COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON GHANA'S 2020 ELECTORAL POLITICS

Several factors influence contemporary elections in African countries. Besides complex historico-contextual factors, issues pertaining to ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, among others, significantly shape African elections and their aftermaths. The 2020 elections in Ghana demonstrate these factors in complex ways. Besides the possible impacts from a global health crisis (COVID-19), this is the first time a former president is contesting an election. Gender has also become an important variable because besides the candidacy of two women, for the first time, a major political party has selected a female running mate. Finally, the two major parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), have both won three and four elections respectively since 1992 when Ghana returned to constitutionalism after a long period of military rule. All of the above make Ghana's 2020 elections an interesting 'site' for political discourse analysis in a context under-explored in global discourse and communication studies. Compared to the Global North, communication studies in the Global South, especially on African politics, is still scant. Although there has been some insightful work in the area of culturally specific discourse (cf. Orwenjo, 2009; Bhatia, 2015; Esposito, 2017; Nartey, 2019; Nartey & Bhatia, 2020; Ahmed, 2020), there is need for further work on the communicative dimensions of electoral politics and processes and this is especially true for studies on Ghana. While there is a rich scholarship on Ghanaian electoral politics and culture (e.g., Nugent, 2001; Frempong, 2012; Bob-Milliar & Paller, 2018; Henaku, 2018; Agbozo, Edward & Inusah, 2019), not many explore factors relating to language, rhetoric and communication, an important tool for the doing of politics (Chilton, 2004). This interdisciplinary volume aims to bridge these gaps by highlighting the relevance of language, rhetoric and semiosis to electoral politics in Sub-Saharan Africa in the period of a global pandemic, using Ghana as a focus of analysis. Besides accounting for local influences, the collection will demonstrate how election discourse can take on unique properties of specific transnational contexts within which it is conceived and performed.

We call for submissions related, but not limited, to the following themes:

- Election technologies, GhanaPostGPS/digital address, cyberspace and hacking
- Digital communication including social media campaign, use of multimodal communication tools
- Securitisation, vigilantism and voter disenfranchisement
- Media coverage, propaganda and disinformation
- Institutional (e.g., electoral commission, media, CSOs)/party discourses
- Coronavirus influence on election discourse and processes
- The role of indigenous languages, sign languages, and cultural symbolisms
- Gender and other intersectional influences
- Disability, access and electoral process
- Celebritisation, strategic negotiation and party endorsements
- Ideological and historical influences in electoral discourse
- Political party financing and the rhetorics of corruption
- Branding, electoral promises and party track record
- Influence of religion and African traditional institutions (e.g., chieftaincy & indigenous religions, Islam, Christianity)
- International and geopolitical influences
- Discourses of ethnicity, regionalism, and residual rhetorics of autonomous nations
- Embodiment, multimodality and (playful) performances in public discourses
- Theoretical reflections on researching Ghanaian and Global Southern election

TIMELINE

- Abstract Submission: February 28, 2021
- Submit a 200-word abstract to 2020ghanaelections@gmail.com
- Paper Submission (5000-6000 words): August 30, 2021
- Tentative Publishing Date: December 2022

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