and organization of party members but an avenue to conduct exit poll, collate results, and declare results. Nevertheless, equal challenges of illegalities are observed in the domestic politics of the developed world. Thus, raising concerns of security, peace, and stability of the society, especially, Europe and the United States (U.S) where cyberspace-driven globalization has increased multiculturalism. With the proliferation of alt-right platforms in all various spaces in the cyber world, there is

looming fears of fake and false dissemination of information a threat to progressive ideals in a democratic world. This brings us to the next important concept which is fake news.

1.2.2. Cyberspace and Democracy: A quintessence of Politics and Legitimacy

The term Cyberspace was coined by William Gibson in his Magnus Opus, *Neuromancer* in 1984. The terms defy definition but rather apply in a descriptive pattern to refer to the virtual space with which intense interaction of computers for the purpose of communication via audio, video, and electronic print. The space is virtual because is not physical, but, its broad nature is unlimited. Interestingly, the word as earlier given a brief explanation about it is used interchangeably with the word internet and even refer to social media for the platform it provides for socialization. Further, the concept of cyberspace goes beyond just referring to the internet. It expounds the unlimited virtual space which provides a platform for both covert and overtly political, social, and economic activities that take place to facilitate human interaction. In fact, as a vehicle of globalization and multiculturalism, this realm is an alternative to physical space that man conducts his life. Cyberspace is therefore an extension of a distorted physical space but, rather virtual in character with a capability to satisfy man's need. As a result, activities extend to include funding to crime, buying to stealing, and war to peace. These activities have created a constellation of lexicons such as cybercrime, cybersex, cyberdiplomacy, and cyber politics. Indeed, it is in the realm of cyber politics where democracy is realized. With the proliferation of internet usage and the advancement of cyber technology in the 21st century, many scholars argue that the process of physical election is laborious and could be made easy if the technology is engaged from voting to processing, then to the announcement of result. Although this has been lauded as a good initiation and adopted by many countries, yet, it has also been the source of electoral dispute. A typical case is the election 2000 in the United States of America which made George Bush the president. In recent times, another phenomenon was the issue of Russian Gate against President Donald Trump which no evidence was found against him for colluding with the Russians to win the election. However, what many agree is the fact that fake news played a key role in Trump's victory

Democracy constitutes two Greek words: that is, "demos" means the rule and "Kratos" which means people. Many agree that putting these two Greek words together, democracy

means the rule of the people. But, academic scholar Popper (1962) established that democracy is the only way members of society can replace a ruler without involving in a war or taking the lives of others. He argued that democracy allows the smooth transfer of power because members of society have to come to a reasonable agreement to elect their leaders and in this way, peace is ensured. Thus, for Popper (1962), democracy reduces the occurrence of war. Schumpeter (1942) on the other hand viewed democracy as a political system whereby leaders are nominated by the people's choice through competitive elections. His argument signifies that leaders are elected by the will and agreement of the people (vote) so that these leaders fulfill the needs of the people and society in general. Schumpeter's (1942) definition further implies that democracy allows any member of the society to stand and compete for political power and this indeed provides them with the opportunity to express their opinion before the electoral committee. The basic argument being established here is that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion in democratic governance. Thus, freedom of expression is a core principle of democracy and no one is to abuse such rights of others. Similar to Schumpeter, Dahl (1963) argues that democracy is a political institution whereby individuals have the legal right to compete and exercise their vote in a free and fair election although Dahl had a "polyarchy" understanding of democracy. From Dahl's (1963) explanation of democracy, one can argue that democracy provides the tendency and right for individuals to vote and to be voted for. Although scholars have had separate views on democracy, it is clear that almost all of these scholars had a political understanding of democracy and also understood that democracy gives a total right to the people to make decisions about their leaders through votes (inclusion of the people in decision making). Contemporarily, democracy has been defined as the establishment of political structures that allows citizens of a country to recognize their rights and to legally choose their representatives in a free and fair election. In other words, power resides in the hands of the people and democracy has been summarized to mean the *government of the people, by the people, and then for the people*. This virtually means that democracy has to do with people. Democracy is an act that focuses on people and their best interests. Additionally, democracy has been noted to be the only form of government that gives individuals the power to voice out their opinion and everyone's opinion is to be heard and respected. Equally important, democracy emphasizes the individual's ability to rightfully own

property and join any association of his or her choice. Furthermore, democracy enables individuals to know their roles, rights, and freedom as citizens to enjoy such rights and freedoms. Nonetheless, every individual is responsible for their actions. Democracy doesn't discriminate. Everyone is equal before the law. In general, many scholars have argued that democracy should at least have one of the following fundamental features; the separation of powers(that is a separate and independent arm of government), multi-party systems, respect and protection of human rights, freedom to form and join any association, various mediums of communication and then providing the freedom for individual citizens to express their opinions through these communication channels, rule of law and equality, freedom to vote and to be voted for. In other words, for democracy to survive and work in a society, the people must be allowed to select their rulers by voting, the human right must be protected and the rule of equality must be constitutionalized. Democracy has also been classified into direct and indirect. Direct rule was largely utilized in ancient Greek. During this time, there was inequality amongst the people of Greek. Individual Greeks could not make their choices and could not publicly express their opinions. By the enlightenment era, the majority of the people in Greek could freely speak up in public and front of their rulers. In fact, to an extent, those with high rank like kings had to even follow the laws. At this time, all Greek citizens were allowed to participate directly in decision making and governmental policies to ensure the developmental wellbeing of the people. This formed the basis of direct democracy. Direct democracy is a type of democracy that allows the members of society to directly take part or participate in day-to-day (governmental policies) activities of the society. In an indirect democracy, members of society have to choose representatives who will act and present their ideas on their behalf. An indirect form of democracy is being practiced by many countries in recent times.

Darwin's observation of survival of the fittest in the human competitive struggle to outwit and dominate each other has always replicated and reflected in every aspect of man's life as a member of society. Fundamentally, those with greater strength succeed whereas the weaklings with ill-fated weaknesses succumb to failure. This ignited Herbert Spencer (1969) to raise an argument on a type of political system which he regarded as *laissez-faire* (that is the non-interference of government in the general and personal affairs of individuals). Interestingly, he was drawing the attention of the government to put an end

to support the weak and lazy individuals in society. He rather encouraged the spirit of hard work among all members of society. For Thomas Hobbes (ibid, 1651), man's quest to advance his selfish interest creates a condition where each and everyone's hand is against each other. According to him, for this selfish behavior which allows some individuals to infringe on the rights of others to end, he believes people must be controlled. In this way, there should be a sovereign in whose hands rest power and can control the activities of man. J.J Rousseau (1712-17789) equally argued that man used to live in a state of nature which was very peaceful. However, modern civilization destroyed this peaceful state of man and caused inequality and abuse of human rights. He emphasized that, for men to live peacefully, there should be an agreement between them which he termed as the *Social Contract*. Thus, for him, the social contract will generate a better life for everyone and will operate to satisfy the *goodwill of people*. Ideally, throughout human history, many societies have been hit by bad governance. This caused many people to demonstrate against poor political governance and the majority of scholars then came to a relative conclusion that, democracy is the most appropriate form of political governance which enables peaceful co-existence and maintains social order in societies. Mainly, it was the work of J.J Rousseau (1712-17789) that inspired many scholars to think of democracy as the best form of the political system for all mankind. Even though democracy has gained much support as the best form of political ruling, some scholars have argued otherwise. Academic scholars like Plato and Aristotle for instance had an aristocratic view of democracy. That is, for them, democracy favors only the knowledgeable (philosophical intellectuals) to the neglect of those who are not. They equally went as far as to argue that monarchy was better than democracy but these scholars were criticized heavily and it has become widely accepted that, democracy is the only form of government that promotes stability, equality, and freedom of individuals and protects human rights.

It has been argued sociologically and historically that, by the start of the 14th century in ancient Europe, Europeans by then began to develop new ideas regarding their social life and they equally began questioning how they were been ruled by their leaders. European kings were seen as having a God-given talent and right to rule. Regardless of how poor they ruled their societies, the citizenries were stuck with them. It was believed that God had placed them in power and for that reason, they could not be substituted. These long-

held beliefs and practices about European society changed by the beginning of the 18th century. Most enlightened European social thinkers at the time questioned the idea that their kings ruled by divine right and also questioned the practice that justified the existence of the nobility and serfs which was usually seen as what kept these societies in order. One of the serious problems it posed during this time was the political revolution that occurred in France which consequently affected and destroyed the monarchy. Besides, this led to the proclamation that no one was above the law and that everyone was equal. Social disorders that occurred at the time ignited social thinkers to think of democracy as the most important tool to ensure social and political stability in this society. Another instance was the argument raised by Karl Max (1956) which emphasized class conflict in capitalist society. He viewed such society as always in constant tension and conflict because, for him, in the struggle or process to meet the necessities of life, members of society come to organize themselves into two major classes with conflicting interests which in turn generate class conflict. According to him, capitalism allowed for the first time in the history of Europeans, the private ownership of resources, and also created more wealth which resided in the hands of few (bourgeoisies) while the majority (proletariat) remained poor. He believed that, since resources remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie, they could exploit the proletariat. So, in his analyses, capitalism permitted the bourgeoisie to rule the proletariats and this form led to constant chaos in society. He eventually concluded that a communist society is the one that emancipates the members of society from oppression and when adopted, it would transform society to be in order and good shape. Based on this, one can argue that Karl Marx (ibid) was in total disagreement with a form of a political system in which members of society are being oppressed by the few who own and control the resources. So, to do away with such oppression which generates instability and conflict, communism must be practiced whereby individuals can contribute their quotas according to their ability and they can be rewarded accordingly. In this way, everyone will be happy and society will be in order. Many academic scholars appreciated the work of Karl Marx (ibid) but they disagreed that communism yields a better result for society to be in order. The argument many academic scholars have held is that democracy is the only system of governance that will liberate individuals from oppression and conflicts. Thus, to them, democracy yields better results than what Karl Marx (ibid) held. In general, many societies across the globe have

historically been challenged with power struggle and political instability. According to Marx Weber (op.cit), there exist two forms of domination. These are legitimate and illegitimate. He argued that legitimate domination is when those that are being dominated understand that, those dominating them have the total right to rule them. However, he observed that there is always a problem when domination is illegitimate. Thus, when those that are being dominated do not come to believe that their rulers have the right to dominate over them because he believed illegitimate domination is always built on the use of coercion and those being ruled do not willing to succumb to it. History has it that, most countries including parts of Europe and Africa have challenged their authorities on how they ruled them in an illegitimate way (that is a dictatorship, autocratic, despotism, tyranny, and military regime). So, to liberate people from such cruel domination, many have argued and thought that, democracy should be replaced with such forms of bad governance. What many believe also is that, by end of the 19th century, most countries across the globe have become democratic with the United States of America being the world's shining star of exhibiting good democratic values.

In a nutshell, acknowledging that democracy is the best form of government system which ensures stability and development of a nation, is rather unfortunate that the recent influx of internet and social media platforms are bad for democracy and national development. Since democracy allows individuals to express their views as it is their basic rights, social media platforms are increasingly been weaponized in the current information age to disseminate false information (fake news) which is a big threat to democracy. In other words, social media in the current age poses a dangerous threat to democracy and slows down the development of a nation. It can be said that most developed countries today are facing democratic challenges due to the widespread of fake news on social media platforms. To sustain a good democracy for the people many have argued that, social media platforms should be utilized wisely by individuals in the sense that, before information go viral, they might have checked its authenticity. Once this is done, democracy will be sustained and there will be development.

1.2.3. Cyber Security and Democracy

Cyber security and democracy are interrelated in the space of human endeavors, social, economic, political, and psychological security. Security has been the cardinal element

of human survival. As a result, society has essentially recognized the organization of structures to maintain order, stability, and peace in a limited space of man in his physical environment. Politics is one of the structures which ensures distribution of wealth among the member of the society. Politics is the culmination of competition “among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues” (Van Dyke, 1960: 131-134), through a regulated and unregulated space. To paraphrase Onuf, the direction of politics is giving and taking which has to do with contests of wills (Onuf, 1989:5). The mode of politics over the years has always varied in maintaining order in the public space. This is so because Politics is not just a social condition of man but also ritualistic. Politics seeks to arbitrate among men to coexist in harmony and peace. Out of this functionality of politics emerged social contract for order, security, and legitimacy of authority within the political space where democracy is practiced.

Patrick Riley (1982) posits that the social contract theory dates back to ancient times around the 17th and 18th centuries. This theory is relatively associated with social obligations such as the political rights individuals have towards forming a secure, peaceful, and stable society (Michael Lessnoff, 1990:1). In addition, it a theory that influenced in shaping the political rights of members of society and also ensuring order, security, and stability in societies. Some renowned proponents of this influential theory include Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and J.J. Rousseau (Michael Lessnoff, 1990: 1-5). These social and philosophical thinkers observed, thought about, and reflected on how their societies were totally in disorder and insecure. Later, this ignited them to propose a theory that required members of societies come into agreement or come to organize themselves under one umbrella, or formed a league to ensure stability and order in society. Although this theory has faced a lot of criticism over years, nonetheless, it has helped shaped the political ideology needed in maintaining peace, security, and order in many societies (Michael Lessnoff, *ibid*). Succinctly, the social contract theory is based on the idea that assumed a society in havoc, totally disorganized (state of nature) and to fix this disorder, the proponents of the theory suggested men of such society come into a common agreement to build a better, secured and sustainable society for the well-being of all.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was an English philosopher who grew up in England. The English civil war (1642-1651) ignited him to think about the social contract theory. He

noticed at the time, how this society was disorganized, lacked security and protective measures. Jonathan Wolf (1994) asserts based on his observations in his article that during this time, Hobbes thought members of this society were not regulated by law so almost everyone lived up a self-fish life where according to him, “*everyone’s hands was in each -others mouth and life in this condition was nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and short*”. For him, in such a situation of war and lack of security (state of nature), monarchy or a bad ruler is better. He further established that, naturally, men or members of society needed or desired security, protection, peace, and stability. In support of this, it required that men entered into a common agreement to choose a leader (sovereign) who will ensure their safety and well-being. This is what he termed as a *social contract* (Jonathan Wolff, 1994: 271-278). Thus, societal security and individuals’ safety is based on the contract that they agree together to elect a leader in whose hands rest all these powers. The leader must grant them all their needs including social security, protection of their lives, and preservation of their properties. In turn, anyone who fails to abide by the contract will be penalized according to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). He maintained that, by doing this, law, order, and stability will be ensured in societies. Many have argued that Thomas Hobbes’s concept of social contract reflected *absolutism* where everything in society is regulated by a sovereign and who has absolute right to sanction those that don’t follow orders. Thus, in Hobbes’s view, “*Sovereign is absolutely and all the time right*”. (Jonathan Wolff, 1994:271-286). In nutshell, Thomas Hobbes’s argument on social contract theory implies that men in the *state of nature* lived up a fearful and insecure life. To be safe and protected, they unite under one umbrella through a deal or agreement to elect a sovereign who has the total right to rule, protect them, and equally has the total right to sanction those that disobey. Thus, he believed the only way to replace the state of nature which has to do with insecurity, war, disorder, and instability is only through the social contract concept of agreement among the people to elect a leader who will see to their affairs and the general progress of their society. His social contract theory though was beneficial in ensuring order and stability in most societies however it was criticized heavily by many scholars and this laid down the foundation for others such as John Locke to look at the concept from a different perspective.

While Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) has argued that, the state of nature was bad and therefore an agreement should be reached by the people to surrender their right to a

sovereign who will in turn protect and save them from the state of nature. However, John Locke (1632-1704) has argued otherwise and stated categorically that, the state of nature was not that bad but rather, a peaceful and harmonious state. He disagreed with the Hobbesian idea that, a sovereign was better than the state of nature (Michael Lessnoff, 1990: 10-12). In addition, he argued that a ruler who doesn't rightfully serve and protect the members of the society could be replaced. He believed that individuals are born equal and have equal rights. In view of this, power should not rest in the hands of just one person rather it should be fairly distributed to ensure order in society. In other words, he argued for a representative form of government to ensure order and stability in society. Locke's view on the social contract is based on the protection of property. He argued members in the state of nature sort for protection and security of their property. According to him, men only come into agreement to seek the protection of their property while they maintain the other rights (such as the right to life and liberty) with them since those rights are considered natural (ibid, Michael Lessnoff,1990). In other words, Locke's argument on the social contract is based on the concept that members of society are naturally born equal and morally have equal rights. However, since their property is not secure, they only agree to have a deal with a leader who will see to the protection and security of their property. Thus, for him, the protection of the property is important and forms the basis of the social contract theory. He further added that, while men have entered into an agreement to elect a leader to protect their property, they now begin to experience new societal changes such that law enforcement authority (executive) and adjudicators of the law (judges) will begin to implement laws to ensure order in society. According to him, these law enforcement agencies are to protect the property of individual members of society however, if they fail to then a new agreement could be reached by the people to replace the government (Michael Lessnoff, 1990: 1- 14). In short, Locke differs from Hobbes on the basis of the state of nature. Hobbes believed the state of nature was full of evil (men were selfish and only fought among themselves) and therefore should be replaced with an absolute sovereign to ensure security and stability in society. Locke, on the other hand, believed that, though members in the state of nature were not regulated by law, they lived a morally accepted life, however, they only needed the security of their property and to achieve this, they enter into an agreement and this is what he termed as the social contract. Locke's social contract theory served a relevant purpose in ensuring

security, order, and stability in many societies. Just like Hobbes, he was criticized and this led to a new interpretation of the theory by J.J. Rousseau.

The term *social contract* is largely accredited to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). He was the first philosopher to coin the term *social contract*. He is known for his famous works on *Social contract theory* and *Emile* which was both published in the same year 1762 (Christopher Betts, 1994). He based the social contract theory on the ideology that, “*Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains*”. (Christopher Betts, 1994). In other words, contrary to Hobbes, he argues that men were naturally good and lived peacefully in the state of nature. He established that the state of nature was harmonious and all men were free to do anything they wanted in the state of nature. He further added that no one’s labor was used, division of labor was absent and no one violated the rights of others. Thus, in this state, everyone lived peacefully and there was no war. He argued that, as soon as society transformed (beginning of civilization), individuals began to exploit others for their selfish gain, individuals could easily create leisure times for themselves and that was the beginning of societal distraction and disorder. Having reflected on this, J.J. Rousseau proposed that, a common agreement among the people could create a peaceful and orderly society. This is what he termed as social contract theory. A theory in which the people must agree to work collectively (social pact) in peace for the general good of all to ensure their security, state prosperity, and stability (Patrick Riley 1941). In nutshell, the social contract theory according to Rousseau seeks to address societal problems (security, violence, war) in the way that, men agree through a deal or contract to work together for the common and collective interest to promote peace and order in society. Like the rest of the proponents of this theory, Rousseau’s concept gained much ground in maintaining order and stability in society.

It can be concluded that, throughout history, humans have desired peace, security, and refuge which have formed parts of their political, religious motives. As a result, social contract theory describes the ways members of society agree either to surrender to a leader or to work collectively to protect themselves from harm, danger, and invisible enemy attacks to ensure peace and stability. Comparatively, cybersecurity has prescribed modern and contemporary ways of seeking to address cybercrime issues that pose a threat to security via the internet or cyberspace. Social contract theory has therefore been relevant

in both pre-modern and modern societies to combat societal threats in a way to ensure order, peace and stability in societies.

Cyber security just like other concepts is not a new phenomenon however it has recently gained much attention in the realm of cyberspace. Many scholars have argued that, by the dawn of computer age, necessary steps were taken by computer experts to prevent the data, software applications and other information on the computer from damage, harm or reaching unrecognized members (Burnap et al., 2019). This is to demonstrate that, cyber security is not a new concept however, it has taken a different form in the age of digital technology. In fact, there is no straight rule to defining cyber security. Scholars have established several and varying definitions of cyber security in many of their literature works (Bayuk et al., 2012). One of the definitions emphasize that, cyber security exists in three forms and deals with the aims as well as the security methods that are used by qualified cyber security officials (Bayuk, 2010) to detect and prevent cyber threat. Prevention, detection, respond, people, process, technology have been noted as some common terms related to cyber security however, confidentiality, integrity and availability remain the three most important terms of cyber security (Bayuk, 2010).

Historically, specific measures have been adopted to protect human life and society. That is to mention that, some of the necessities to the total well-being and survival of humans is to be free from all forms of harm (provision of security). In turn, military and police officials of various societies have adopted security strategies to protect the lives and borders of land from all sort of danger. In support of this, some works have argued that, primitively, societies have put some level of security measures in place in order to protect their societies from any form of invisible enemy attacks (Bayuk et al., 2012). Further, Wendy Brown (2010) has for instance noted the rate at which contemporary societies have adopted measures to prevent hostile attacks by setting up great walls close to their borders. Examples of such walls in the physical space are the great Chinese wall, the Berlin Wall and the Safety Fence of Israel which is also known to Palestine as Apartheid Wall. Similarly, with the advent of technologies such as computers, measures have been adopted by computer operators to detect and to prevent computers from damaging (Bayuk et al., 2012). Also, during this time, the physical hazards on computers were mostly controlled by guards who used cards to ensure a person's right to use the computer

(Schacht, 1975). Scholar McNeil equally noted that, the early 1970s was unfortunately the years of increased number of computer fraud (McNeil, 1978). In view of this, a computer security measure such as Transport Layer Security (TLS) which was introduced in 1999 to restraint computer fraudulent activities has ever since remained the most commonly used security measure as cited by Gorman (2012).

As societies transformed and more digital devices coupled with internet expansion sprung up, different security measures have rather been adopted to restrict the spread of misinformation (Bayuk et al., 2012). In other words, the digital age has ushered in new forms of security methods to control widespread false information. It has been argued that cyberspace is the virtual space where all forms of activity are conducted including the exchange of information by individuals (Burnap et al., 2019). Besides, this cyberspace is regarded as anarchical, virtually unlimited, and where all categories of criminal acts (cybercrime) can equally occur. For this reason, scholars have established that maintaining security and information confidentiality within cyberspace is relatively difficult however, some measures have been inculcated to limit the flow of false information. On this basis, information security has sometimes been used interchangeably with cybersecurity although information security emphasizes more on only information control. Cybersecurity or information security has therefore been defined by some scholars to mean the maintenance of confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information to only authorized users within cyberspace (Burnap et al., 2019). In the Democratic election where the credibility of elections is the evaluation tool and signature of a transparent electoral system, the securitization of cyberspace is very fundamental to the success of democracy. Thus, succinctly, cybersecurity involves peculiar plans developed by digital experts to detect information threat and to restrict unauthorized members from accessing information within the unlimited cybersphere to maintain some level of confidentiality and integrity.

As already indicated above, the new changes and improvements in technologies have morphed communication behaviors among individuals around parts of the world. Although few numbers may not be connected to the internet, many of those that are connected to the internet across the globe can communicate in all kinds of manners including those that are not beneficial to improving human condition and state of

development. In other words, it has been argued that the cybersphere is so wide and unlimited that some individuals across the world may have negatively used this space to disseminate violent information and on how to carry them which could subsequently lead to a state of insecurity. This act is often referred to as cybercrime. McClelland (2011) has pointed out that, many Australians such as individual households, businesses, and government officials are connected to the internet in such a way that, there is often a chance for internet (cyber) crime including fraud, change of identity and misinformation to occur.

McClelland (2011) further added that cybercrime is becoming a serious social menace and global pandemic which is largely outweighing the national drug business. Additionally, there have been many cybercrimes that have occurred in history and the most important one that drew so much attention according to some scholars was the terror attack on the World Trade Center that occurred in New York on 9th September 2001 and which later caused many countries to tighten their security and surveillance rules on terror attacks. This incident also consequently triggered government and Internet Service Providers to tighten internet surveillance and security (Caravelli and Jones, 2019). According to Panetta in the citation of Gienger (2011), by and by, cyberspace is a war zone and there is a need to strive very hard to guard and combat cyberattacks. In addition, digital technology and cyber body experts across nations including the United States Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) have continuously functioned together to restrict information flow via cyberspace. Thus, the dynamics of digital technology have compelled network providers in collaboration with government and cyber professionals to put strict security measures (cybersecurity) in place to reduce the spread of information that will pose danger to the state and which may lead to national insecurity. Similarly, the European Committee of Experts on Crime in Cyberspace (CECC) since its establishment around the 1970s has worked tremendously hard to deal with the internet, digital information-centered issues, and generally cyber-related crimes world-wide. While many have lauded this as a good mechanism, others have denounced it as a measure that does not promote democracy and development.

One way of promoting democracy is by freedom of speech and according to many scholars, the cyberspace has served such purpose, rather in a different form. Academic

scholar Poster (1997) and among others have for instance cited the internet (cyberspace) as a platform for promoting democratic liberty. In other words, the best form of democracy has been promoted through the way individuals can freely share and express their opinion via the new digital social space (cyberspace). Furthermore, based on the theory of internet (cyber) neutrality, (Froomkin 2003; Lessig 2006) have argued that, there should be no restrictions on any cyber sites and that all information should be handled equally without any discrimination. Paradoxically, recent approaches in the cybersecurity discourse have allowed discrimination in the information content of some individuals and this has consequently affected democratic communication (liberty to communication). Also, while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has established the need for every individual to enjoy his/her freedom of privacy and to preserve such rights by not allowing any form of an external attack on that right.

However, it has been argued that individuals do not enjoy their privacy rights because some cyber sites like goggles provide history and all the records of the activities conducted by an individual. With this, cybersecurity methods are used secretly by some cyber experts to interfere in the personal and private affairs of the individual conducted on a cyber site. Foucault, with the *panopticon effect* theory, has argued that, if individuals are of the knowledge that, they are being watched, then it will make them very cautious and powerful in carrying out their activities (Foucault, 1977:104). Foucault's (ibid) idea points to the fact that, if the cybersecurity approach allows individuals to be aware that they being watched, then it may make them meticulous in carrying their activities online. Similarly, with individual consent that they are being supervised, will likely limit their communication flow online and this is what some scholars have considered being a condition that could be a hindrance to democracy because individuals will not be able to enjoy their free liberty to communicate. On the other hand, if the cybersecurity approach is used to spy individuals without their knowledge, unfortunately, this may also likely be an infringement on their human right and subsequently an act which doesn't equally promote democracy and nation development. Thus, the security measures (cybersecurity) put in place to limit individuals' communication have been criticized by many academic scholars as an infringement on the rights of individuals in relation to democracy and state development. In short, the cyber space which has been lauded a good digital platform for promoting democracy has also been criticized by others to be a social space which

impacts negatively on democracy and draws society backwards due to how investigations on cybercrimes are carried out to control information flow (cyber security).

As indicated above, McClelland (2011) draws on the need for mutual support between countries in order to combat cybercrime given the rate at which it is increasing across the globe. This shows that, the growth of cybercrime needs not only a single country to tackle it but with assistance from other countries globally. In view of this, there has been interference from a nation to the other whereby right to privacy needed for a healthy democracy is not secured. For instance, the interference of USA into other nation's private issues. Brown B (2011) argued that, the USA are equipped with highly improved cyber security measures that, it allows them to survey in secret and have information regarding war and other internal activities of the Arab societies. This is where other academic scholars have emphasized on cybersecurity as a threat to a vibrant democracy of a country. Apparently, this has ignited some scholars to address the need of the government and cyber officials to adopt cautious security measures that will reflect human right, rule of law and a healthy democracy in general.

It can be concluded that, the frequent occurrences of online crime including the misuse of the cyber space to disseminate information which poses threat to a nation's development has caused government agencies in collaboration with Internet Service Providers (ISP) to strengthen security measures(cyber security) to control and safeguard their nations to ensure development. In fact, noting that, cybercrime is a serious pandemic and therefore needs to be resolved by better cyber security mechanism, nevertheless, expansion in cyber security measures have in turn consequently posed threat to democracy(infringement on individual right, secret surveillance on both individuals and nations which undermines the right to privacy) and development in general. Thus, there is a need to address cybercrime issues by implementing cyber security measures nonetheless, the cyber security measures should only deal with vibrant cyber criminals and their unlicensed activity to ensure sustainable democracy and development.

1.2.4. Fake News

The term fake news is not a new word but assumed prominence during the 2016 election when the presidential candidate of the conservative Republican Party, Donald Trump made the term as part of his rhetoric's for the campaign against certain media houses. The

thesis presents Wardle's (2017) definitions that fake news is a broader label of misinformation and disinformation to achieve a certain goal. Wardle (2017) argued that this misinformation action could be subtle and unintentional whereas disinformation is a blatant disregard to the truth which is largely deliberate putting out information to disinform. On the other hand, scholars such as Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow (2017) do not delineate fake news into a distinct perspective. They approach any form of falsification of items whether deliberate, unintentional, or mistake to fall in the category of fake news since the impact mislead the victim. This thesis adopts the former definition purposefully, to achieve the target of the study. The work extends its tentacles to draw in the environment, time, degree and the context of false information proliferated in the form of propaganda, text, satire, and article to effect a change to maintain the status quo.

1.3. Understanding Fake News: A Typical case of Anarchy in Democracy

Advancement in technologies is increasingly influencing our world especially on how we connect and communicate via social media. The rise of Facebook and WhatsApp obviously points to the widespread social messaging, receiving information, and making live videos. Ultimately, these social media platforms are the easiest way of accessing information however, most information spread via these media is largely false and individuals do not even consider the authenticity of the information before going viral. Just like the eras where rumors were spread 'like wildfire', and had a strong impact by finding people that accept them with no questions. Similarly, in today's internet era, the strength of spreading information lies in the scope to believe by those spreading it. Equally important, in this proliferation of the internet era, is the fact that anyone at all can now promote a wide range of information, be it true or not. This is where the issue of fake news comes in.

Centuries ago, it could be said that members of societies relied on their agriculture products for sustenance and better living. Comparatively, in this new digital technology era, most people rely on information for decision making and better living. For instance, most organizations and companies today make use of modern information technology to improve productivity and maximize profits. This is to emphasize that in this new era of digital technology, information matters and this is evident in the way it is easily accessible; and which makes information very important in this new age. While it feels

so great, wonderful, and exciting for information to be accessed easily everywhere and at any given point in time during this digital technology era, it is rather unfortunate that not every information is useful or worth changing the lives of individuals today. That is, to say that some information today, impacts negatively on societies and its members.

Fake news has become the latest trending word though, the term is not a new phenomenon (Marcus, 1993). Previously, the term was used to describe similar but diverse forms of ideas such as news propaganda, lies, and political satires. For instance, in the USA, Jefferson during an interaction with his friend in 1807 made an argument that “ the man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them; in as much as he who knows nothing is nearer to the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors” (Jefferson, 1807). This example proves that fake news has been in long existence however currently, the term is used to describe the widespread of false information mostly on social media platforms since these online platforms are now the main sources of news sites for most individuals. The modern world of digital technology has currently challenged the traditional way of delivering news to people as it was the sole work of journalists. However, these days, social media are eventually serving as online platforms that provide opportunities for non-journalists to reach a mass audience. As Wall’s (2015) puts it succinctly, “Eventually, social media offered a wider platform for non-journalists to engage in journalism”. Of course, it is the advent of digital technology that has increased non-journalists to engage in journalism mostly on social media prevailing lots of misinformation, thus, fake news.

Further, social media provides numerous channels including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, through which information can be communicated and the ease at which information can be duplicated, forwarded, and made to reach a large audience at a low cost and without any delay. For instance, Facebook which happens to be one of the most famous social media reported having more than 1.23 billion daily users within December 2016 at the time (Facebook, 2017). Initially, Facebook started as a platform for people to link up with family, old friends, and share photos. Suddenly, it transformed from a social networking site to a news site. A survey carried out in the United States found that 44% of the population get their news from Facebook (Gottfried and Shearer, 2016). Most people now get most of their news from Facebook with the

introduction of new features combined with algorithms that filter out certain content of information and allows them to manipulate some aspects of the information. Facebook helps to facilitate and exchange information at a fast rate, but unfortunately, presently it is a medium for widespread of wrong information, fake news.

The term fake news has been explained in various ways by many scholars. Thus, to mention that there is no specific definition when it comes to the term fake news. Journalist Claire Wardle (2017) defined fake news as a “larger context of misinformation and disinformation”. Wardle (2017) further emphasized that misinformation “the inadvertent sharing of false information” whereas, disinformation “the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false”. Academic scholars, Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow (2017) on the other hand defined fake news as “news articles that are intentionally and verifiable false and could mislead readers”.

Although the above definitions of fake news suggest different meanings, however, the common theme running through the definitions is how untrue information is shared to a large audience. Fake news as already indicated is relatively a new phenomenon. The term existed in the early years when it was used to address various concepts such as news fabrications and propaganda to criticize mainstream media. However, fake news has recently taken on a new form due to innovation in technologies and the expansion of the internet. As Claire Wardle (2017) argues, fake news has features as of satire, false context, manipulated context, and most importantly propaganda. This proves that fake news is not a new concept but rather, recently triggered by modern technologies. Satires are usually news articles with hilarious or amusing content. According to Brewer et al, “Satirical programs are also acknowledged to have significantly shaped public discourse, opinions, and political trust”. ‘The Onion’ can be identified as most probably the leading USA source of satirical fake news stories.

Propaganda on the other hand can be false stories that specifically serve the purpose of political gains by way of misleading the public. Usually, propaganda contains little fact with a large amount of fiction to influence public perception and perhaps benefit the government. The idea of fabricated story content is to misinform the audience. An example of a fabricated story is “Pope Francis Endorsed Donald Trump” (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Manipulated content involves the alteration of visuals and videos to

create less factual stories. The introduction of digital technology has led to an increase in the manipulation of news context especially, those that have to do with images. For instance, colors can be increased or the insertion of persons into images. This is done to seek the attention of the audience. Based on Wardle's (2017) argument about fake news, it can be agreed that the term suggests broader meanings within the scope of propaganda, satires, news fabrication which makes it rarely a new phenomenon although the term gained much concern and popularity during the 2016 USA presidential election. USA president Donald Trump during the 2016 election referred to the term as "something or any idea that reports what he doesn't want to believe". Since then, fake news became the new lexicon in contemporary societies and is now been viewed as posing threats to democracy and election. In fact, what many agree is that fake news has real consequences and it played a key role in Trump's victory. The issue of fake news is critical in modern societies due to the way social media platforms are being weaponized by certain individuals to disseminate false information. This has a real impact on the development of a nation. It can be said that fake news is gradually shifting society away from the real norms, values, and morals of upholding the principle of truthfulness. That is, lies have eventually permeated within societies which is a threat to societal development. For Zelizer (2004) established the notion that "fake news is evoking 'moral fear' and this time he draws on the attention of journalists to uphold the 'God-terms' of facts, truth, and reality in journalism". Ever since the penetration of the internet in societies, many enlightened people worried and questioned the future of democracy. Low and behold, social media then became the main contributing factor to the spread of fake news and now fake news has been recognized as a serious social canker which poses challenges in the political discourse (election and democracy) and equally seen as an impediment to the general development of a nation.

In effect, it is very essential to understand the term fake news most especially in this new digital technology era because of how recent news is altered, manipulated, and published to look real consequently affecting societies. As (Goldman, 2016; Lopez, 2016), put it, "Fake news has real consequences".

1.4. Illustrated Cases of Fake News around the World

To best cite the cases involving the publication of manipulated, fabricated, dishonest and false information (fake news), the most widely and acceptable definition of Journalist Claire Wardle, 2017 which establishes fake news as “misinformation and disinformation” will be considered. Thus, deduced from this definition, fake news can be said to be an old phenomenon, however, recently fueled by technology. With the introduction of the new age of digital technology, news fabrication, alteration, and manipulation have become so easy especially through social media. The new technological phase of society originally served as a basis for more workers to remain unemployed because machines replaced what workers could do and of course these machines could do the work at a fast rate. In recent times, advance in technology has made it equally a basis for social media platforms to replace the work of journalists. Prior to this digital technology era, there were few ways information was put into mass circulation and this was the sole work of journalists. Equally, during this time, there were exceptional moments where some information was manipulated in favor of political leaders to influence the public normally regarded as propaganda. With an improvement in technology, this has grown into what is known as fake news.

The turn of the 21st century, thus the age of digital technology has transformed societies to spending lots of time seeking for information most especially on social media because it is convenient however, most of the information retrieved is false. Within the context of America, where technology has advanced, the majority of the people spend more time on social media especially on Facebook to access current affairs and news.

Following the 2016 USA presidential election, it has been marked by a growing number of fake news, and this fabricated, false news was largely shared on Facebook. For instance, a case that went viral on Facebook which happened that, on 3rd December 2018, a twenty- eight years old man from North Carolina went into a Washington DC pizza parlor and pointed a rifle at an employee then fired 3 shots, however, none was injured. Upon his arrest, the man claimed he was investigating a conspiracy theory that Hillary Clinton was running a child sex ring out of the restaurant. This particular news went viral on social media especially on Facebook which happened to be fake news (Lopez, 2016).

As Silverman (2016) puts it “The most famous fake news stories were more widely shared on Facebook than the mainstream news stories; and during this time, majority of the fake news stories were in favor of Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton”. The term fake news was popularized by USA president Donald Trump during the 2016 election where he referred to the term as “something or any idea that reports what he doesn’t want to believe”. This raised a lot of concern into political debate and the implications of fake news on the election. Thus, in the words of (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017:211-236) which suggests “The impact of ‘fake news’ on electoral process has also been called into question”.

1.5. The Case of Africa

Largely, various societies respond to situations including political and propaganda issues differently at a given point in time. In Africa, politics is most likely attributed to rumor, satire, and propaganda most especially on radio and television stations owned by the state. Equally, these state-owned television and radio stations are employed by journalists who update people with news of the country. Thus, news giving in most parts of Africa are solely the work of journalist and any false information from any television or radio station could be fast checked.

However, with the emergence of the new form of education, age, and technology in Africa, new media (social media) has become the site for news production and distribution by anyone at all, not only journalists; and fact-checking of authentic news has become a problem. Following the Nigerian 2019 presidential election, most individuals used social media especially on Facebook and Twitter to spread false information. Mostly, photos and videos were shared on social media, Facebook to be specific, spreading false rumors about the aspiring presidential candidates. Lolade Mwanza, a journalist and head of digital operations for the Guardian Nigerian Newspaper, for instance, spoke about fake news in relation to the then-upcoming election, and this what she said “Welcome to the Nigerian election season, where disinformation and propaganda are nothing new. However, in the lead-up to the 2019 presidential election scheduled for Saturday, fake news has been on steroids.” What she meant by fake news, is such stories that are either entirely made up or shared out of context. An example of fake news that went viral on social media during the election was the accusation of the

sitting president Muhammed Buhari of Nigeria, that he had died and was a clone running his office. According to CNN, President Muhammed Buhari refuted to the repeated claims most especially on his official Twitter page that “This is the real me and regard the allegation as “ignorant rumors”.

On the part of the opposition leading member of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar was accused of sharing food and money during one of his rallies. An image of him with regards to food packs and money attached to them saying “keep them in poverty, then give them handouts” were shared on social media. This news went viral on social media and according to CNN, the accusations were investigated by a group of journalists who found out that it was one person by name Onochie who spread false information. She later apologized saying “The story I posted was true however, it’s the image that was the issue”. She added that “I have never deliberately posted fake news and I never will”. “I pulled it down and I have apologized”.

Again, a video went viral on a Facebook page namely, ‘Make Nigeria worse again’. This particular video was a claim about Atiku Abubakar of making a deal with Boko Haram in exchange for land and oil. But this story was not true. It was a piece of fake news. There was another widely shared story on Facebook, an image of USA president Donald Trump, appearing to endorse the leading member of the opposition party, Mr. Abubakar Atiku. This story was full of lies and misleading. It can be said that, during the presidential election in Nigeria, there has been a lot of fake news that went viral most especially on social media, thus Facebook and Twitter because these stories could be easily manipulated, altered, and duplicated. As Nwanze told CNN, “There are some handles and some pages on Facebook that are notorious”. She added that “One of them puts out a story, the same story is replicated in like 3 or 4 other pages and that’s how they just widen their reach”.

Similarly, in Ghana, fake news has been weaponized not only in Presidential elections but other sub-elections. The proliferation of fake news in Ghana’s election is associated with the introduction of digital technology as in the case of Nigeria. During December 2016 Ghana’s presidential election between the incumbent president Nana Addo Dankwa of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition, John Dramani Mahama, of the National Democratic Congress Party (NDC), there were several cases of inaccurate

information online usually on social media. The current president of Ghana, His Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa during his campaign in the 2016 election, promised Ghanaians of free senior high school education but several Ghanaians questioned his ambition and most especially on social media, his image was manipulated and made to look like he will not be able to accomplish that ambition. However, these were all lies-fake news because after Nana won the election, he accomplished the dream of establishing free senior high school education with quality materials. Recently in the case of the by-election in Ghana such as the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election, reports have been posted on social media such as death cases which happen to be all fake news and this will be the focus of the study. In a nutshell, rapid growth of fake news is triggered by advance in digital technology and social media platforms have been the main sources for the rapid spread of fake news. Nonetheless, these social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have faced criticism over the proliferation of fake news on their sites although, they say they are working hard to curb the spread of fake news. For instance, Facebook tried launching its fact-checking program in 2016 after the USA presidential election of Donald Trump as the president of the nation. It was a joy felt by many people, however, there is still lots to be done by these social media to solve the spreading of fake news.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Choice of Methodology

This study is based on eight (8) month of Internet Mediated Research (IMR) with cyber-ethnographic observation on Ghana's cyberspace cutting across all social media and relevant websites where daily interaction of cyber activities takes place in relation to elections and democratic development. Ethnography here is used not in its classical sense as introduced by Malinowski (Father of Ethnography) and advanced by Radcliff Brown (1922), Evans Prichard (1940/1969) and as posit by Anthony Kwame Harrison's "Ethnography" (Patricia Levy, 2014: 223). Rather, the choice of Annette N. Markham's discussion in "Ethnography in the Digital Internet Era: From Fields to Flows, Descriptions to Interventions" which is more appropriate to this study (Norman K. Denzin et'al, 2018: 1129). What transpires in this cyber society is presumed to be a reflection of the physical world itself since "man's deed is the product of himself" (Marx, 1977:185). The human social context is widened to the amazement of some scholars acknowledging the ability of man to create his desire in different experiences (Rheingold, 1991: 386). Thus, the social and cultural experience of people today can be felt through the cyberspace, a digital technology of internet connections whether online or offline. Electoral politics in cyberspace is that aspect of capabilities acquired by this generation of people as members of the human world, and to some extent cyber world.

The purpose of application of the above research methodology was to observe at first hand the contribution of political parties, the political candidates, electoral commission, media houses and the civil societies in Ghana. For the purpose of this research, the researcher used qualitative approach making use of primary and secondary data. The principal method of collecting the primary data has been through in-depth interviews, online focus group discussion and participant observation using WhatsApp, Facebook and zoom meeting video calls. And that of the secondary data has been library books, journal articles, newspapers and the internet. The ethnographic and IMR qualitative approaches adopted were meant to complement and corroborate each other to achieve the target of the study.

Below is the discussed topics chronologically illustrated in the following: qualitative research, profile of the study area with highlights on religion in Ghana, education in Ghana, media and communication in Ghana with specific reference to the subject of study. Further, provide detail explanation on target study, target population, sample size, primary data, interviews, focus group discussion, participant observations, and secondary data. Ethical issues in the research, data analysis, challenges and assumption are also discussed.

2.1. Qualitative Research

From the above overview of the choice for the methodology, the best method suited for this subject of enquiry is the qualitative approach. Unlike its quantitative opposite, the qualitative method “avoid(s) or downplay(s) statistical techniques and mechanics of the kinds of quantitative methods used in, say survey research or epidemiology” (Silverman, 2005: 6). Consequently, Martyn Hammersley has identified a common set of preferences shared by qualitative researchers (*ibid.*). These include analysis of words and images rather than numbers, observation rather than experiment, meaning rather than behavior and hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis testing. (Silverman 2006: 56). Strauss and Corbin, (1990:17) describe qualitative research methodology as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedure or other means of quantification. They further clarified that some of the data could be quantifiable but the analysis is qualitative (Hoepfl, 1997). The qualitative choice offers a reflective cognitive technique to a researcher to adjust to a “multiple and changing milieu” (Clair, 2011:17). The complex dynamics and the uncertainty in the domain of cyberspace deserve a qualitative approach in this context with an emphasis on ethnography in a cyber world which is transforming not only what social but what is human (Op.cit, Norman K, et’ al, 2018:1134). Qualitative research is increasingly being used by many social scientists because of the growing recognition that “it is insufficient to rely on quantitative survey and statistics to understand human affairs. It has become important to attempt to delve deep into the subjective qualities that govern human behavior (Holiday 2002; 7). An ethnographic worldview in an IMR with asynchronous and synchronous approach of Face-to-Face (FTF) to interview, focused group discussion, analyzing and interpreting coded data and online observation.

More so, in the social sciences, statistical quantitative statements are subject to different interpretations and may sometimes be used for political “spin”. Numbers themselves do not speak, thus attitude, behavior, chats emoji’s, body language, symbolism, style and tone of speech are all relevant to unearth the meaning of social action and interaction. Qualitative research however suffers from one serious defect; it has been argued that the researcher might select only those fragments of data which support his argument.

Figure 1: Map Profile of the Study Area



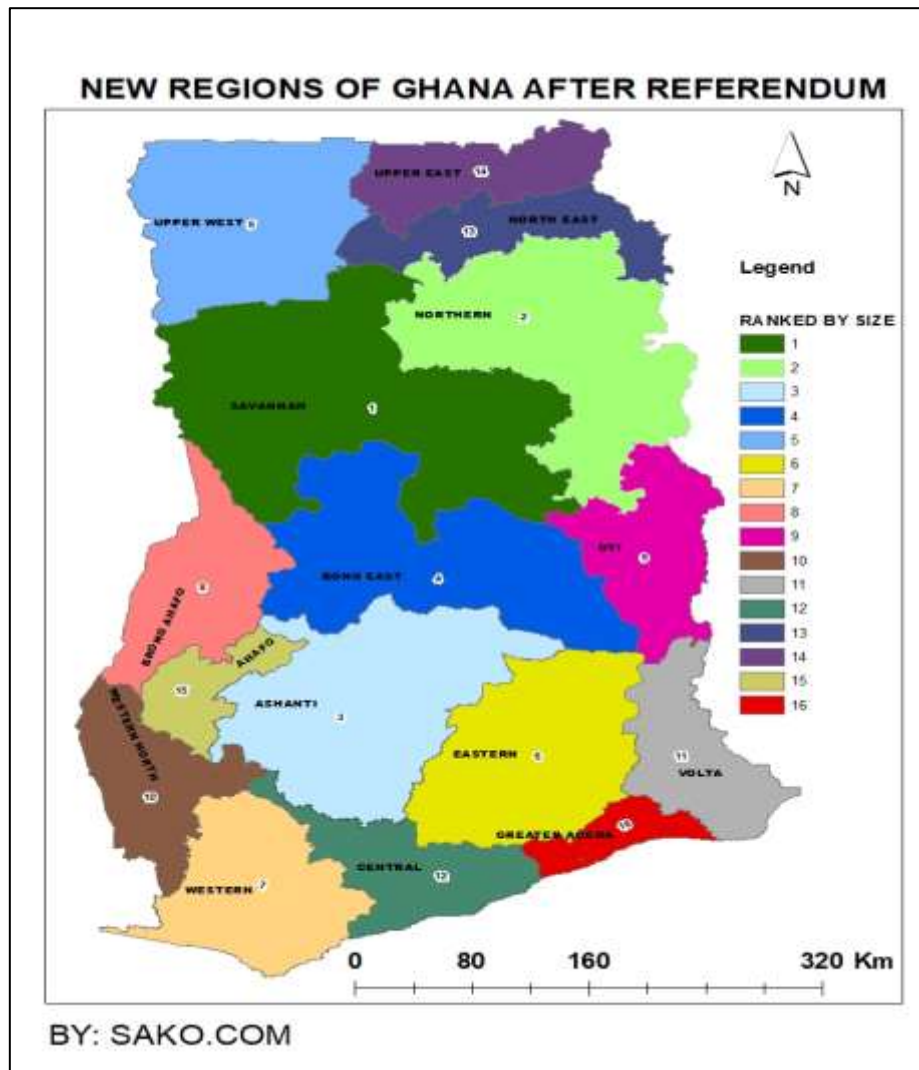
Source: www.ghc-ca.com, adopted by author, 2020. African Map with Ghana inserted a little above the Gulf of Guinea as arrowed indicated in the map below

2.2. General Profile of Ghana as Research Field

Ghana is a democratic nation-state situated in the western part of Africa. It is made up of approximately 30 million population and shares borders with Burkina Faso to the North, Ivory Coast to the West, Togo to the East, and the Gulf of Guinea to the South. Ghana was the first African country to gain independence in 1957 and for this reason, it prides

itself as the Blackstar of Africa. It is also the second biggest economy in West Africa that has maintained a very strong economic stability since it attained independence from its former British colony. Due to this, Ghana has attracted many migrants to the country although it draws its migrants from other parts of the world, Ghana's attraction to her neighboring West African countries is enormous.

Figure 2: Map of Ghana



Source: Field Research, author's adoption from SAKO.COM, 2020

Equally important Ghana is a member of the *ECOWAS* community and as a member of the community, the country is under treaty obligation to allow free movement of goods and persons despite Ghana's immigration law (Essuman-Johnson, 1992). This forms a reason why most neighboring members of West African countries feel free to enter Ghana

whenever their countries are faced with challenges and in this way, they have constituted large numbers of the total number of immigrants in the country. Ghana has English as its official language and the country is equally very rich in minerals like gold, timber, hydropower, and petroleum. Also, the country is the main exporter of cocoa and gold. Chinese immigrants in Ghana are noted for illegal mining known as ‘Galamsey’ the illegal activities of these Chinese migrants posed environmental problems including the pollution of water bodies. In June 2013, Ghana police made an effort to arrest these illegal mining Chinese operators ([www. spectatorgh.com/45Chinese galamsey operators arrested](http://www.spectatorgh.com/45Chinese_galamsey_operators_arrested)). Not only the Chinese in Ghana are known for illegal activities but some immigrants like Nigerians are also noted for defrauding and stealing from many Ghanaians. (Essuman-Johnson, 1992). This and many negative activities indulged in by some foreigners in Ghana made Ghana adopted measures to tighten its immigration rules.

Ghana used to be divided into 10 regions but currently, the country has 16 regions with ACCRA being the capital of the country and the majority of the total population is centered in the capital. Each region has its unique culture, customs, beliefs, tradition, occupation, and food. For instance, the *Gas* who are mainly residents of the Greater Accra region are mainly known to be fishermen due to their (adaptation) closeness to the sea and they are mainly consumers of fish. Also, Homowo is a traditional festival celebrated by the Gas in Accra whereas Odwira and Damba festivals are celebrated by the Akan ethnic groups and Dagombas respectively. The main reason behind the celebration of these various festivals in Ghana is to display their various cultures. Among the northern Ghanaians marrying more than one wife is portrayed as cultural and societal responsibility and evidence of potency in their culture and this gives high status to the man and also ranks the man very important in the community. Sometimes the man who marries more than one wife and has many male children is given a traditional rank in the chief’s palace.

Equally among the Akan ethnic groups, respect is given to women with twins. Usually one will hear the Akans with appellations that refer to women with twins such as calling them *ntaa maami* (meaning mother of twins). Furthermore, inheritance among Ghanaians varies from ethnic groups. For instance, inheritance among some Akans is matrilineal. That is, they trace lineage from their mother’s side so inheritance is done through the

mother line. Usually, the belief among these Akans is that, although the father gives birth and names his children, the children eventually can't inherit from him. It is virtually common to hear among the Akans that, *your mother belongs to your family but your father does not*. Among the Ga ethnic group, inheritance is patrilineal that is they trace inheritance through their fathers. In recent times, globalization coupled with modernization has affected the traditional customs and beliefs of various ethnic groups in Ghana. Despite the changes that have occurred due to modernization, some ethnic groups in Ghana still stick to their customs and beliefs.

2.2.1. Religion in Ghana

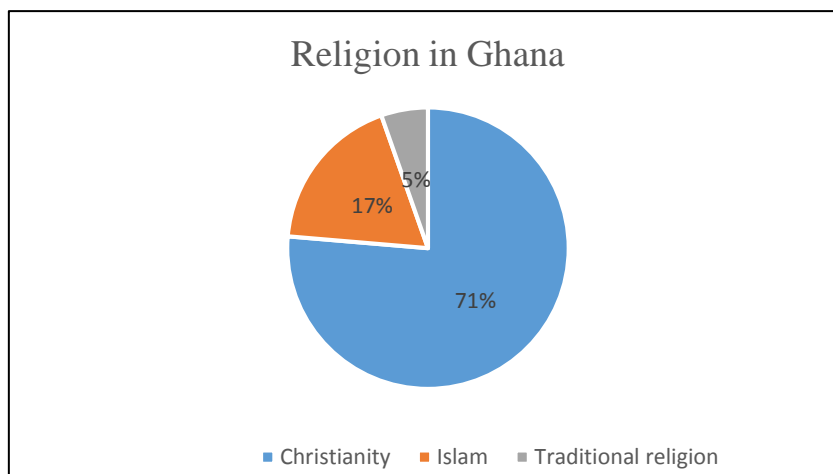
Ghanaians are well-known to be religiously notorious. Religion is believed to form a significant aspect of the lives of Ghanaians. There are three main and major religions in Ghana. These religions are Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. According to the 2010 report from Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census, Christian religion constitutes the largest (71% of the total population) in the country followed by Islamic religion (17%) and then the least of religion is traditional religion (5%). The major reason for the widespread of Christianity in Ghana is the factor of colonization. Islamic religion on the other hand reached Ghana (specifically North of Ghana) from North Africa through trading activities of the Arabs. Majority of Ghanaians who reside in the Northern part of Ghana mainly practice Islam as their religion and are generally known to be Muslims. Traditional religion in Ghana traces its origin from the Traditional African Religion and in Ghana, this religion varies from ethnic groups. For instance, the Akan ethnic group places their traditional belief in the earth, water bodies, and trees. Usually, the Akan traditional believer in Ghana prays by pouring *libation* to *mother earth* (Asaasi Yaa in the Akan dialect) because they believe the earth is a female. Some have argued and attributed feminine gender to Ghana due to some of the traditional belief that the earth is female. As indicated above, Ghana has attracted a lot of immigrants due to her long sustenance of political stability and for this reason, some of these immigrants have brought in their *unfamiliar* religion to the country. The influx of international migrants in Ghana especially in urban centers has posed some problems. It is often argued that, in many destination countries, host societies have become increasingly fearful about the presence of migrants, especially those that come with *strange* religions, cultures, and

those that are associated with violence (Khalid Koser, 2007). In the cities of Ghana, famous religions are equally Islam and Christianity. However, with the increased foreign migrants in the cities, many forms of beliefs are beginning to emerge including Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. This has created a lot of problems since some religions require rituals that are strange to the people. This though is not a major problem but has eventually sparked tensions, fear in urban areas of Ghana.

Ghana is one of the secular countries which guarantees religious liberty to its citizens. Ghanaian citizens have the basic right to believe and free to join or worship any religious institution as enshrined in Article 21(1) (c) of the Constitution. Although generally in Ghana, religious bodies are allowed to operate on their own without any interference from the state yet there have been instances where during political campaigns for votes religious songs (mainly Christian gospel songs) were utilized. In fact, during the 2008 elections, the New Patriotic Parties (NPP) were seen to have used most Christian gospel songs to campaign for votes largely on media platforms. Political campaigns also targeted developing Muslim communities. Apart from political parties enhancing their campaign with educational scholarship, Hajj pilgrimage is also use as a means to influence Muslims vote in Ghana. Before elections, political candidates largely visit media houses (Radio, Television houses), religious leaders, and institutions such as a church, mosque, traditional places, to seek for prayers and to make promises and at times some donations at religious functions. In other words, political candidates try to use religion in a way to seek votes through religious leaders, groups, and most importantly via media platforms. Despite this, religion remains significant because of the major role it plays in ensuring successful and peaceful elections in Ghana. The above paints a vivid picture of a democratic country where many nationals from different countries seek economic and political refuge. A haven for migrants like Ghana in the sub-region democratic values need to be protected from deterioration due to the complex nature of cyberspace.

It can be summarized that Ghanaians are seen to live in harmony despite differences in religious faith unlike some parts of Africa and largely around parts of the world where religion has constantly been the cause for division among citizens. Ghana largely remains one of the top democratic countries in Africa that allows and guarantees individuals right to belong to any religious faith and their liberty to worship.

Figure 3: Religion in Ghana



Source: Author's graphical representation adopted from Ghana Statistical Service, population census, 2010.

2.2.2. Education in Ghana

It is interesting to understand that in a democratic society the vote of a university professor in the city is equal to and carries the same weight to an uncritical, common uneducated citizen of a remote village. Thus, a critical educated mass is relevant in a democratic state for good governance. Many scholars have argued that to become an effective member of a particular society, primary socialization (socialization at home) is very important. In light of this, individual Ghanaians are always thought and trained at home on how to become successful members of the Ghanaian society. One of the common socialization processes that the child undergoes among various ethnic groups in Ghana is being trained to respect and properly greet the elderly one. For instance, it is largely heard among the Akan ethnic groups in the local dialect if a child shows disrespect towards an elder (such as not greeting the elderly person if they happen to meet) that, *wu maami antiti wu iye* meaning *one is not brought up or properly trained by his/her mother to respect the elderly*. In effect, Ghanaians largely place more value on primary socialization at home than everything else and that is the first education they receive.

Prior to the arrival of the colonists, the process of learning (education) to become a better Ghanaian was informal. Formal education and socialization at school (classroom education) was introduced in Ghana by the missionaries through the help of the colonists.

In order to teach the then Gold Coast (current Ghana) members how to read and write, they established schools and initiated classroom education. A common language was needed for better understanding and explanation so English was adopted as the general language throughout the process. This is how come Ghana has its formal language as English. After Ghana gained independence and Nkrumah become the president, he initiated a free education for all Ghanaian citizens and equally granted scholarships to education both locally and to study abroad. In fact, classroom education introduced to some extent inequalities among Ghanaian men and women. Ghanaian women largely remained at home with the belief that their place is the kitchen and with the idea that they will eventually be married off while men went outside to receive a formal education. However, in recent times, many Ghanaian women are increasingly attaining higher education and trying to bridge the gap between men and women. It is quite pathetic that some Ghanaians still place more value on male education than female education and consequently most men are afraid to marry women with high education because they do not want their authorities to be challenged by these women. Formal education has also declined the extended family system in Ghana and has subsequently led to so much divorce in the country. Computer education (ICT) is one of the subjects introduced to the educational curriculum to equip individual Ghanaians with computer skills. Fortunately, the computer skills acquired by many Ghanaians are not used for the right purpose. In other words, formal education coupled with modernization has exposed many Ghanaians to the use of the internet and social media. This has eventually caused many Ghanaians into misusing the social media platform to communicate unethical and fake news. In typical Ghanaian societies and among some ethnic groups in Ghana like the Akan during the naming ceremony of a child sprinkle some water on the lips of the child to signify that the child should grow up to always spread and abide by the truth. This virtually means that the main value and culture of the Ghanaian is to uphold the principles of truth. Unfortunately, in recent times, social media is been utilized by many Ghanaians to spread lies. It can be said that modern education and social media is currently affecting the good moral nature and standard of the Ghanaian due to the way some Ghanaians are using the social media platform to spread lies.

In nutshell, informal education was dominant in Ghana before the arrival of the missionaries and colonists. For better understanding and communication, formal

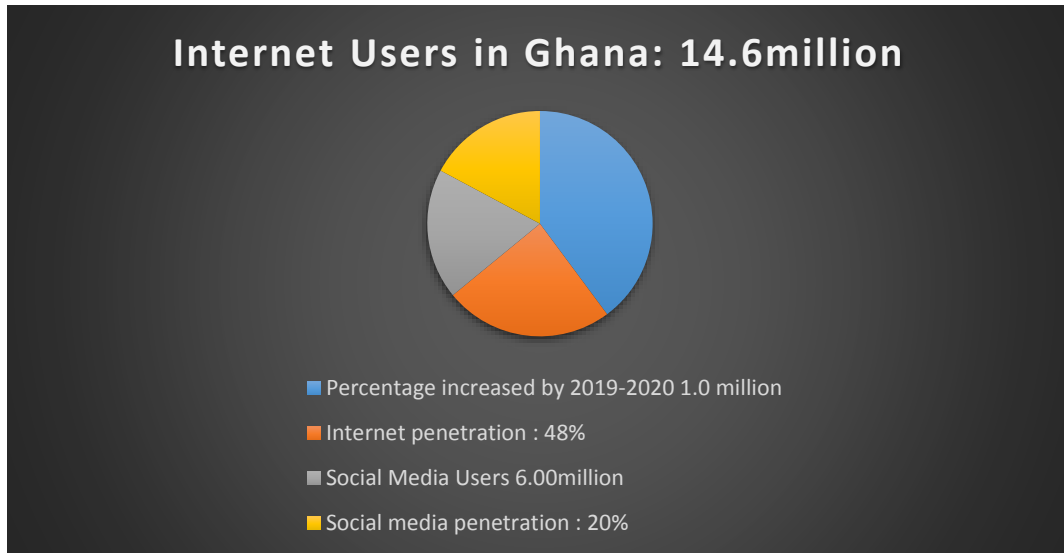
education was introduced by the missionaries who were supported by the colonists, and English was used as the medium of communication. The English language has ever since remained the formal language in Ghana. Formal education has consequently changed the way of life of Ghanaians and is currently posing problems to the way some Ghanaians disseminate information. Improvement in education has exposed many Ghanaians to social media where they subsequently learn and share ideas on democratic values such as electoral process, advocating human rights, registering protest and dissent against government policies they deem not suitable. The youth also campaign online during an election where fake information in the form of propaganda is circulated in the virtual media space for votes. This activity is not only un-Ghanaian and undermining the value of customs and traditions of Ghana but also putting Ghana's democratic gains at risk.

2.2.3. Media and Communication in Ghana

Historically, many countries across the globe had various ways of communicating with each other. In parts of Africa door-to-door communication was generally common and also items such as bells, drums, smoke were mainly used for communication. Similarly, in the typical traditional Ghanaian society when a report needs to be given about the passing away of a great person, the drum was mostly used. However, in almost all societies today, people are getting closer to one another and globally connected due to expansion in the internet and improvement in technology. In Ghana, the mobile connection is around 39, 97 million with a 130% equivalent of its population by January 2020. The Ghanaian society is equally not an exception. Many Ghanaians today, engage in indirect communication by the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to link up with family and friends despite great distances. However, in recent times most individual Ghanaians have deviated from the usual basis on which the social media platform was meant for. Most Ghanaians use the social media platform for wrong purposes such as propagating a wide range of false information to the general public. This has posed challenges to the development of the nation and, the role of the Ghana media in enhancing the nation's democracy. What these media do is update Ghanaians on the day-to-day affairs of the government. This is to emphasize that freedom of speech is instilled in the democratization of Ghana for accountability and transparency. Unfortunately, as indicated earlier, social media platforms are now being weaponized by

many Ghanaians to report largely fake information to the public and this current situation is weakening the democracy of Ghana.

Figure 4: Information on Mobile, Internet and Social media Users



Source: Field generation by author, adopted from <https://datareportal.com>. 14/July/ 2020

2.3. Preparation for the Fieldwork

Prior to making an online ethnographic observation within the cyberspace in the political space in Ghana, the researcher conducted a background research into the democratic development and electoral politics of the country (See page number 40, and chapter four). Thus, a detailed case study on the general election, referendum and bye election in relations to elections in cyberspace and implications provided in Chapter two. Efforts were made to contact scholars in related subject to provide guidelines for the purpose of achieving a more successful findings relevant to the study. The researcher also had to abreast herself on chat language, purposively identify respondents, create social applications groups such as WhatsApp and Face messenger groups and joined social media platforms for the purpose of acquiring asynchronous and synchronous data.

2.4. Study Target

The study target is electoral development after the Cold War ending in 1989 with a specific interest in Referendum and general elections in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 general elections and the referendum of the six newly created regions all

provided as a case study with the incidence of fake news which nearly marred the credibility of those elections.

Table 1: General Elections in Ghana 1992-2016

PP*	Year	Win/ Results	PV*	%*	VT*	PRESIDENT
NDC	1992	NDC	2, 323,135	58.4%	50.2%	Jerry John Rawlings
NDC	1996	NDC	4,099,758	57.4%	78.6%	Jerry John Rawlings
NPP	2000	NPP/2 nd ROUND	3,631,263	56.9%	60.4%	John Agyekum Kuffour
NPP	2004	NPP	4,524,074	52.4%	85.1%	John Agyekum Kuffour
NDC	2008	NDC/2 nd ROUND	4,521,032	50.2%	72.91 %	Prof John Evans Atta Mills
NDC	2012	NDC	5,574,761	50.7%	79.43 %	John Dramani Mahama
NPP	2016	NPP	5,755,758	53.7%	69.25 %	Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffu Addo

Source: The Table is created using Previous General Elections data in Ghana gazzeted, by the author, 2020. <https://ec.gov.gh>

*Political Party (PP), Popular Votes (PP), Percentage (%), Voter Turnout (VT)

2.5. Target population

The study takes into consideration sane persons of 18 years and above since the aforementioned age limit is exclusively qualified to engage in politics and vote during elections in Ghana regardless of gender and status. Besides, the electorate are the political parties, media, electoral commission, and civil society who play a major role in democratic elections and the development of the electoral regime.

2.6. Sampling and Data Collection

The study for the purpose of achieving the objective of the study employed ten media houses in Ghana, which include, Joy TV, Joy FM, Asempa FM, Adom T.V, Adom FM, GTV, TV3, Metro TV, City FM and City T.V. For the online print media apart from the ten electronic media daily guide, Ghana web, and crusading guide was added for authentication and cross-checking the veracity of story published on media handles. Press conferences of the two major political parties in Ghana, New Patriotic Party (NPP)

National Democratic Congress (NDC), and four civil societies such as AFAG, IMANI Ghana, OCCUPY Ghana and Danqua Institute (DI).

2.6.1. Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling technique was adopted to make a case on fake news and its ramification to electoral politics and security in Ghana. The study focused on convenient and purposive sampling on electronic media from 1992- 2016 with emphasis on 2012-2016 as indicated in the source of data for the study to achieve the target of its study. This is to ensure that relevant data are specifically gathered to achieve the purpose of the research.

2.6.2. Primary Data Collection

Interviews

The in-depth interviews were designed for key personalities who the researcher believed would have a good knowledge on electoral politics in Ghana in relation to cyberspace. The interview guide had questions that were strictly based on the objectives of the study outlined in the introduction, for easy categorization. The basis of the questions primarily involved the careful reviews of the relevant objectives. The interview was conducted in both English, Hausa, Ga, Twi and Dagbani to broaden our data base for volumes of data to select suitable for work under study. The interviews were semi-structured. This interview guide was used with flexibility regarding sequence and formulation. Modifications were made to question when important issues beyond previous planning came up during the interviews. Due to COVID19 interviews were conducted through WhatsApp video call.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussions were also held using synchronous approach online FTF discussion to obtain data for this research. There were four separate focus group sessions each spanning a little over an hour in each month depending on the availability of the participant. Participants for the first session were all people aged from 18-35, and participants in the second session were all above 35. A Focus Group Discussion is a collection of a small number of people, typically four (4) and twelve (12) that meet to

discuss a topic of mutual interest with assistance of a facilitator (Gatrell, 2002). The Focus Group Discussions also considered balance of sex and gender to ensure that both male and female were fully integrated in the discussion. This was done to allow respondents to give additional information and further explain issues that could not come up during the interview of experts in the field. Asynchronous data of group discussion on zoom meetings, YouTube contents on the subject of the study were all considered, selected, coded and analyze to achieve the target of the study.

Online Participant Observation

To suppose that any researcher's presence in the field would not exert an influence on the data is unrealistic (Strong 1974 cited in Silverman, 2005; 29). Observations on the field during online discussions were part of the data collection. Online Participant Observation provided the possibility to observe what people do as compared to what they said. Body language, eye contact, style of speech, level seriousness, commitment to time, clarity of expression, choice of words and chat language usages such as emojis. Thus, the researcher involved observation in the cyber community and cyber social interaction context in which people express themselves in the virtual domain. It was interesting to observe their daily routines and interactions during online discussions. The information obtained through this process, in the form of informal online conversations, personal reflection and analysis were formulated and recorded in field notes. Online Participant observation provided the opportunity to collect additional data beyond the interviews and focus group discussions.

2.6.3. Secondary Data Collection

Analysis of secondary sources was used to complement the primary data. The secondary data involved an intensive research from books, journals, magazines, newspaper reports, radio interviews, articles, Internet materials and unpublished works related to the study. The essence was to review literature on the relationships between cyberspace and electoral politics that will assist the researcher in analyzing how the cyberspace affects electoral politics both negative and positive. The secondary sources provide quiet relevant materials in this study. The study further access online document from the Ghana Electoral Commissions annual Reports, published and gazzeted previous election results, Ghana Electoral commissions all social media handles, official social media handles of

popular media houses, media houses audio and visual discursive programs on mainstream T.V and social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Reports of civil society groups such as Ghana Center for Democratic Development, (CDD), Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), the Alliance for Accountable Governance (AFAG), Imani Ghana, and others. Press conferences of political parties. The researcher consulted existing literature on the subject of inquiry. In that vein, data sought after were from textbooks, journal articles, and internet sources to complement primary sources such as press conferences, third party interviews, and reports to make a case study to achieve the objective of the study. In fact, data on the referendum were retrieved from the recent referendum in 2019 for the creation of new regions by Ghana electoral commission's website. Again, on general elections data were retrieved from the Ghana Electoral commission's publication on their website on 2012-2016 election because this was an intense moment of cyberspace activities. In 2016 government during the elections through the head of the police service had decided to block Facebook for security reasons. The ramification is analyzed in chapter three using synchronous offline data.

2.7. Ethical Issues in the Research

Voting is supposed to be personal secret, enquiring into people personal interest and calling private phone numbers of unfamiliar people is very challenging. Divulging information about his/her opinion on a certain political party and their conduct on their social media platforms in most instances were another challenge to the interest of the respondents and participants in group discussion. In fact, video call had some turn off as some prefer to off their video and listen to the discussion. As a result of the above, points were made to explain in detail the purpose of the research to each respondent, and made them understood that participation was on voluntary basis. I sought consent of each respondent who participated in this research. In fact, respondent opted to be remained anonymous. Every researcher has personal perceptions, beliefs and values that can influence the decisions making process during research and the data analysis process. Weber (1946) has pointed out that all research is contaminated to some extent by the values of the researcher. The conclusion and implication to be drawn from the study are also largely grounded in the moral and political beliefs of the researcher (Silverman,

2000; 257). As a result of the above, in order to conduct a scientific research, one needs to apply what phenomenologist call methodological agnosticism and de-construct stereotypes and misconceptions so as to become open to new ideas. The researcher took the above ethical considerations seriously in conducting her research to achieve the target of the study.

2.8. Data Analysis Design/Technique

Data analysis in this work was a continuous process as the study was qualitatively oriented. The data obtained was organized by creating categories. The process of coding, as part of the analysis, involves “generating concepts from and with our data” (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; 26). Such issues as thinking creatively and conceptualizing the data, raising questions and providing provisional answers and meaning among and within the data are vital in this process of conceptualizing the data through induction. In transforming the coded data into meaningful data, patterns, themes and regularities as well as paradoxes and irregularities were considered (ibid).

The data analysis aimed to answer the aims and objectives of this research (see introduction). The analysis began with data induction; this involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the raw data (Miles and Huberman, 1984; 21, cited in Silverman, 2000; 177). The process also involved making decision about the particular data that provided the initial focus of the study. The next stage was to draw conclusions from the coded data. Conclusion drawing means “beginning to decide what things mean, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configuration, causal flows and propositions” (Miles and Huberman, 1984; 229, cited in Silverman, 2000; 177). The conclusions were then verified; verification involved testing the provisional conclusion for “their plausibility, their sturdiness, and their “conformability” –that is, their validity.

In this context the study aptly employed content and contextual analysis of data using critical discourse since the study emphasized on cyber and political language, interpretation, meanings, ideas, symbols, and images of the phenomenon rather than measurement and employing numbers and statistics. The study applied this method because of the immense role perceptions play in the subject of inquiry; in this context of fake news roles in electoral politics in Ghana. Elections do not bother only on politics but

also in security where stability is necessary. Constructionists claim that the world is just not a social world but a cultural one that is dynamic and keeps transforming its identity through the historical process of change. This process has seen the construction of man's physical space into new social cyberspace in it, language is developed through socialization which affects our perceptions on a new space. And to understand social interactions Fulcher (2010) argues that discourse analysis is the appropriate approach in this case. Locke (2004) posits that discourse analysis brings meaning to the reality of the constructed world. The subject of inquiry is a multi-disciplinary, which deals with power, perceptions, and opinions, society, and culture. Thus, the need for critical discourse, subjective induction, content analysis through IMR and Cyber-ethnography as qualitative designs in dealing with this subject matter.

2.9 Challenges

During the fieldwork it was important that trust was built with the respondents, this was especially so considering the fact that the study area was about electoral politics which deals with people emotions, social interactions in groups, and personal private cyberspace. The process of trust building requires a degree of knowledge about the conditions prevailing on the ground. The researchers had called and chatted at least three times in the private cyberspace of the respondents to become conversant with the conditions before they started the actual online participations. The researcher also spent a great deal of time visiting cyberspace platforms, including: Website, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter of all the target populations which include Ghana electoral commissions, mainstream media houses and the civil society organizations. Obtaining access to information in a sensitive area is not a task that can be successfully achieved in a day. There are always barriers in such places constructed “to keep the outsider at bay” (Smith 1999; 138). There are some challenges such internet access availability and cost of data were used as excuses sometimes to avoid participation and the presence of the researcher in the respondent private space. It requires time and patience on the part of the researcher to build the trust needed for a good research. Again, the banning of travel due to COVID19 limited not just the scope of data pull for the research but the time for any study on the field of the study since it is very broad area. The researcher also encountered problem of financing the project.

In addition to the above problem some people refused to participate in the research, citing time constraints, lack of knowledge on the subject and lack of interest. However, it is the researchers' fervent hope that this research will further generate study on the subject matter. In conclusion, the researcher assumed that the information provided by respondents regarding the subject under study were the right information base on which the study was conducted and conclusions made.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Brief Summary of the Chapter

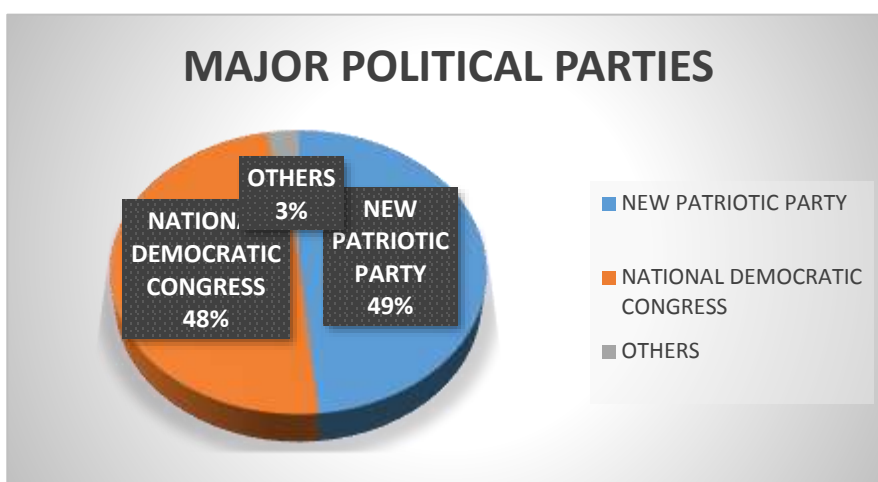
This chapter provides findings on political parties in Ghana and their activities, It further analyze the electoral commission of Ghana and cyberspace, cyberspace and democracy, its relationship and the impact it exudes on legitimacy of election and the progress of democratic society and its security. Further, practically through content and discourse analysis the work provides future based analysis on the prospect of Cyberspace using 2012-2016 Data generated from the IMR and cyberethnographic source. This draws attention to the proper use of cyberspace by the Ghana Electoral commission in the process of ensuring credible and transparent election. The data provided here is largely primary based source through synchronous and Asynchronous FTF interview, focus group discussion as qualitative approach to understand the issues on cyberspace in elections in Ghana

3.1. Electoral Parties in Ghana and Cyberspace

Ghana forms part of the world's 40 countries with who practice multi-party political system(EC, Ghana, <https://ec.gov.gh/political-parties/>) The research findings indicate that one of the target population which is political parties according to Ghana Electoral Commissions is 27 in number as at 14 August, 2020. These parties include : All People's Congress (APC), Convention People's Party (CPP) Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), Democratic People's Party (DPP), Eagle Party (EP), Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP), Ghana Democratic Republican Party (GDRP), Ghana National Party (GNP), Ghana Freedom Party (GFP), Ghana Union Movement (GUM), Liberal Party of Ghana (LPG), National Democratic Congress (NDC), National Democratic Party (NDP), New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Reform Party (NRP), New Vision Party (NVP), People's National Convention (PNC), Progressive People's Party (PPP), People's Action Party (PAP), People's Destiny Party (PDP), Reformed Patriotic Democrats (RPD), United Ghana Movement (UGM), United Development System Party (UDSP, United Renaissance Party (URP), United Front Party (UFP), United Democratic Party (UDP), United Progressive Party (UPP). All these political parties are regulated under the control of the Electoral Commission. In the case study of Ghana's electoral politics from 1992-

2016 only two political parties are able to win elections and alternate power in the democratic dispensation of Ghana. These two political parties are the major parties similar to U.S where only the Democrats and the Republicans alternate power among themselves. Thus, the research show after discussions and interview with experts, other online respondent and participant observations, based analysis using 2000/2008 elections that only three percent of the population decide election. The major parties have the following distribution of data in terms of vote:

Figure 5: Major Political Parties



Source: Author’s depiction of the strength of the major political parties in Ghana using Ghana’s Electoral commission data 2000/2008 first round results.

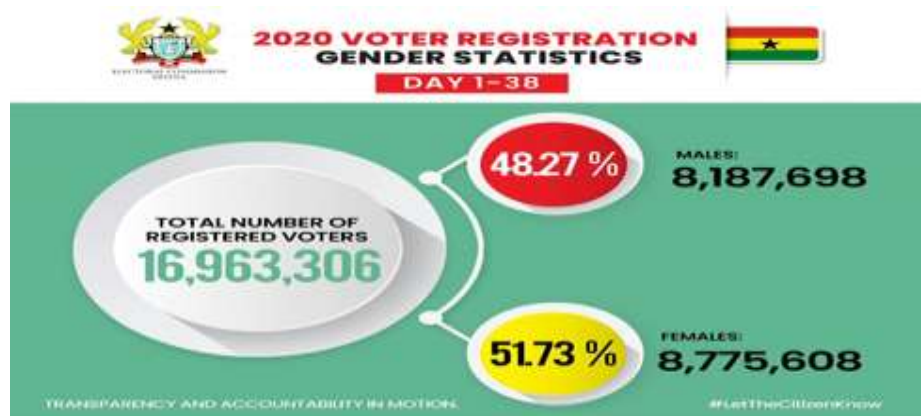
The two major political parties have not less 1,072 social media across Facebook platform, twitter and Instagram. The findings counted 250 districts Facebook and twitter pages, 275 party constituency Facebook and Twitter pages, 275 parliamentarian’s Facebook and twitter page, 250 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) Facebook pages and twitter pages, 16 Regional party fan pages of Facebook and twitter, six presidential candidate pages of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. These pages serve as their campaign platform for the purpose of disseminating information and organization of the party.

3.2. Electoral Commission of Ghana and Cyberspace

Another major stakeholder in democratic elections is the electoral management body and in this study, the Ghana Electoral commission. In the global cyber world the electoral

commission of Ghana has also evolved to employ mechanism to maximize benefit of the cyberspace and avoid security threat and risk of cyber-attack to maintain, peace, credibility and sustainability of democracy and development in Ghana. To be able to achieve this transparency is key. As a result, the electoral commission of Ghana have verified Facebook and twitter accounts to authenticate, legitimize and manage their information in this cyber age to avoid distortion of facts. It is true as evidenced in the case of Ghana electoral politics (see chapter, four) distortion of fact and spread of fake news was the main culprit for the conflict at Ayawaso-Wuogon bye election. In this democratic election Ghana’s electoral commission in their 2020 upcoming election used the cyberspace positively to update citizens on development of registration of voters at various electoral center. Research findings reveal that the data on voters were provided based on demography age, gender and disabilities. The following data were collected from the social media platforms of the Electoral Commission of Ghana.

Figure 6: Gender of voters and eligible to Vote

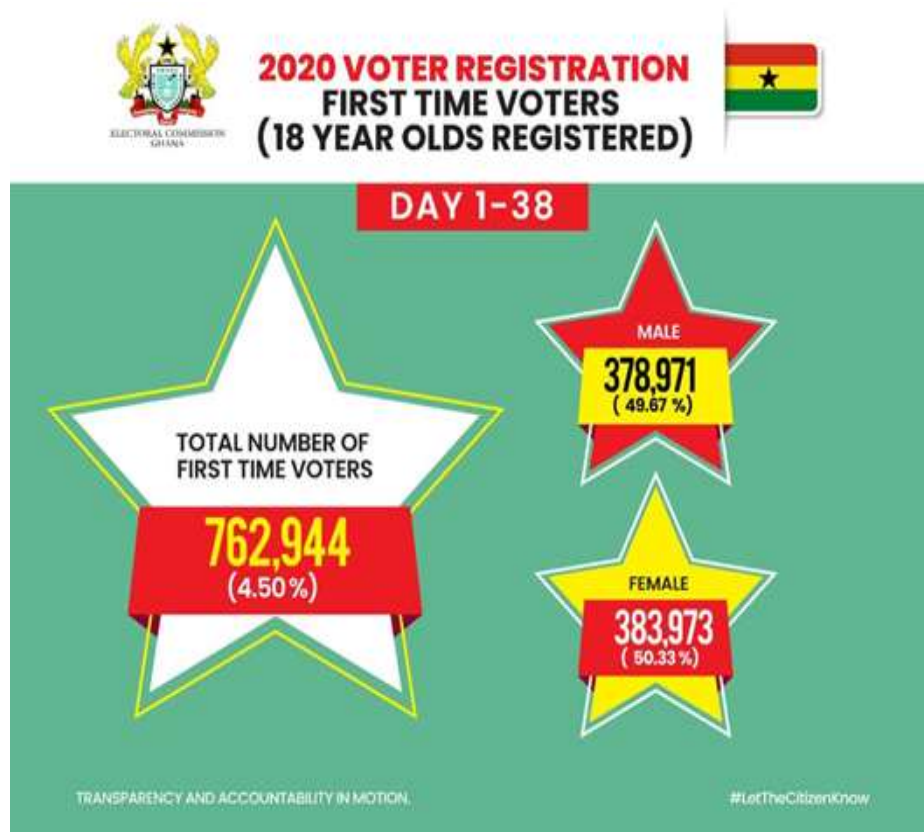


Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2020

The data present an interesting information in relations to Ghanaian population and participation in elections. World barometer 31, 157, 334 (www.worldometers.info) United Nations (UN) put the populations figures of Ghana at 31,072,940. However, Ghana will conduct a new population census this year. For the purpose of this research, the author adopts the Ghana statistical service population census (2010) to make a case for the data. The population census 2010 presents us with 24,658,823 which made up of 12,024,845 males (48.8%) and 12,633,978 females (51.2%) corresponding marginally, the voter register. Does that speak to us about the outcome of the 2020 population census?

Unfortunately, is out of the scope of this study. The interesting thing is that Ghanaian politics is dominated by males with only 36 parliamentary candidates out of 275 members.

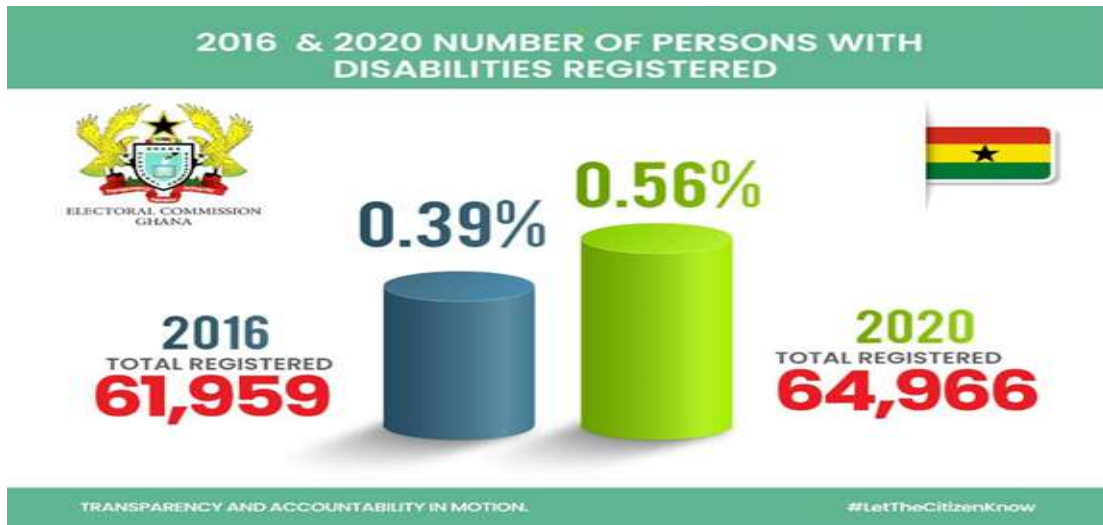
Figure 7: Demography of First-time voters



Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2020

The first-time voter population demography also exhibits the traits of the national distribution which indicate interest of participation of women in politics. The number registered in the graph also indicate the interest Ghanaian first time voters also have in taking part in electoral politics.

Figure 8: Comparative Data of Demography of people with disability 2016-2020



Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2020

In Ghanaian society disability does not mean lack of ability. Thus, challenged people are given the opportunity with special conditions to register and votes. Although the percentage of the numbers of challenged people might be less but in political atmosphere where 20,000 can win a party an election such a number is significant in determining the winner of election. In discussing this in one of the online focus group discussion in a zoom meeting of 75 persons largely Ghanaians all agreed to this assertion using the 2008 Second Round election where NDC won by 20,000 votes.

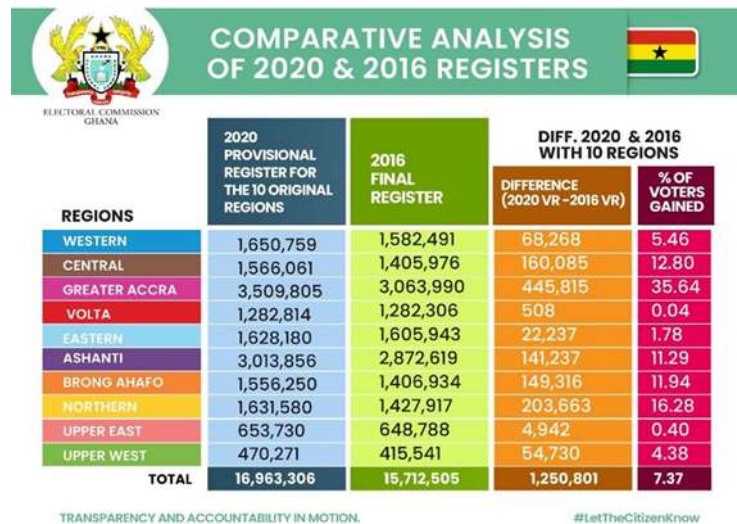
Figure 9: Timeline Update on Daily Registration



Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2020

For an electoral result to be accepted by all fairness, transparency and credibility is needed. Thus, the EC of Ghana to avoid distortions updates its citizens on social media through a press conference and daily data presentations through a programme all citizens must know. This graphs comes as an evidence of transparency using cyberspace.

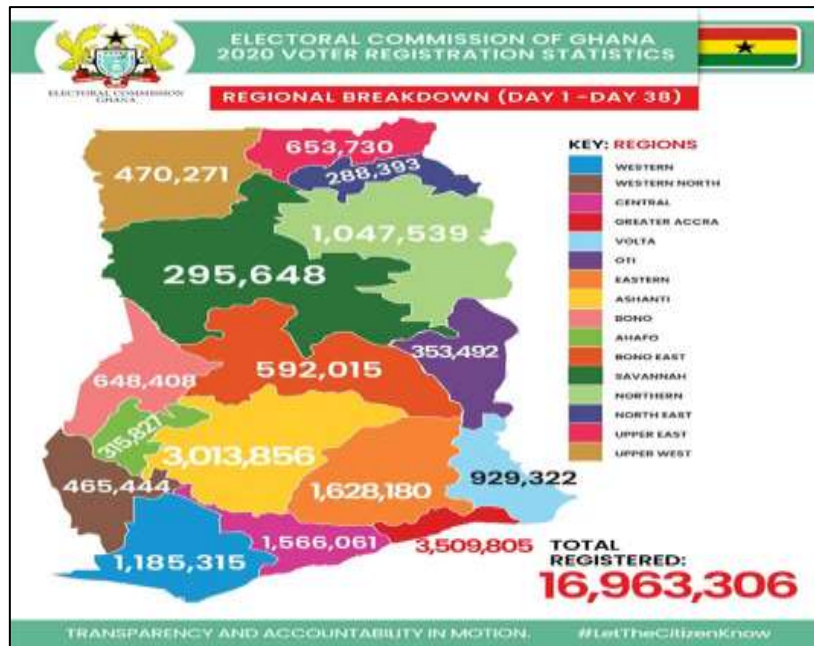
Figure 10: Comparative analysis of 2016 and 2020 voters' population



Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2020

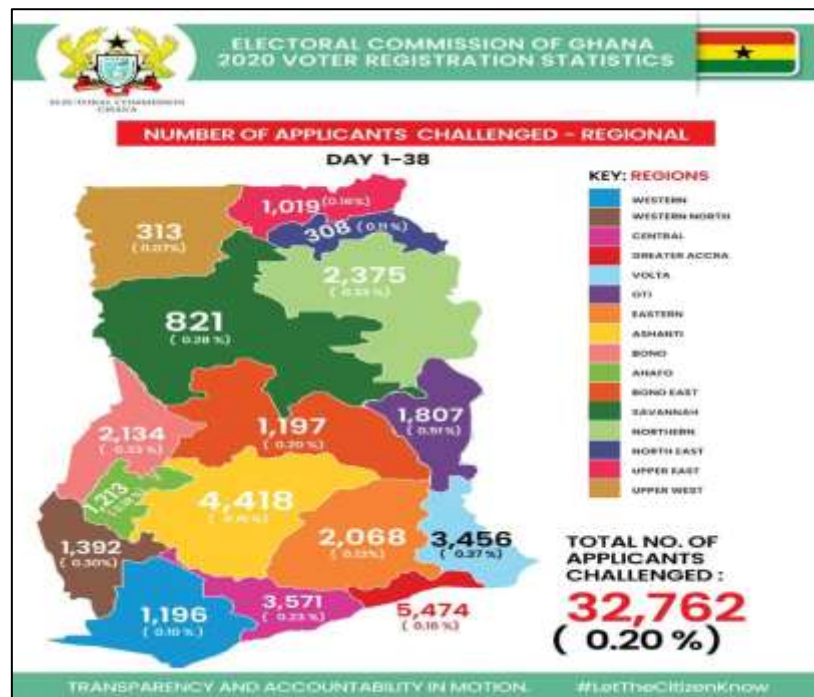
This graph depicts the old and new register in a comparative. One might think this is not necessary but discussant on Facebook live discussion indicated that this graph was necessary due to the disagreement of the compilation of new register which some parties had rejected citing waste of money, time and COVID19. Thus, the comparison shows clearly that the old register was a bloated one.

Figure 11: Regional Breakdown of registered voters



Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2

Figure 12: Challenged cases of persons

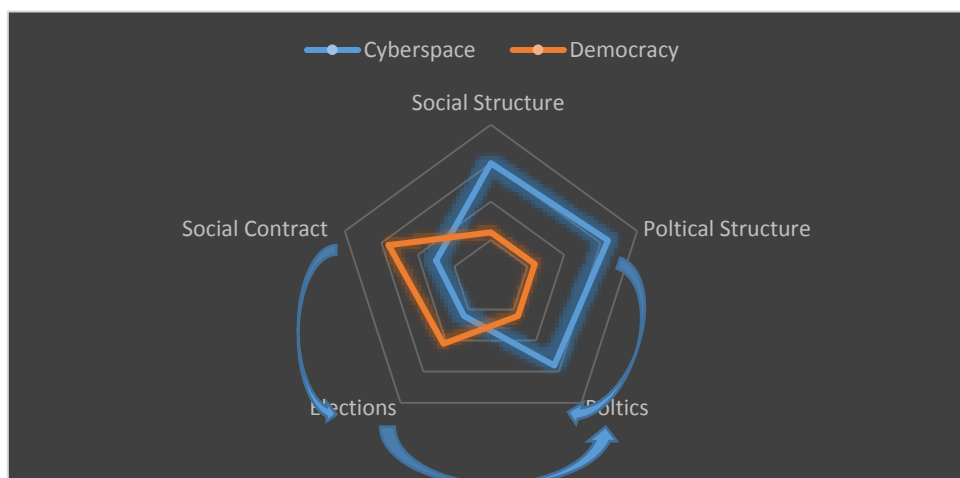


Source: adopted from Ghana Electoral commissions, social media (Facebook), 12/8/2020

3.3. Cyberspace and Democracy

In an online discussion with Mr. Ishmeal Mohammed a PhD candidate in Selcuk University, department of International Relations, Konya, through interview on the cyberspace and its relations with democracy stated that “there is always a thin line that separate the domestic and international politics. What many scholars in International Relations had used to separate the international from the domestic was the unregulated and lack of authority in the international sphere, but the emergence of cyberspace has brought the domestic more closely to the international making the domestic politics more complex during elections blurring the hierarchical and anarchical argument. He went further to argue that “cyberspace has leveled the playing ground in terms of lack of governmentality in seeking for power using the cyberspace to advance democratic values of which election is a criterion”. When asked about if there is relationship between cyberspace and democracy he answered in the affirmative. For him he said “the relationship between democracy and cyberspace interlinked in virtual space where activities of electoral politics transpire to promote democracy. Denying their relationship is like denying that there is no link between politics and election. These concepts interlink in a circular form within one social structure where each subject addresses societal issues. It is the construction of these subjects that make up the social structure and the culture of the society as a whole complex”. Based on this discussion fig.3.9 was generated to depict the nature of the relationship between cyberspace and democracy.

Figure 13: Interrelation between Cyberspace and Democracy



Source: Author’s illustration of interrelation between cyberspace and democracy, 2020

3.4. Future-based Analysis on the Prospect of Cyberspace Using 2012-2016 Data

In 2012, the election of Ghana was disputed in the apex Supreme Court of Ghana. In this case, the proceedings of the court were broadcasted live on national television and radio across the length and breadth of the country. As the beacon of democracy in Africa and beyond, the stake was too high for a country governed by the rule of law. However, one thing stood out and for the first time, Ghanaians could assess the proceedings not from the traditional media but from using social media. Before that only results of the election were published on the electoral commission website and other media houses. Today, the electoral commission has social media handles from Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter where information is disseminated.

In 2016 the major political parties used social media to market their candidates and campaigned massively on social media platforms. They built up their own Electoral College centers using WhatsApp and telegram to transmit their results for the first time. Party groups from candidates to official campaign WhatsApp group, there are other fan club pages on Facebook, political party's youth wings pages on Instagram, and Twitter.

Nevertheless, cyberspace served positively in the above context, 2016 witnessed a new trend where the electoral commission of Ghana social media handles was purported to be hacked by saboteurs' hackers. This hacktivism also affected other media houses and delayed the release of results on time for the populace. The attempt of the hackers successfully provided and updated results on the electoral commission page. This forced the E.C to put out a statement on the falsification of results circulated as credible from them. This brought apprehension and confusion among the stakeholders at the time aggravating tension in the country. It is interesting to note that many had advocated for E-voting in Ghana leading to the 2016 election due to the protracted court case against the winning candidate in Ghana. To avoid the mistakes of the 2012 largely human error and influences many wanted the human element out of the picture but hacktivism opened up another challenge to be surmounted if E-voting is to be allowed in Ghana. On 4th July 2020, Dr. Serebour Quarcoe in News File program on Joy T.V stated that there is too much suspicion among the parties which is affecting the conversation for E-voting in the future. And until more trust is built through education and understand that election is cooperative responsibility the E-voting target will be a mirage. Much as there is

confidence in the electoral process using the cyberspace there is enormous fear due to the positive and negative the cyberspace has impacted on elections as indicated in the case study of electoral politics in Ghana in chapter two. Evidenced to the fact is the data finding below. The data finding below:

Figure 14: Response to the hacked Ghana’s electoral commission social media Twitter platform after it was restored.



Source: Fieldwork, 2020, adopted from Ghana Electoral Commission Twitter Account, 2016

The attempt to disseminate false information using social media quite obviously vindicate the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to block social media to control security a day before the election. This, however, raises questions of the right to information and freedom of speech in Ghana. In one social media post on Joy news Facebook page published on the 27 May, 2016 asynchronous data retrieves and meticulously analyzed using IMR and cyberethnographic techniques finds some respondents discussions and analysis to this story summarized their opinions, perceptions and frustration this way:

“How about you shut down all FM radio and T.V stations too. When the politicians go on radio and T.V insulting themselves you do not shut them down. When they this (FB) to affect people’s perception that one you want to shut down. We the discerning people will use the platform to monitor the elections and report on it. How about you shut down the airport too because some people use it for traffic illegality? Close down the roads too so armed robbers and criminals cannot use it. What kind of myopic leaders are these we have these days?” Respondent one. This obviously is similar to the post-truth foundations which seeks to replace the mainstream perspective regardless of the fact on the ground. This clearly was a ground promote as mistrust and distrust as it seek to systemically reject authority with deception (Stoker, 2017: 35–36)

A second Respondent also disagreed and took the middle position:

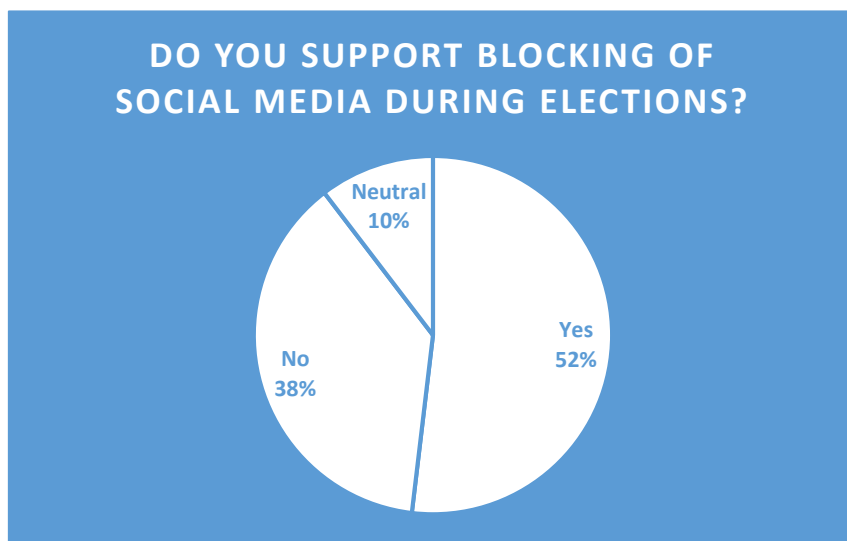
“ I do not support this idea of blocking the social media entirely considering how it helps us communicate easily and less costly but on the other hand if you also look at the degree of falsehood that is been thrown out there and the impersonations are very worrying in an election year. I, therefore, agree that some kind of very helpful solution must provide to solve this”.

A third respondent supported the IGP:

“Very good. We are in the modern age, but many Ghanaians lack maturity in the use of social media. We should rather learn and conform to civilized norms rather than insult the IGP who has more knowledge in security matters than most of us”. The content provided above was part of 275 respondents as observed from a Joy news Facebook page publishes on 27 May, 2016. What is obvious in the findings is that cyberspace in our electoral space is blurring confidence and credibility as knowledge of truth and facts is

gradually viewed from personal perspective. This impact transcend the electoral as Van Zoonen (2012:60) argues that the cyberspace is facilitating I e(I)-pistemological ethos of truth in the world. In the analysis of the content through critical discourse relevant to language, text, sociability, and meaning were carefully selected as explained in the methodological approach above.

Figure 15: The Distribution of Perception on the Blocking of Social Media during the Election.



Source: Author’s illustration of perception of blocking social media during the election. Adopted from myjoyonline Facebook’s page publication on 27 May, 2016

As an inductive research approach, the author conceptualize the data by the insight observation of pattern of response of respondents asynchronous comments presented, self-expression using nonverbal language such as emoji. The author utilized the algorithms provided by the data and coded the language to generate concept with meaning and interpretations of the online data allowing the data to speak to the reader. This is what Straus (1967) calls grounded theory because the theory is perception of blocking social media is based on the online data responds adopted from joy news publication. The technique adopted here is corroborate with Lofland (1995) emergent analysis which makes this qualitative technique as a creative and intuitive process best suited to the case of this study’s analysis. Therefore the findings show as indicated, 28 respondents (%10) although supported but also disappointed in the reckless usage of social media irresponsibly by citizens. 105 respondents (%38) disagreed and cited abuse of power,

human rights violation, and silencing dissent which to them is an anathema to democratic development in Ghana. Among 143 respondents (52%) who supported the blocking of social media cited a lack of control of the system and the possibility of irresponsible activities affecting the security of the country. In Ghana today there is a conscious effort by the security, civil society groups, media, and political parties to fight against fake news and maximize the use of cyberspace positively in transforming the fortunes of electoral system and democracy in Ghana. The electoral commission itself has become proactive in reacting to propaganda and false information speculated and circulated in the cyberspace platforms such social media including Facebook, Instagram and twitter. A clear example is way the electoral commission of Ghana reacted to press conferences. This were addressed in the form of press conference. (See appendices B and C)

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY ON GHANA'S DEMOCRATIC AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Brief Introduction of the Chapter

This chapter discusses issues of Ghana and democracy, General Elections in Ghana, By-Elections in Ghana, Implication of Fake News on the Ayawaso Wuogon By-Election and Referendum in Ghana base on press conferences of political parties, Ghana electoral commission, and government committee reports on electoral violence, newspaper review, T.V discussions, and YouTube political discussion on matters concerning electoral politics. The case study on the study in this chapter relies on the above secondary sources to address the relevant questions of the study.

4.1. Ghana and Democracy

Democracy is well-grounded in the history of Ghana. Elections have been free and fair as well as the transfer of power has also been peaceful without any bloodshed. There has been an argument that democracy existed in Ghana many years ago prior to the arrival of the colonist. That is, before the coming of the British to Ghana, the country was utilizing a decentralized system of political governance. This decentralized system of governance contained some aspect of democracy such that, chiefs were being elected to be leaders and political rulers of different communities. During this time, in various communities, there existed a traditional belief and symbol regarding the ruling of authorities. For example, in the AKAN community, *Tumi te se kosua* connoted the idea that 'power is similar to an egg' which created an impression that, power is very fragile; when held too tightly it will break and when held very loosely it will fall and break. In this way, ruling in the Akan community conveyed a message in the Akan dialect that, power shouldn't be held for a long period of time and this proved a virtue and an aspect of democracy (smooth transfer of power by free and fair election). In fact, at this time, Ghanaian women were also allowed to vote. That is during the pre-colonial era, women were allowed to participate in politics and they usually used to be opinion leaders. During the 19th century in Ghana, the British assumed dominance in the country and employed the indirect system of governance. The majority of Ghanaians began demonstrating against British rule and called for freedom. Among the great leaders who fought and called independence for

Ghanaians was Kwame Nkrumah a member of the Convention People's Party (CPP). After attaining independent, state failures begun. Coup D'états swept the Ghanaian state and an alternation between civilian and military regimes. In 1966, there was a military overthrow of the Nkrumah government. In 1972, there was the overthrow of the Busia's democratically elected government by then military Gen. Kutu Acheampong. In 1979, there was a military revolt led by J.J Rawlings against the Akuffo and Acheampong regime. In 1981, the Liman administration was overthrown by the military-led by J.J. Rawlings. After the 1981 revolution, the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992 returned Ghana to a fully democratic state with an established written constitution. Although Ghana's national government was originally built on a British parliamentary model, it follows an American parliamentary system of governance. The country operates on a multiparty democracy and arranged under an elected president, a legislature, and an independent judiciary. It is divided into 16 administrative regions, especially for the central government. Local districts are organized under the district assemblies. Some seats are also allocated to traditional rulers such as chiefs. Separation of powers is instilled in the democracy of Ghana. Additionally, as academic scholar Joseph Schumpeter (op.cit) has emphasized, free and fair election as an important component of democracy the right to vote and to be voted for, free and fair election, smooth transfer of power is strongly consolidated in the democracy of Ghana.

4.2. General Elections in Ghana

Many scholars have emphasized that free and fair election determines the democratic standard and developmental level of a country. In other words, if elections are free and fair then the tendency of sustaining democracy in a country is high. Also, what many agree is that elections aren't considered only free and fair just during election periods but three main factors account for an election to be free and fair. These are; what usually happens before elections, during elections and after elections are all factors to be considered because these three factors determine the credibility of free and fair elections. In many developed countries, reports have it that, elections have mostly been free and fair. For this reason, these countries are democratically and economically good. However, it is largely reported that sustaining democracy in many developing countries is tedious because elections aren't always conducted in a free and fair atmosphere. This accounts

for the reason why many developing countries like Africa are democratically and economically poor. Bofo-Arthur (2006) emphasized that in many African countries, elections are very difficult to determine due to several factors such as a high level of illiteracy, ethnicity, religiosity, attachment, and personalities. In the case of Ghana, since 1992 to 2016 (4th republic) elections in Ghana have been successful except for few cases. As indicated earlier, Ghana after attaining freedom from the colonies, a lot of coups occurred in the country until 1992 where the country became fully democratic.

The observation in Ghana's general elections since 1992-2016 has been peaceful and after declaring electoral results, incumbent presidents have handed over power smoothly to the victorious ones. Acknowledging the fact that elections in Ghana have been successful, in some instances, elections have been disrupted by some groups such as 'Zongo' boys, Bolga boys, and Nima boys. These groups have been reported to create violent scenes during elections around parts of Ghana despite security control around those areas. Over the years in Ghana, there have been two major dominant parties; the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) who have competed and won general elections. In 1992 the leading member of the NDC J.J Rawlings contested and won the general election against the NPP. Also, in Ghana, there have been rumors and false information surrounding an incumbent president. The hearsays and beliefs are that a sitting president doesn't lose power. Although this has been true for some presidents, this belief has failed for others. As stated earlier, in 1992 the NDCs won the election and after ruling till 1996, an election was conducted and the NDCs won again against the NPPs. The NDCs continued till 2000 where new general elections were conducted. During this time, the NPPs led by John Agyekum Kufuor won the elections and maintained power till 2008. The above proves to some extent the rumors to be true but unfortunately, after the NDCs led by late John Evans Atta Mills had won the 2008 elections and ruled for some time, changes occurred in the electoral patterns of the country. Basically, per the constitution of the country, the vice president had to take over. So, this brought in the vice president at the time, John Dramani Mahama to finish the term of the then late president. After elections were conducted again in 2012 and the NDCs headed by John Dramani Mahama won the elections against the NPPs whose leader is Nana Akuffo Addo. The NPPs after the electoral result were not satisfied and instead of creating chaos in the country, they rather took the matter to court, and eventually, it

was agreed that the NDCs won the election. In fact, during this time, a lot of Ghanaians utilized social media and to some extent followed the court proceedings on social media platforms rather than mainstream media. Additionally, prior to the election, these dominant parties campaigned for votes and usually did most of their political activities on social media through the cyberspace. Thus, political leaders largely used social media to reach their audience. At this time also, a lot of fake news stories were shared on social media platforms by some active members of both parties. Equally, the argument of the NPPs at the time was that the biometric system initiated for conducting election was not effective and that's the reason they weren't satisfied with the election results. In other words, while in other countries introduction of new technologies such as biometric systems have enhanced productive elections, yet, in Ghana, the claims were that these new technologies didn't enhance effective and positive election results.

Nonetheless, the actions of the NPPs were acknowledged both locally and internationally as a good democratic virtue and this further strengthened the democracy of the country. This equally proves that Ghana has for several years' chalked success in a free and fair election. After fulfilling four terms in power, the trend changed and the NPPs won the election in 2016. The long hold belief and hearsay about a sitting president not losing power didn't work for the 2016 elections. These were all fake news surrounding general elections in Ghana. Again, in Ghana there have been hearsays and rumors speculating during elections such as only John's can win elections. This was derived from a biblical quotation to sanctify the presidential candidate as holy and legitimate political material.

Thus, creating a biblical campaign slogans such as *John 3:16*. Although it has been true that only John's have won several elections in Ghana, this fact was contrary to 2016 general elections because the current president *His excellency*, Nana Addo won the election at the time. Most Ghanaians then concluded that the current president came to recreate hope for non-John. These are all misinformation that nearly marred the general elections in Ghana. Just like current situations in many countries, the proliferation of the internet and social media has challenged the democracy of most countries. Similarly, in Ghana, social media platforms such as Facebook have been largely weaponized to cause interruptions and disturbances during elections. This is currently weakening the democracy of the country.

It can be concluded that Ghana after agreeing to be a republican and fully democratic state by a referendum in 1992, the country has undergone peaceful and successful general elections but in recent times, the influx usage of social media platforms to spread fake news and lies have created uncondusive atmospheres in general elections. This has further affected the democracy of the country.

4.3. By-Elections in Ghana

By-election is a parliamentary election held in Ghana. And since the fourth republic, there have been several by-elections conducted in the country which include the Amenfi, Sisala North, Asawasi, and Ayawaso Wuogon by-election. However, the by-election that has drawn much attention in the country is the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election following the death of a Member of Parliament (MP) Emmanuel Kyeremanteng Agyarko. This by-election was necessary to be conducted as a result of what has been clearly stated in the 1992 constitution of Ghana. In the Article 112(5), it reveals that “Whenever a vacancy occurs in Parliament, the clerk of the Parliament shall notify the Electoral Commission in writing within seven (7) days after becoming aware that the vacancy has occurred, and a by-election shall be held within thirty (30) days after the vacancy occurred except that, where the vacancy occurred through the death of a member, the by-election shall be held within sixty (60) days after the occurrence of the vacancy.” Thus, the constitution of Ghana clearly states that there should be a by-election after sixty (60) days following a death. In fact, that was the reason the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election was necessary to be conducted upon the death of the late MP, Emmanuel K. Agyarko.

Ayawaso Wuogon is a constituency situated in Greater Accra the capital city of Ghana and the late Honorable Emmanuel K. Agyarko has occupied this seat as the Member of Parliament for this constituency since 2012. Upon the death of this MP on 21st November 2018, the by-election was held after sixty (60) days as enshrined in the 1992 constitution of Ghana. The by-election took place on the 31st of January, 2019. The by-election commenced well but after an hour into the election, some violence occurred specifically at the LA Bawaleshie Presbyterian School polling station. The emphasis is not what led to the violence, but rather, the rate at which misinformation was been shared through the media space that marred the election. It is important to know that many people during this time used social media platforms, especially, Facebook to propagate false information

and this contributed to the disruption of the by-election. Honorable Sam Dzata George of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Member of Parliament (MP) for the Ningo-Prampam, for instance on that fateful day, at the early hours after voting began posting on his Facebook page claiming that he has been assaulted severally by unidentified men. Some reports on social media, specifically on Facebook claimed that some armed men dressed in National Security uniform stormed some polling stations and attacked some polling agents consequently leading to deaths of few people. Other reports on social media platforms indicated that the armed men were army from the National Security who had information that there were weapons in the houses of few members of the constituency. So, the SWAT team went there to find out the truth and upon arrival at the location of the house, stones were thrown at them and they also decided to give warning shots. However, some faceless individuals went online and reported of 18 people had suffered gunshot wounds and injuries in the said attack. It was also reported by different accounts some said two while others maintained that eight people have lost their lives and that the injured persons have been admitted and still undergoing treatment at the University of Ghana Hospital and 37 Military Hospital.

Ironically, it appeared later that most of the information were false and a fake news during the election. The veracity of the information regarding the false information was revealed when the President of Ghana Nana Akuffo Addo set up a commission of inquiry to conduct investigation into the matter. Interestingly, most people couldn't substantiate with accurate evidence that deaths and injuries occurred. Equally, authentic news Ghana media such as JOY NEWS couldn't confirm the number of those said to have lost their lives or those said to have been injured. The implication of Fake news on the election was that a lot of people refrained from voting and this did not promote free and fair election. Following the claims on deaths and injuries propagated on social media, a lot of people were scared of their lives and decided not to vote. Mr. Samuel Ofose Ampofo the chairman for the opposition party NDC, stated categorically that, his party has withdrawn from the by-election, citing security concerns. He claimed that, security forces couldn't protect individuals during the election and this has caused him to let his members boycott the election. According to the Coalition for Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) lies spread through the media, created a frightened atmosphere for people to come out and exercise their right to vote. The coalition described it as threat to Ghana's democracy.

4.4. Implication of Fake News on the Ayawaso Wuogon By-Election

As indicated earlier, Ayawaso Wuogon is a constituency located in Greater Accra the capital city of Ghana. Following the death of the MP of this constituency, as the 1992 constitution of Ghana demands, 60 days after his death, the by-election was conducted to fill the vacant seat of the constituency. Unfortunately, during the election, social media platforms were used as tools to propagate false and fake news and this consequently marred the by-election.

The implication of fake news during the by-election is that, it did not promote free and fair election. Another serious impact of fake news on the by-election was that the Ex-President of Ghana John Dramani Mahama and the leader of the opposition party NDC took it upon himself and invited diplomat to discuss the matter. The opposition leader also erred by using same fake videos online as his evidence against the government. His action was an impediment to development of diplomatic relations. The implication of this is that, this can affect diplomatic and business relations in Ghana since the government of the day will mistrust countries diplomats who attended the said meeting of the opposition leader. So, this explain the ripple effect of fake news that it doesn't promote free and fair election and democracy but also dent countries image and soiled diplomatic relations.

Additionally, the proliferation of fake news propagated on the media during the by-election caused the government of Ghana to incur lots of money to assign some committees to investigate into the matter. The Coalition for Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) and also National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) after their investigation, condemned all the fake news report that went viral on social media on alleged attacks, shootings and deaths during the by-election. They concluded it was a threat to free and fair election and democracy. In effect, after lots of money had been incurred by the government for investigation, the implication was that there was waste of time on issues which built on falsehood. In effect, fake news through the media space was a serious problem that led to the disruption of the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election and questioned the democracy of Ghana.

4.5. Referendum in Ghana

A referendum is a political policy adopted by nations to make changes or affirm a contested decision with the potential to affect nationwide policies. The state of a referendum has always varied in terms of the degree of relevance of the issue. Thus, two categories are well delineated. The first is a petition which demands many ordinary citizens trigger a clause of the constitution to effect a change. The other is plebiscite which initiates a general-votes to settle political disputes in relation to boundaries, regional creation, and uncertain democratic rights (Norman, and Kantanka, 2009:1).

Table 2: Referendum in Ghana

Referendum	1956	1960	1964	1978	1992	2019
Contested Issue	Trans-Volta Togoland to be part of Ghana	From British Monarchy to Republican State	One-party System	System of Government	Multi-party Democracy	Regional Creation
Results (For)	58.0%	88.46%	99%	60.11%	92.59%	Varied

Source: Author's Illustration of Key Referendum in Ghana, 2020, Ghana Electoral Commission.

As already stated above, Ghana experienced several coups d'état after her attainment of independence. This created political instability in the country. To create a stable and peaceful political atmosphere in the country, a referendum was held and this finally gives rise to the 1992 constitution of Ghana. That is, the referendum brought about constitutional reforms, democracy, paved the way for a multiparty system, respect for human rights, free and fair elections, smooth transfer of power, and most importantly political stability in the country. It can be said that ever since the 1992 referendum was held, Ghana didn't undergo any referendum again not until recently in 2017 where the sitting president *His Excellency Nana Akuffo Addo* noticed that some regions were underdeveloped and so the need to create additional regions. The normal ten regions are Upper East, Upper West, Northern, Brong Ahafo, Ashanti, Western, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, and Volta regions. Out of these ten regions, the current president of Ghana saw the need to create six additional regions from Brong Ahafo, Northern, Western, and Volta regions.

The new sixteen regions with their respective capitals are as follows; Upper East (Bolgatanga), Upper West (Wa), Northern (Tamale), Central (Cape Coast), Ashanti (Kumasi), Eastern (Koforidua), Greater Accra (Accra), Western (Sekondi Takoradi), Western North (Sefwi Wiawso), Savannah (Damango), North East (Nalerigu), Bono (Sunyani), Ahafo (Goaso), Bono East (Techiman), and Oti region (Dambai). Prior to the creation of these new regions, the president of the country *His Excellency Nana Akuffo Addo* assigned a commission to inquire (that is a commission of inquiry) and observe the need to create the new regions.

In light of this, Regional Re-organization and Development was established as the new ministry, and then Honorable Dan Kwaku Botwe was appointed as the leader of this ministry to see to the total affairs of these new regions to be created. The only new region that most Ghanaians were not satisfied with and created a lot of attention was Oti out of the Volta region. Most of the people especially the youths who called themselves *Concerned Volta Youth* and who settle around this region showed strong dissatisfaction with the situation. It is argued that, during the colonial era, the then Gold Coast (Ghana) consisted of three regions which include: the Ashanti boundary, Northern protectorate, and the Gold Coast. But there was a plebiscite held in 1956 to seek the opinions of some members in Togo who were under the German rule to decide if they wished to be independent or join Ghana. The majority at the time agreed to join Ghana and after attaining independence in 1957, the Volta region becomes part of Ghana which consisted of the Ewes. Although at the time of the plebiscite, there were few propagandas, rumors, and hearsays, most people conformed to the plebiscite, and the target was achieved.

However, in recent age when the sitting president called for a referendum in this region in accordance with the constitution in article 5 which states that *if there is an arising matter to the creation of new regions, it must be done through a referendum and under the control of the electoral commission*. And despite the fact that the constitution approves the action of the president, many numbers around the region were adamant and refused to compromise. Furthermore, most people through cyberspace propagated lots of fake news and this nearly marred the serenity of the referendum process.

Conclusively, the post-independence era was marked by several Coups in Ghana which led to political instability. In view of this, a referendum was held in 1992 which finally

brought about change in the constitution and ushered Ghana into democracy. The 2017 referendum around the Volta region was recently however disrupted by some individuals who utilized the social media space to share fake information. Thus, the referendum around this region seemed possible however, social media basically opened the opportunity for various Ghanaians within the region to spread false and fake information which eventually affected the referendum and to some extent tarnished the democratic image of the country. In effect, Ghana's democracy is being affected by the way most Ghanaians are recently abusing freedom of speech through unlimited cyberspace to communicate fake information. Although many have agreed that Ghana is doing well democratically, but by the increased emergence of social media, several others have argued that, the democracy of Ghana needs to be worked on. This proves the argument of the academic scholar Mensah (2007) that, looking at Ghana's democracy, there is still room for improvement.

CONCLUSION

Chapter five presents a summary and projects into the future and prospects of cyberspace and fake news in democratic elections in Ghana, recommendations, and conclusions. The chapter recognizes the urgency of cyberspace in the current virtual world and the need to understand the context of cyberspace, scope and degree of impact is likely to have on democratic dispensation. It presents several solutions to mitigate fakenews proliferation in the social and political cyber world.

Summary

Scientific progress (technological improvement) has currently shaped the mode of activities from communication, economic to politics across the globe. This signifies how modernity characterized by technological advancement is playing important roles in various societies around the world. Thus, currently, almost all societies are increasingly making use of modern scientific tools to promote quality communication at a fast rate and to also promote a very good and transparent democratic governance. Additionally, this has meant that individuals have their freedom, justice is playing a role and there is virtually prosperity and progress in societies.

Equally important is that the use of modern technological tools has now brought to bear a new mode of elections and voting which are being carried out safely online (e-elections and e-voting) within a short time. All these activities are said to occur over a virtual space in modern societies and this space is known as cyberspace. Many scholars have argued that cyberspace has enhanced societal and democratic development (cyberdemocracy) in modern societies. According to (Barth 2011, Carayannis et al. 2012), “Today’s democracy is a sign of healthy democracy and it is the expression of the quality of life, prosperity, innovation, knowledge, and technical know-how”. Thus, comparatively and contemporary, most societies with the availability of digital technologies have improved on their mode of governance (cyber democracy) and this is a sign of great development. Acknowledging this, some societies are relatively doing well than others due to the gap in technological or digital development. In other words, developed countries with their access to advanced technologies, these countries have a better form of democracy compared to developing countries. For instance, countries like the USA are advanced in

technology and so is their democracy equally developed than other developing countries. Unfortunately, freedom of speech which is used to measure the quality of today's democracy is currently being challenged due to technological advancement in modern societies. The situation is relatively bad in developed countries compared to developing countries. Nonetheless, how information is communicated over the virtual cyberspace is said to be a recent threat to democracy in both developed and developing countries. That is, the issue of fake news is currently a deterrent factor to democratic development in almost all countries around the world. This has led many to ask about the future of democracy in the next advanced technological stage of society as science progresses and society evolves. Briefly, presently in modern society, cyberspace is playing an essential role by enhancing electoral and democratic development. Ferdinand (2003) argued that "cyberspace is serving a good purpose for a high degree of democracy because it ensures the quality of participation for all members or citizens of society". Ferdinand (2003) and many other scholars are questioning the future of cyberdemocracy. Klein (1999) argued that democracy over cyberspace in recent times is providing various channels for disseminating relevant information to many people at a fast rate thus, strengthening democratic participation. Yet, it has been argued that its implication to democracy is not to be underestimated. The implication established by scholars includes overflow of fake information, the occurrences of cybercrime resulting in loss of privacy and freedom of speech, voting apathy as a result of the dissemination of irrelevant information online, while the future implication could be the cost that will be involved in building cyber technologies that will secure individuals privacy online for democratic development.

In Ghana out of the total population, the youth are largely and actively involved in the usage of the internet. These youths have the potential to move the Ghanaian society to the next level of political and democratic development if they use the cyberspace productively. Unfortunately, recently in Ghana, this hasn't been the case. Most of the youth internet users are involved in sharing irrelevant information via cyberspace posing a threat to the democracy of Ghana.

Equally, whiles Ghana compared to other African nations are said to have advanced technologies the reason for its democratic stability, some parts of the nation like the rural areas lack technological infrastructures where individuals can access the internet. The

current situation is that the government is making a crucial effort to extend the internet to those areas to ensure democratic development. The future steps to be taken in Ghana will be the cost involved to extend internets to all parts of the nation to promote democratic development and that will be the prospects of cyberdemocracy in Ghana.

Election is regarded as one of the essential elements of democracy. The purpose of free and fair election is to promote democratic development. In Ghana, the cyberspace has shaped the recent electoral processes and it has equally helped in transparent, accurate announcement of electoral results. Yet, there have been unfortunate instances where announcement of election results has been challenging for instance in the year 2012 and this almost caused democratic instability. The current step taking by the government of Ghana is to ensure free and fair election and the future and prospect is to make effective use of the cyber technologies to promote free and fair election in order to ensure democratic development.

In nutshell, presently, Ghana is democratically doing well due to improvement in digital technologies. Ghana has moved away from utilizing traditional methods to promote democracy. The country currently uses digital technologies in governmental and political processes. Thus, Ghana in modern times make use of cyberdemocracy and due to some few setbacks (fake news which poses threat to democracy), the incumbent government is strategizing polices to ensure high quality of cyberdemocracy in the future in order to promote the nation's development. The future and prospect plan are to make Ghana the best in Africa and almost at par to developed nations.

Recommendations for Knowing and Understanding Fake News

As noted above, societies have evolved and so as the process of democratic governance also changed. Ghana as indicated above, presently utilizes cyberdemocracy due to technological advancement. Unfortunately, there have been some draw backs which not regulated, will hinder democratic and societal development. Below are some of the things when done could possibly limit cyberdemocracy problems in Ghana and could promote democratic development.

Public Education (Cyber education). Although in Ghana ICT Course is offered in schools, yet some members of the society are cyber illiterate and this poses threat to effective

democracy. It therefore essential that, Government officials, Media houses, Media Schools and ICT teachers educate the adults, adolescents and children in Ghana on the issues of cyber activities that poses threat to democratic development in Ghana. Having done this, it also recommended that, individual Ghanaians take the necessary step and responsibility upon themselves to share relevant and authentic information via cyber platforms in order to promote democratic stability and development. Individuals must also rely on authentic media sources to retrieve relevant information that will be essential in promoting democratic development.

It is very important that, the media platforms in Ghana and nationwide work on their systems to prevent manipulation, alteration and delivery of fake information. In other words, Media institutions should build fact checking systems to control fake news and to promote democracy. In fact, the issue of fake news is manifested across all nations today due to technological advancement in digital devices which consequently affect democratic development. It therefore recommended that, crucial steps are taking by most importantly Ghana's government and individual Ghanaians to curb the cyber issues that affects the democracy of Ghana today and that will affect it in the near future.

The issue of fake news has been cited to be an old phenomenon in relation to propaganda, satire and misinformation. Thus, fake news is nothing new under the sun however, fueled by improvement in digital technology. Due to advancement in digital technology, most individuals have taken it upon themselves to do the work of journalists spreading fake news on social media. Equally, most people do not check the authenticity of the information before sharing it with a mass audience. Social media platforms are online platforms that allow individuals to easily share fake news and this news can reach a large audience at a fast rate and cheap cost. Fake news poses a serious problem to democratic societies just as the case in Ghana regarding the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election. This implies that some measures need to be taken to curb the issue of fake news. Some of the measures include the following;

Personal responsibility. Individuals must take the necessary step and as a responsibility upon themselves to check the authenticity of information they read online before spreading it to a large audience. Individuals should equally check their sources of information online. In other words, individuals should rely on well-known and accurate

sources from where they receive their news online. They should ensure that they rely on sources of news that can easily be tracked and questioned if they are misinformed. For instance, news sources like CNN can be questioned and easily tracked if there is misinformation and this should be an example of a news source that individuals can rely on to receive their news. If individuals can do this, the issue of fake news can be reduced and political stability can be maintained in nations.

Equally, Public education is necessary for curbing the problem of fake news. Government officials, Media officials, and Media schools should publicly educate people including, adults, adolescents, children, and most especially students on the issue of fake news and its impacts. Also, Social Media platforms should work on their systems to avoid manipulation and alteration of the information by individuals before it comes out as news. Social media platforms should equally build fact-checking programs to control fake news. Although Facebook in December 2016 after the election came out and said it has launched its fact-checking program. This sounds good and a better step for regulating fake news. Unfortunately, Facebook's social media platform to date happens to be the platform where fake news is widely spread. Recently, on CNN, it was reported on April 3, 2019, that, Singapore is passing a bill to regulate fake news on social media, specifically, Facebook and this is bad news for Facebook. The headline of the news captured, "Singapore's "Fake News" bill is bad news for Facebook". This shows the extent to which fake news is bad for economies and as Singapore has set a good exemplary life by trying to pass a bill to curb the issue of fake news, most countries can also consider inculcating it into their bills. This will serve as a wakeup call for social media platforms to regulate their systems to avoid the spread of fake news.

In nutshell, the issue of fake news is manifested in almost all democratic countries today due to advancements in digital technology and this poses serious problems to the political stability and development of nations. It is in this regard that measures such as personal responsibility, public education and fact-checking systems should be inculcated to curb the issue for the development of nations.

Conclusion

Fake news has been an old phenomenon, however, recently fueled by improvement in digital technology opening a new space of cyber for interactions beside the physical

space. Misinformation, lies and fake news on social media especially on Facebook has been on the increase in democratic nations and the case of Ghana is no exception. Ghana is democratic country within West Africa and Africa as large. Drawing from 1992 to 2016 elections. Modernity is characterized by digital technology which has been extended to almost all nations. Today, many countries including Ghana have evolved and transformed their methods of governance to a digital one known as Cyber or e-governance. It is worth knowing that, this new cyber governance has been very effective in ensuring democratic and societal development. However, this new way is posing threat to democracy due to the way irrelevant information is shared within cyberspace (fake news). Fake news is presently a hindrance to democratic development in Ghana. In this regard, the government and the electoral commission of Ghana are putting measures in place to regulate the policies as well as to strengthen the electoral rules that will be suitable to promote free and fair elections in the future. Fake News challenged the democracy of Ghana with specific reference to the Ayawaso Wuogon by-election. In light of this, efforts have been made by the government officials and Ghana Electoral Commission to curb the issue as well as strengthen electoral rules to promote free and fair election needed for development in the democratic nation of Ghana. Despite all the measures the unregulated nature of cyberspace will still post a challenge to the security of the state. Thus, the cyber Crime Unit set up should develop its infrastructure and coordination with the Telecoms in Ghana to safeguard Ghanaian democracy which has earned its name as the most peaceful country in the sub-region of West Africa.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The researcher is undertaking this study to examine and evaluate the cyberspace and electoral politics in Ghana. It is important to stress that the information given to fulfill the purpose of this study will be treated as confidential. Please the research is strictly undertaken for an academic purpose. Below is the abstract of the general research and the interview questions.

Abstract

The electoral processes of Ghana have transformed tremendously with the emergence of cyberspace. The electoral commission of Ghana has engaged in the dissemination of information, compilation of registration data, and electoral results are all exhibited on social media today through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter platforms. There is also an easy way of campaigning by political parties with civil societies and citizens registering their protest on social media and mainstream media. Irrespective of the gains in the democratic dispensation in Ghana, recent electoral skirmishes and disagreement due to fake social media news has ignited a debate to reassess cyberspace through which information circulates, especially, social media and mainstream media to guard against misinformation and possible electoral violence as transpired in various circles of Ghanaian elections from the referendum, general elections to by-elections in Ghana's democratic development. Thus, this work discusses the issue of Ghana's electoral development, fake news, and the way forward for knowing and understanding fake news in the age of cyberspace which is vital for democratic development. The thesis utilizes content and discourse analysis in an Internet Mediated Research (IMR) with a cyberethnographic design of a qualitative approach in analyzing the impact of cyberspace in electoral politics in Ghana. The findings of the thesis reveal that cyberspace have great influence on electoral politics in Ghana both negative and positive.


Interview questions

1. Is there a role cyberspace play in Ghanaian electoral politics?
2. Do people engage in cyberattacks during election?
3. What is the cause of such hacking activities?
4. Will such negative cyber activities in the cyberspace affect our elections?
5. What will happen to our democracy in this era of cyberspace?
6. Kindly explain to me the relationship between cyberspace and democratic development in Ghana
7. What is the role of democracy in Ghana?
8. How is fake news a problem in Ghanaian democratic dispensation?
9. What are some of the cases of fake news in Ghanaian electoral politics?
10. How do fake news impact on Ghanaian elections?
11. What are the implications of cyberspace on Ghana's electoral politics?

Thank you!

Appendix B:

TRANSPARENCY. FAIRNESS. INTEGRITY



PRESS RELEASE

**ELECTORAL COMMISSION
GHANA**16th July, 2020.

FAKE CARD: EC DID NOT ISSUE IT



The attention of the Electoral Commission has been drawn to a Voters ID card making the rounds on social media.

The card that bears the photograph of an Asian male has the ID No: 2809012503. It has been photoshopped to superimpose the image of the Asian male onto the face of card.

The Commission did not issue the card to the Asian male. The card was originally issued to Nana Kweku Okai Brako.

All of the photographs on the EC Voters ID cards have a blue background. In the photoshopped ID card, the background of the photograph with the Asian male is cream. We call on the public to disregard it.

We are working with the Police to investigate how the card belonging to Nana Kweku Okai Brako was photoshopped and circulated.



E199/28th Avenue Ridge, P.O Box M214, Accra, Ghana
info@ec.gov.gh +233-303968750 www.ec.gov.gh🐦📷 @ECGhanaOfficial



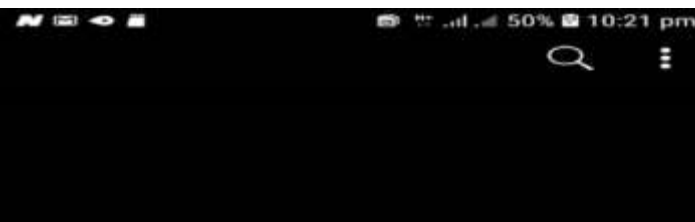
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👍👎 59 81 comments

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share



Sirh BrYte
3 MINUTES AGO

NEGATIVE:
MANIPULATION AND
FALSIFICATION OF ELECTORAL
MATERIALS TO CAUSE CONFUSION



Appendix C:



**ELECTORAL COMMISSION
GHANA**

TRANSPARENCY. FAIRNESS. INTEGRITY

PRESS RELEASE

5th August, 2020

KETU SOUTH VOTER REGISTRATION ON COURSE

The attention of the Electoral Commission (EC) has been drawn to a video recording by an aspiring Parliamentary Candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the Ketu South Constituency of the Volta Region.

In the said video, the MP Aspirant, Ms Dzifa Gomashie makes the claim that the Voter Registration Exercise in Viepe has been discontinued to make way for registration of the Ghana Card.

Madam Dzifa Gomashie further insinuates that it is a grand agenda to reduce votes in Ketu South. The Commission finds the statement by the Aspiring Member of Parliament very unfortunate. Not only is her statement untrue but it also has the tendency of creating unnecessary tensions and disaffection for the Commission and its staff.

For the record, the Voter Registration Exercise in Viepe is taking place at the R/C Primary School whereas the National Identification Authority (NIA) Map-Up Exercise is taking place at the Roman Catholic Church, which is more than one hundred metres away.

The Commission urges the good people of Ghana to disregard the contents of the said video as the allegations are baseless and unfounded.


As a Commission, our cardinal goal is to ensure that all eligible voters are captured on the Electoral Roll. We have put in place systems to ensure this happens.

The Commission, therefore, takes this opportunity to encourage all eligible voters who have not yet registered to take advantage of the last phase of the Registration Exercise, which ends on Thursday, August 6, 2020.

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Appendix D:

TRANSPARENCY. FAIRNESS. INTEGRITY

PRESS RELEASE

ELECTORAL COMMISSION
GHANA14th August, 2020

**FIRE OUTBREAK AT REGIONAL OFFICE IN SARPEIMAN, DATA
CENTRE SAFE AND SECURE**

The Electoral Commission (EC) has confirmed that there was a fire outbreak at its Regional Office in Sarpeiman near Accra in the early hours of today, Friday, 14th August, 2020.

The fire struck the storage facility of the Sarpeiman Office and destroyed a number of used items including old forms, ballot boxes and referendum stationery.

The fire did not affect the Main Administration Block. Personnel of the Ghana National Fire Service were able to bring the fire under control.

The Commission entreats the General Public to ignore the falsehood being peddled on social media to the effect that its Data Centre was destroyed by the fire. The Electoral Commission assures the General Public that its Data Centre is safe and secure.

The Electoral Commission is working closely with the Fire Service and the Security Agencies to unearth the cause of the fire.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mariam MOHAMMED is a Ghanaian and a young graduate of University of Ghana where she pursued Higher BA Sociology and Geography from 2012-2016. Her interest in academics propelled her to advance her study in Sakarya University at Sakarya, Turkey where she pursued MA in Sociology. Mariam is interested in Political Sociology, Cyberspace, Democracy, Social Theories and Qualitative Research. The author's next project will focus on Cyberspace and domestic law.