



SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

**STRATEGIC EXPLOITATION OF CRISES IN GHANAIAN POLITICS: ANALYZING
THE 2024 ELECTION AND THE ROLE OF GALAMSEY AND DDEP CRISES**

BY

OBUOR BRIGHT HAVILAH


MPPCM23001

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH, INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND
COMMUNICATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT**

DECEMBER 2025


STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

OBUOR BRIGHT HAVILAH	MPPCM23001		DECEMBER 31, 2025
Student	Index Number	Signature	Date

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation/Thesis laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication UniMAC-IJ.

PROF. KOBBY MENSAH		DECEMBER 31, 2025
Supervisor	Signature	Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all who seek to make this world a better place for all and to generations unborn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My primary gratitude goes to the one who is the inception of the law, time, space, energy and matter, the foundation upon which my entire existence rests. My journey through this academic exploration was gracefully guided by the exceptional supervision of Prof. Kobby Mensah of the University of Ghana Business School, and Dr. Lawrence Agyapong (UniMAC-IJ). Their mentorship not only navigated the intricacies of my work but also provided a tutorial guidance, with inspiration, patience, and unwavering dedication pivotal to its successful completion. To them I am eternally grateful.

Acknowledgment is also due to my research assistants Moses Abanga and Maxwell Kwadwo Nyagamago, alongside senior colleagues Abugre Abayetah Alezebure and Eric Efah Appiah, for their invaluable guidance throughout the study.

Heartfelt thanks reach Members of Parliament, including MP for Tamale South and Minister of Education, Hon. Haruna Iddrisu, MP for Afadzato South, Hon. Frank Afriyie, Hon. Alexander Kwamina Afenyo-Markin, MP for Efutu Constituency; Their financial support has been instrumental, and I am profoundly grateful. Finally, my deepest thanks extend to my father, Mr. Emmanuel Klu, for his unwavering support and encouragement, and to my beloved siblings, Rita and Wise, for their continuous love and care.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DDEP	Debt Exchange Program
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NDC	National Democratic Congress
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ESLA	Energy Sector Levy Act bonds
GHS	Ghanaian Cedi (currency)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
VAT	Value Added Tax
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (software)
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
ESLA	Energy Sector Levy Act bonds
TUC	Trade Union Congress
CDD	Center for Democratic Development
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
UTAG-	University Teachers Association of Ghana
MoF	Ministry of Finance
BOG	Bank of Ghana
CE	Crisis Exploitation
CEF	Crisis Exploitation Framework

ABSTRACT

This study examines how Ghanaian political actors strategically exploit major crises – the galamsey (illegal mining) crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – during the lead-up to the 2024 general elections. It investigates how both the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) craft narratives, employ framing strategies, and manipulate public discourse to influence voter perceptions, justify policies, and garner electoral support. Using a qualitative multiple case study approach, the research analysed speeches, media statements, social media content, and policy documents from key political figures, civil society, and advocacy groups. Theoretical frameworks such as Framing Theory, the Blame Game Framework, and the Crisis-Opportunity Framework are employed to dissect how actors construct, contest, and exploit crisis narratives. These frameworks informed the development of a novel Crisis Exploitation Framework (CEF), which guides the analysis and triangulation of data by systematically examining issue framing, moral and political blame attribution, and strategic opportunities within crisis contexts. The findings reveal that both parties leverage crises to reinforce legitimacy, discredit opponents, and mobilize support, often blurring lines between genuine concern and political opportunism. The study underscores ethical risks, societal implications, and potential long-term impacts of crisis exploitation on Ghana’s democratic process, governance legitimacy, and social cohesion. It contributes to the broader understanding of political communication strategies in times of societal upheaval, emphasizing the importance of responsible crisis management and narrative integrity in safeguarding democratic stability.

Keywords: Crisis management, Political strategy, Narrative framing, Governance, Galamsey, Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP)

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.3. General Objectives.....	9
1.4. Specific Objectives	10
1.5. Research Questions	10
1.5. Significance of the Study	11
1.6. Scope of the Study	11
1.7. Limitations of the Study.....	12
1.8. Organization of the Study	13
CHAPTER 2	15
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW	15
2.1. Introduction.....	15
i. Crisis Exploitation: An Analysis of Strategic Utilization Across Various Contexts	15
ii. Overview of Galamsey as a Political Crisis	18
iii. Political Dynamics and the Galamsey Crisis in Ghana: An Analysis of NPP and NDC Strategies.....	24
iv. Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme: A Critical Overview	27
v. Confronting the Debt Exchange Program in Ghana: Public Responses and Aftereffects. 29	
vi. Political Responses to Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Program: An Analysis of Party Tactics and Discourse.....	30
2.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	33
i) Framing.....	33
ii) Blame Game Framework.....	37
iii) Crisis-Opportunity Framework	40
2.3. Theory Relevance to the Study	42
2.3. Review of Related Studies	47
2.4. Conclusion	49
CHAPTER THREE.....	51
Methodology	51

3.0 Introduction.....	51
3.1. Research Approach	51
3.2. Research Design.....	55
3.3 Research setting	59
3.4. Study Population	60
3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques	61
3.6. Data Collection Instruments	61
3.7. Data Collection Process	61
3.8. Data Processing and Analysis	64
3.9. Triangulation as a Data Analysis Technique in the Study of Crisis Exploitation in Ghana’s Politics.....	70
3.10. Data Interpretation	73
Thematic Framework for Crisis Exploitation in Ghana: Galamsey and DDEP	75
3.11. Ethical Considerations	79
3.12. Limitations	80
3.13. Chapter Summary	81
CHAPTER FOUR.....	83
Findings and Discussion	83
4.0 Introduction.....	83
4.1. Research Objective	84
4.2 Summary of Data Collection Approach	84
4.3 Analysis of Key Findings.....	85
4.3.2. Analysis of NPP Comments on Domestic Debt Exchange Program	136
4.3.3. Analysis of NDC Statements on Galamsey	161
4.3.4. Analysis of NPP Statements on Galamsey.....	191
4.4.0. TRAINAGULATION OF NPP AND NDC EXPLOITATION OF GALAMSEY AND DDEP CRISIS.....	217
4.5.0. Comparative Analysis	231
4.6.0 Crisis Exploitation in the 2024 Campaigns using Crisis Exploitation framework: NDC vs. NPP.....	252
4.7.0 Further Analysis	258

4.7.1 Research Questions 1: How have the Ghanaian government and opposition parties utilized the Galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as political tools to shape their electoral narratives in the lead-up to the 2024 elections?.....	259
4.7.2. Research Question 2: What strategies and narratives have political actors employed to manipulate the galamsey crisis and DDEP, and in what ways do these narratives influence public sentiment and electoral behavior?.....	262
4.7.3. Research Question 3: In what ways do the current crises and their political exploitation compare to past events in Ghana’s history, and what patterns or differences can be identified in the framing and utilization of crises?.....	264
4.7.4. Research Question 4: How can the interplay between crisis management, narrative framing, and voter behavior in Ghana’s political landscape inform and contribute to existing theoretical frameworks on crisis exploitation and political strategy?.....	267
4.8. Chapter Summary	270
CHAPTER FIVE	272
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	272
5.1 Introduction.....	272
5.2 Summary	272
5.3. Findings from the Study.....	274
5.4. Incumbent Narratives as Double-Edged Swords: How Defensive Framing and Externalization of Crises Can Undermine Government Legitimacy	276
5.5. Limitations of the Study.....	277
5.6. Conclusion	279
5.7. Recommendation for Further Studies	280
REFERENCE.....	282

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 2.0 theoretical relevance of the Framing Theory, Blame Game Framework and Crisis opportunity Framework to Crisis Exploitation.</i>	44
<i>4.3.1. Analysis NDC Comments on Domestic Debt Exchange Program</i>	86
<i>i. Analysis of the full speech by His Excellency John Dramani Mahama on "Building the Ghana We Want."</i>	86
<i>ii. Analysis of the full speech by Dr Cassiel Ato Forson on the Ghana Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and the broader economic situation as of October 27, 2022.</i>	93
<i>iii. Analysis of Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson's Post-DDEP Announcement Press Conference Speech (Minority in Parliament, December 5, 2022)</i>	100
<i>iv. Analysis of Minority Leader Haruna Iddrisu's speech on the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) (December 5, 2022)</i>	107
<i>v. Analysis of NDC's National Communications Officer, Sammy Gyamfi's speech on the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP)</i>	113
<i>vi. Analysis of NDC's Running Mate, Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang's speech on the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) (December 5, 2024)</i>	120
<i>viii. Message by the NDC's National Chairman, Johnson Asiedu Nketia</i>	131
<i>i. Analysis of President Akufo-Addo's Speech (30 Oct 2022)</i>	136
<i>ii. Analysis of Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta's DDEP Announcements</i>	141
<i>iii. Analysis on NPP's Communication Director Richard Ahiagbah's Comments on DDEP</i>	146
<i>iv. Analysis on Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia's Aide Dennis Miracles Aboagye's Comments on DDEP</i>	151
<i>v. Detailed Analysis of NPP Manifesto on DDEP</i>	156
<i>i. Analysis of Flagbearer of the Opposition NDC's statements on Galamsey (Mahama Fellowships with the Clergy Streamed live on 1 Oct 2024)</i>	161
<i>ii. Analysis of Sammy Gyamfi's Statement on Galamsey at a Press Conference on 25 Apr 2023</i>	167
<i>iii. Analysis of Sammy Gyamfi's on Press Conference on Galamsey</i>	173
<i>iv. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Chairman of the Government Assurance Committee at the Government Assurance Committee of Parliament held a public hearing on October 7, 2024, focusing on the galamsey (illegal mining)</i>	179
<i>v. Observation on Crisis Exploitation in the NDC 2024 Manifesto on Galamsey</i>	185
<i>i. Vice President Dr. Bawumia On Galamsey Fight, Sep 20, 2024</i>	191
<i>ii. Dr. Bawumia's remarks from the August 9, 2024, NPP Manifesto launch.</i>	196
<i>iii. Analysis on Miracles Aboagye's Remarks on Galamsey</i>	201
<i>iv. Analysis of Richard Ahiagbah on Galamsey</i>	206
<i>v. Analysis of NPP Manifesto on Galamsey</i>	211
<i>A (i). Triangulation of NDC's Exploitation of Galamsey Crisis vs. DDEP Crisis</i>	217
<i>(ii) Summary of Key Differences in NDC's DDEP and Galamsey Exploitation</i>	221
<i>(iii) Similarities in NDC's Crisis Exploitation of Galamsey and DDEP Exploitation</i>	223

<i>B (i) Triangulation of NPP's Galamsey Crisis Exploitation vs. DDEP Crisis Exploitation.....</i>	<i>226</i>
<i>(ii) Summary of Key Differences Between NPP's Galamsey Crisis Exploitation vs. DDEP Crisis Exploitation.....</i>	<i>228</i>
<i>(iii) Similarities in NPP's Exploitation of Galamsey and DDEP Crises</i>	<i>229</i>
<i>i. Table analyzing the differences between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the DDEP crisis</i>	<i>231</i>
<i>i. Table analyzing the similarities between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the DDEP crisis</i>	<i>239</i>
<i>iii. Table analyzing the differences between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the Galamsey crisis.....</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>iv. Table analyzing the similarities between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the Galamsey Crisis.....</i>	<i>248</i>
<i>i. Campaigns using Crisis Exploitation framework: NDC vs. NPP</i>	<i>252</i>
<i>ii. Similarities in how both NPP and NDC exploited crises in the 2024 campaigns, using Crisis Exploitation framework</i>	<i>255</i>

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Diagram 1.0 Triangulating Strategic Crisis Narratives: A Theoretical Framework for Ghanaian Political Exploitation</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Figure 2.0 summary of multi-phased systematic data collection for Crisis Exploitation.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Figure 3.0 Crisis Exploitation Framework</i>	<i>79</i>

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study by outlining its background, objectives, scope, and key considerations. It begins by examining the pervasive influence of crises, disasters, and political scandals on political landscapes, highlighting how such events offer opportunities for strategic manipulation and narrative framing by political actors. The discussion emphasizes the mechanisms through which crises are exploited for political gain, particularly during election periods, with a focus on the Ghanaian context. The chapter further delineates the specific crises – namely, the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – that serve as focal points for this research, illustrating their potential to be leveraged for electoral advantage. The study's aims, key research questions, and its significance for understanding the interplay between crisis management, political strategy, and voter behavior. The scope of the research, methodology, and limitations are also briefly outlined to contextualize the forthcoming detailed analysis. Additionally, the Chapter discusses the organization and structure of the study. Overall, this chapter sets the foundation for exploring how political actors in Ghana strategically navigate crises to influence electoral outcomes and shape governance discourse.

1.1 Background of the study

Crises, disasters, and political scandals often leave a significant and lasting impact on the political landscapes in which they unfold, as highlighted by researchers such as Birkland (1997, 2006), Baumgartner and Jones (1993, 2002), Lomborg (2004), and Posner (2004). These events create a pervasive atmosphere of threat and uncertainty that can deeply alter people's perceptions and interpretations of the world around them. When a major emergency arises, or when the terminology associated with distressing events – terms like 'crisis, 'dislocation,' 'scandal,' or 'fiasco'

– becomes prevalent in public discourse, it signals a profound disruption of previously established social, political, or administrative narratives. This notion of 'crises,' as discussed by Wagner-Pacifici (1986, 1994) and Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis (2000), suggests that the existing frameworks through which individuals understand governance and authority are being unsettled. In the aftermath of a crisis, societal expectations shift dramatically; many individuals begin to anticipate and even demand structural changes in response to the erosion of legitimacy surrounding existing power dynamics. As noted by Klein (2007), the decline in perceived authority and stability associated with crises often catalyzes calls for transformation and reform as citizens seek to redefine and reshape the frameworks of power that govern their lives.

Disruptions to the established routines and expectations of society create significant political opportunities for various actors, both within and outside the government. According to Boin, McConnell, and 't Hart (2009), these disruptions enable stakeholders to redefine critical issues, propose innovative policies, and recommend organizational reforms. Such contexts allow these actors to enhance their popularity and mount challenges against their political opponents. Echoing this sentiment, scholars such as Keeler (1993), Birkland (2006), and Klein (2007) argue that crises serve as catalysts for political opportunity windows, granting advocacy groups the chance to question and challenge established policies. They also enable newly elected officials and other potential agents of change to advocate for alternative approaches.

In the midst of crises, a dynamic contest typically emerges, characterized by competing narratives – often referred to as frames and counter-frames – regarding the nature and severity of the situation, its underlying causes, the accountability for its onset or escalation, and the implications for the future. Various contestants (Political Parties) engage in strategic manipulation of these narratives, striving to have their perspective accepted as the dominant interpretation of events. This struggle

is evident in the works of scholars like 't Hart (1993), Tarrow (1994), Brandström and Kuipers (2003), De Vries (2004), and Stone (2001). In essence, the political landscape during a crisis becomes a battleground where different narratives conflict, each vying for legitimacy and influence over public perception and policy direction.

Crisis Exploitation as “the purposeful utilisation of crisis-type rhetoric to significantly alter levels of political support for incumbent public office-holders and existing public policies and their alternatives” ('t Hart & Tindall, 2009). Crises Exploitation (CE) is thus the strategic manipulation or utilization of a crisis situation for personal, political, or economic gain. This exploitation can manifest in numerous forms, including the erosion of civil liberties during states of emergency, the reallocation of public funds toward privatization, or even the propagation of disinformation. Crises create a sense of urgency, often leading to the suspension of normal decision-making processes and moral considerations. Consequently, the absence of scrutiny provides an opportunity for actors to push through initiatives that may not have been possible in more stable times. In their 2009 study, 't Hart and Tindall explore the dynamics of crisis exploitation, particularly how crises can lead to significant political outcomes. They identify two critical pathways through which crises can be harnessed by political actors, both within and outside government. Firstly, crises serve as potent political weapons. When a crisis occurs, it often attracts intense media scrutiny, amplifying its visibility and pressuring government officials to respond effectively and compassionately. This response, however, comes with potential pitfalls, as governments may face scrutiny over their prior inaction or inability to prevent the crisis. Such questioning can prompt political actors to craft persuasive narratives that explain the situation, their previous roles, and the necessary responses moving forward. Those who succeed in framing their narratives will gain public prestige and support, while those who falter risk becoming scapegoats. For example, the incumbent NPP

government attributes Ghana's economic crises to the Russia-Ukraine war and COVID-19 (SONA, 2023), a claim that the opposition and various civil society organizations strongly contest, arguing that the severity of the impact stems largely from poor governmental economic decisions, including excessive borrowing and an overreliance on imported goods. Secondly, crises provide an opportunity to challenge established policies and beliefs. Severe crises, particularly those perceived to stem from preventable issues within current policies, create leverage for critics and reform advocates to push for significant changes. Advocates for radical reforms may find themselves better positioned to advance their agendas, particularly newly elected officials who can distance themselves from existing issues while highlighting the need for policy changes, they support. In the context of an election year, the implications of these insights become particularly relevant. Political actors may strategically exploit a crisis by emphasizing their preparedness, effective responses, and the need for reform as they campaign for office. This scenario is conducive to framing contests, where candidates strive to define the crisis in ways that bolster their narratives and discredit their opponents. Thus, crises not only create a backdrop for electoral politics but also reshape the political landscape, offering opportunities for newly elected officials to advocate for change, while providing a platform for challengers to critique the status quo.

In an election year, effectively leveraging the narrative surrounding a crisis proves decisive, allowing candidates to galvanize support and establish legitimacy amid uncertainty and upheaval. In Ghana, political parties historically exploit major crises, such as 'Dumsor' – the prolonged power outages during former President Mahama's tenure – for strategic political gain, particularly in election years. The crisis, which persisted for several years, became a focal point of public discontent and was widely perceived as a failure of the incumbent government, thereby influencing electoral outcomes. Joyce Bawah Mogtari, spokesperson for Mahama's campaign, publicly

acknowledged the significant negative impact of ‘Dumsor’ on the NDC’s electoral performance in the 2016 general elections. She recognized that the energy crisis constituted a major setback for the party, contributing to its electoral defeat, emphasizing how such crises can be strategically employed as political instruments to mobilize support or allocate responsibility. Politicians often capitalize on such crises by promising swift resolutions or by contrasting their performance with opponents, as seen when Mahama claimed to have solved the ‘Dumsor’ problem before the 2016 elections, despite ongoing public dissatisfaction. The strategic use of crises like ‘Dumsor’ underscores a pattern where political parties in Ghana utilize major national emergencies to mobilize voter sentiments, sway public opinion, and legitimize their political narratives, especially during election periods. This exploitation of crises not only influences electoral dynamics but also underscores the politicization of national emergencies as a means to secure political advantage.

Brändström (2016) also highlights the crucial interplay of political, social, and psychological factors in crisis situations, emphasizing that identifying a policy failure is inherently a political act rather than an objective assessment of reality. This phenomenon is especially salient in an election year, where political actors leverage crises to shape perceptions and narratives that support their agendas (Edelman, 1988; Bovens & ‘t Hart, 1996; Boin et al., 2009). Accordingly, framing plays a significant role in this context, as it enables politicians to construct and communicate narratives that influence public understanding of the events at hand (Edelman, 1977; Schön & Rein, 1994). In election years, candidates may (as of norm) strategically employ framing techniques to manipulate voters' perceptions and advocate for specific solutions, effectively using crises to their advantage (Goffman, 1974; Gephart, 1993; Hart, 1993). Goffman's (1974) distinction between the 'primary framework' – the actual event – and the crafted "lenses" through which these events are interpreted illustrates how candidates can shape the narrative around crises to highlight their

competency or propose new policies. By framing crises in a manner that aligns with their electoral goals, candidates position themselves as the solution to the problems highlighted by these events, thereby gaining public support. In this way, the strategic manipulation of narratives during crises becomes a powerful tool for political exploitation in election years, enabling politicians to consolidate their power and sway voter sentiment by presenting themselves as effective leaders capable of managing crises. Studies have also found that in crisis situations, various actors must engage with different audiences – including news outlets, peer organizations, and political opponents – to advocate for their specific interpretation of the crisis, or "crisis frame." Incumbent officials typically seek to justify their actions and decisions in response to the crisis, aiming to reassure the public and maintain their legitimacy. Conversely, opposition figures are inclined to highlight the failures or shortcomings of the incumbents, aiming to shift public perception and gain political capital from the crisis situation (Kuipers & 't Hart, 2014). This dynamic interaction, termed "accountability management," emphasizes the ongoing contest for narrative control during crises. Political exploitation occurs when actors leverage such narratives to mobilize support or undermine opponents, using crises as opportunities to enhance their own image or diminish that of their rivals. In this context, the framing of a crisis by competing actors can profoundly influence public opinion, shaping electoral outcomes and political dynamics as actors seek to assert their narratives and achieve strategic objectives.

Crisis exploitation, though it remains an underexplored area in academic literature, becomes particularly imperative in the context of the 2024 election season in Ghana, amplified by notable crises such as the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and the rampant illegal mining known popularly as Galamsey. These crises are not just societal disruptions but serve as fertile grounds for political maneuvering, providing a vivid case study of how political actors might

strategically exploit situations of urgency and discontent. In times of crisis, as outlined by Boin, McConnell, and 't Hart (2009), political opportunities arise not only for the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) but also for the major opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), to redefine narratives, challenge existing policies, and propose alternative solutions. The selection of DDEP and Galamsey for study is particularly salient, given their direct impact on the socio-economic fabric of Ghana. The DDEP represents significant national economic turmoil, placing financial burdens on citizens and provoking widespread discontent regarding governance and fiscal responsibility. Simultaneously, the Galamsey crisis underscores an existential threat, highlighting entrenched issues of corruption, environmental degradation, and the struggle for resource management; these challenges resonate deeply with the electorate's aspirations and concerns regarding sustainable development. In the politically charged atmosphere of an election year, understanding how such crises shape political narratives becomes essential, opening avenues for academic inquiry that address gaps in existing political research.

The galamsey crisis, characterized by illegal and often environmentally harmful mining practices, has stirred considerable public outrage and anxiety over issues of sustainability, legality, and the livelihoods of local communities. It poses a significant dilemma for political actors, as they must navigate the deep-rooted interests of various stakeholders, including those engaged in these mining activities, while simultaneously addressing the public's demand for accountability and environmental preservation. Politicians are faced with the challenge of balancing tough rhetoric condemning galamsey practices with the fear of losing support from constituents who rely on illegal mining for their livelihoods. Similarly, the DDEP has emerged as a contentious issue amidst a backdrop of economic instability. This program aimed at restructuring the country's debt has led to widespread discontent among citizens, particularly those who felt the impacts of the

government's economic policies acutely. As with the galamsey crisis, political leaders must grapple with the inherent risks of addressing the economic fallout from the DDEP. Exploiting public discontent can provoke backlash, as citizens may interpret such maneuvers as opportunistic attempts to divert attention from existing governance failures.

Given these complexities, this research aims to analyze how both the government and opposition parties frame the galamsey crisis and the DDEP as part of their electoral narratives in the lead-up to the 2024 elections. By scrutinizing the strategies employed by various political actors, we can uncover the extent to which these crises were exploited to shape public perceptions, justify policy choices, and mobilize voter support. This examination will also delve into the broader implications for governance and democratic sustainability in Ghana. By exploring the tactics of crisis exploitation, we can gain insights into the potential costs and risks associated with leveraging crises for political gain. Furthermore, this study addresses the dilemmas inherent in the political exploitation of crises, including the potential erosion of trust in governmental authority and the fragility of public support when crises are politicized. Research has shown that crisis management becomes highly politicized when key actors fail to assume responsibility and adequately respond to public concerns (Brändström, 2016). Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute a nuanced understanding of the intersection between crisis management, political strategy, and voter behavior, with an emphasis on the challenges and ethical considerations facing political entities in times of crisis. Through this lens, this study clarifies how the Galamsey crisis and the DDEP not only influence the electoral landscape but also present significant dilemmas for political actors seeking to exploit them. The importance of studying crisis exploitation during the 2024 election in Ghana cannot be overstated. These crises create a battleground for narrative control, where the framing of the situation can significantly influence public perception and ultimately determine

electoral outcomes. Political actors often engage in strategic narrative manipulation to present themselves as the solution to the crises at hand. Both the NPP and the NDC have vested interests in shaping public perceptions of these crises, thereby creating powerful opportunities to garner political support or undermine their opponents. As crystallized in the works of scholars such as 't Hart and Tindall (2009), crises not only bring issues to the forefront of public discourse but also create openings for critics to challenge established policies, push for reform, and capitalize on dissatisfaction with the status quo. Therefore, exploring the dynamic interplay of these crises in the political sphere will not only contribute to a richer understanding of crisis exploitation but will also illuminate how electoral strategies adjust in response to societal upheaval. By providing clarity on the mechanisms through which political narratives are constructed and contested during crises, this study offers invaluable insights into the larger discourse surrounding governance, public accountability, and electoral politics in Ghana. This exploration aligns with broader theoretical frameworks that emphasize the significance of contextual and situational factors in shaping political landscapes, reinforcing the relevance of crisis exploitation as a critical area of investigation in contemporary political studies.

1.3. General Objectives

This study aims to analyze the strategic exploitation of the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) by the two dominant political parties in Ghana in the lead-up to the 2024 elections, focusing on how the ruling and opposition parties framed these crises within their electoral narratives, the implications for public perception, policy justification, and voter mobilization, as well as uncovering the extent of exploitation for political gain alongside the associated risks, ethical dilemmas, and broader impacts on governance and democratic sustainability in Ghana.

1.4. Specific Objectives

- I.** To investigate how the Ghanaian government and opposition parties used the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as political tools to frame their electoral narratives in the lead-up to the 2024 elections.
- II.** To examine the strategic manipulation of crises by political actors, focusing on the specific narratives constructed around the galamsey crisis and DDEP, and how these narratives influence public sentiment and electoral behavior.
- III.** To place the findings within a wider historical and sociopolitical context, drawing parallels and distinctions between the current crises and past events to elucidate patterns of political exploitation and narrative framing.
- IV.** To enrich the academic discourse on crisis management and political strategy by providing a nuanced understanding of the interplay between crises, narrative framing, and voter behavior within the context of Ghana's political landscape.

1.5. Research Questions

- i.** How have the Ghanaian government and opposition parties utilized the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as political tools to shape their electoral narratives in the lead-up to the 2024 elections?
- ii.** What strategies and narratives have political actors employed to manipulate the galamsey crisis and DDEP, and in what ways do these narratives influence public sentiment and electoral behavior?
- iii.** In what ways do the current crises and their political exploitation compare to past events in Ghana's history, and what patterns or differences can be identified in the framing and utilization of crises?

- iv. How can the interplay between crisis management, narrative framing, and voter behavior in Ghana's political landscape inform and contribute to existing theoretical frameworks on crisis exploitation and political strategy?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to deepen understanding of how political actors exploit crises to shape electoral outcomes, particularly within the Ghanaian context of the 2024 elections. By analyzing the strategic framing and manipulation of crises such as the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), this research will illuminate the tactics employed by both ruling and opposition parties to influence public perceptions, mobilize support, and challenge opponents. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for assessing the impact of crisis exploitation on democratic processes, governance legitimacy, and policy legitimacy in Ghana. Furthermore, the study offers valuable insights into the ethical dilemmas and risks associated with political manipulation during times of societal distress, highlighting how such practices may erode public trust and undermine accountable governance. Additionally, by contextualizing current crises within Ghana's historical and sociopolitical trajectory, the research will contribute to theoretical frameworks on crisis management, narrative framing, and political strategy, enriching academic discourse on political behavior during emergencies. Ultimately, the findings will provide policymakers, scholars, and civil society with a nuanced understanding of the interplay between crises and electoral politics, fostering more informed debates on safeguarding democratic integrity amid political exploitation of societal upheavals.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the strategic exploitation of the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) by political actors in Ghana during the lead-up to the 2024 general elections. It examines how both the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National

Democratic Congress (NDC) utilized these crises to craft their electoral narratives, influence public perceptions, and mobilize voter support. The research covers the period from the onset of these crises in the recent past through the election year, analyzing political communication and public discourse related to these issues. The scope extends to assessing how political actors constructed and manipulated narratives around these crises, the tactics employed to frame them as either failures or opportunities, and the resulting impact on public trust, legitimacy, and electoral behavior. Additionally, the study situates these crises within Ghana's broader historical and sociopolitical contexts, enabling comparisons with past instances of crisis exploitation to identify recurring patterns or unique features. It will employ a purposive sampling technique to sample the messages on the cases under review from two leading figures each from the two leading political parties in Ghana (the NDC and the NPP). It also seeks to contribute to theoretical understandings of crisis management, political strategy, and voter psychology within Ghana's democratic landscape.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

Despite its comprehensive scope, this study faces several limitations that may affect the generalizability and depth of its findings. The focus on elite discourse and prominent political actors may marginalize the voices of marginalized communities or ordinary citizens, whose perceptions are equally vital to understanding the full scope of crisis exploitation. The study's temporal focus on the period leading up to the 2024 elections further limits insights into long-term trends or post-election developments. Data collection methods, primarily media footages, and campaign materials, depend heavily on the availability and accessibility of sources, which may introduce interpretive biases. Moreover, Ghana's rapidly evolving political landscape means that unforeseen events or shifts during the research period could impact the relevance of the findings. Consequently, while the study aims to shed light on the strategic exploitation of crises in Ghanaian

politics, these limitations should be acknowledged, and findings interpreted with caution, recognizing the need for further research to encompass broader perspectives and longitudinal analyses.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five comprehensive chapters, each designed to systematically explore different facets of the strategic exploitation of crises in Ghanaian politics, particularly in the context of the 2024 general elections. The opening chapter lays the foundation of the research by providing an overview of the study's background, objectives, scope, and significance. It contextualizes the phenomena of crises, disasters, and scandals as political tools within Ghana's socio-political landscape, highlighting how these events are exploited for electoral advantage. The chapter also delineates the specific crises under investigation – the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – and introduces the theoretical frameworks guiding the analysis. Lastly, it presents the organization and structure of the entire study, offering a roadmap for subsequent chapters. The chapter two is followed by chapter two that critically reviews existing academic discourse on crisis exploitation, framing theories, blame attribution, and strategic narratives in political crises. It synthesizes relevant case studies, including Ghana's galamsey and DDEP crises, and discusses the applicability of key theoretical frameworks – Framing Theory, the Blame Game, and the Crisis-Opportunity Framework. The review identifies gaps in current scholarship and articulates the theoretical relevance of these models to understanding Ghana's political strategies in crisis contexts.

After Chapter One and Two comes the methodology in chapter four. This chapter details the research design, emphasizing a qualitative multiple case study approach suitable for exploring complex political narratives. It describes the setting within Ghana's socio-political environment,

the target population (politicians, civil society, media), sampling techniques, data collection instruments (speeches, social media content, official documents), and procedures. Ethical considerations, data analysis methods – including thematic content analysis, discourse analysis, and triangulation strategies – are thoroughly explained to ensure rigor, credibility, and transparency.

The Findings and Discussion is presented in Chapter Four which presents the core empirical insights derived from the data. It systematically analyzes how political actors from both the NPP and NDC frame, manipulate, and exploit crises like galamsey and DDEP to serve electoral objectives. Using illustrative examples from speeches, media content, and social discourse, it discusses the narrative strategies, blame attribution, and framing techniques employed during the 2024 campaign season. The chapter also critically examines the societal and ethical implications of these strategies and discusses their effects on public perception, voter behavior, and democratic legitimacy. Ultimately, the concluding chapter (five) provides the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations. The final chapter synthesizes the key findings, drawing overarching conclusions about the dynamics of crisis exploitation in Ghanaian politics. It reflects on the theoretical and practical implications, offers policy recommendations to promote responsible crisis management, and suggests avenues for future research. This chapter underscores the importance of ethical political communication and the need for transparency to safeguard Ghana's democratic processes.

Overall, this structured approach ensures a logical progression from conceptual groundwork through empirical investigation to practical conclusions, providing a comprehensive understanding of how crises are strategically leveraged for political gains in Ghana's electoral landscape.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Crisis exploitation is a multifaceted phenomenon that reveals how actors strategically manipulate moments of societal upheaval to serve political, economic, or ideological objectives. This process encompasses a range of themes, including framing strategies, blame attribution, opportunities for reform, and the contestation of authority – all within complex socio-political environments. Across different contexts – such as authoritarian regimes, media landscapes, religious movements, populist politics, and business sectors – crises are transformed from mere disruption into instruments of influence and control. Theoretical frameworks like framing theory elucidate how issues are presented to sway public opinion, while the blame game demonstrates how assigning responsibility becomes a tool for political advantage. Additionally, the crisis-opportunity perspective highlights how actors seek to redefine narratives and expand their influence during moments of disorder. This review explores these interconnected themes through diverse case studies, notably Ghana’s galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), illustrating how political actors exploit crises to reinforce legitimacy, advance agendas, and attempt reform – often amid contentious debates over ethics, responsibility, and social justice. Understanding these themes provides critical insights into the strategic dimensions of crisis management and the broader implications for democratic accountability and societal resilience.

i. Crisis Exploitation: An Analysis of Strategic Utilization Across Various Contexts

Crisis exploitation refers to the deliberate and strategic utilization of crises by various actors to advance their interests, implement policy changes, or gain political advantage. This concept finds

relevance across multiple domains, including political systems, media coverage, religious movements, populist politics, and business strategies. Lipsy (2020) define crisis as “a situation that threatens significant harm to a country’s population or basic values and compels a political response under time pressure and uncertainty.” Each of these contexts provides valuable insights into how crises can be effectively leveraged to achieve specific objectives. To begin with, in political systems, particularly authoritarian regimes, crisis exploitation often manifests as a mechanism for policy change. For example, in China, policy elites proficiently exploit crises to reshape public discourse and advocate for significant policy adjustments. The authoritarian context enables these elites to manipulate the definitions of issues and control the political agenda effectively. Notable instances include the SARS outbreak, the Wenchuan earthquake, and the H1N1 crisis, where strategic framing during these crises facilitated substantial policy shifts. The political elite's perception of a crisis as an opportunity for reform underscores the interplay between crisis management and governance (Liu, 2019). Furthermore, the media plays a pivotal role in the exploitation of crises by shaping public perception and narratives. Research indicates that media coverage often favors government actors, employing descriptive journalism and issue framing to bolster the credibility of those managing the crisis. This dynamic not only influences public opinion but also creates a conducive environment for the introduction of new policies. By framing crises in a manner that aligns with governmental interests, the media serves as a powerful tool that enhances the legitimacy of political actors (Olsson et al., 2015).

In addition to political systems and media dynamics, religious movements, particularly those on the political right, have also demonstrated a capacity to exploit crises to further their agendas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, the Christian right reframed the crisis as an opportunity to amplify their existing campaigns. By integrating pandemic-related issues into their

advocacy, these groups have maintained both relevance and urgency in their efforts, showcasing how crises can serve to advance ideological goals in a rapidly changing social landscape (Mos, 2024). Similarly, populist leaders frequently exploit crises as a means of consolidating power and polarizing public sentiment. This approach is exemplified by the narratives constructed around societal problems during the COVID-19 pandemic, where out-groups, such as migrants, are scapegoated for broader issues. Such strategies can effectively galvanize support for populist agendas by fostering a sense of division and reinforcing in-group solidarity. The dynamics of crisis exploitation in populist politics reveal how leaders can manipulate public perception to divert attention from systemic issues and consolidate their political base (Breeze & Gintsburg, 2023).

Moreover, in the context of business, firms confronting crises often adopt exploitation strategies as a means of survival and adaptation. Research indicates that firms that focus on leveraging existing capabilities and resources demonstrate a higher likelihood of sustaining operations, especially in high-tech industries. This focus on operational strengths contrasts sharply with exploration strategies, which are generally less effective during crisis situations. Consequently, the strategic exploitation of crises can serve as a pathway for business resilience and survival (Chou et al., 2024). However, while crisis exploitation can yield positive outcomes such as policy reforms or business continuity, it also raises significant ethical concerns. The manipulation of public perception and scapegoating of vulnerable groups can exacerbate existing societal tensions and erode trust in institutions. Therefore, an understanding of these dynamics is vital for developing more responsible crisis management strategies that prioritize ethical considerations alongside political or economic objectives. Crisis exploitation therefore represents a multifaceted phenomenon relevant to various spheres, including politics, media, religion, populism, and business. Each context highlights the strategic potential of crises to reshape narratives and advance

particular interests. Nonetheless, the ethical implications associated with such exploitation necessitate careful consideration in order to foster more responsible approaches to crisis management that are mindful of social consequences. Understanding these complex dynamics is essential for stakeholders seeking to navigate crises in an increasingly interconnected and volatile environment.

ii. Overview of Galamsey as a Political Crisis

Ghana's history of illegal mining, commonly known as galamsey, is deeply rooted in the country's socio-economic and political fabric, evolving over several decades from artisanal endeavors to a complex, organized sector driven by both local and foreign actors. Historically, illegal gold mining activities in Ghana date back more than a century, reflecting longstanding challenges in managing mineral resources amidst economic and political shifts. The formal recognition of small-scale mining came with the enactment of the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law in 1989 (PNDC Law 218), which aimed to regulate and legalize artisanal mining practices (Hilson, 2007). However, despite this legal framework, illegal mining persisted and often expanded, driven by economic hardship, weak enforcement, and the proliferation of foreign involvement, particularly from Chinese investors who introduced mechanized and heavy earth-moving equipment such as bulldozers and excavators (Minerals Commission, 2021). The growth of galamsey over the past two decades reflects a transition from purely artisanal, subsistence-based mining to a more organized, mechanized sector, which now contributes approximately 43% of Ghana's gold production (Minerals Commission, 2021).

State responses to this burgeoning challenge have historically been reactive and often ineffective. The first official government intervention was the legalization of small-scale mining in 1989, accompanied by military crackdowns aimed at curbing illegal activities. For instance, in

September 2006, the government launched 'Operation Flush Out,' a nationwide military exercise intended to dismantle illegal mining camps and prevent their expansion (Hilson, 2007). Despite these efforts, illegal mining activities resurged, aided by political influence, corruption, and inadequate enforcement capacity, which hampered sustained progress (Hausermann & Ferring, 2018). Subsequent initiatives, such as the 2013 inter-ministerial taskforce and Operation Vanguard launched in 2017, sought to intensify crackdowns through military and police operations, seizing equipment, arresting miners, and destroying illegal structures (Boafo et al., 2019). Nonetheless, these measures often failed to address the socio-economic drivers of galamsey, such as poverty and land tenure complexities, which perpetuate the cycle of illegal activity.

The involvement of foreign nationals, especially Chinese migrants, and the use of advanced mechanized equipment have significantly intensified environmental degradation, leading to rapid deforestation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. This escalation underscores a shift in the nature of illegal mining from small-scale, subsistence activities to organized, commercial operations that threaten Ghana's natural resources and sustainable development goals (Crawford et al., 2015). The persistent challenge of galamsey is compounded by Ghana's weak legal and institutional frameworks, characterized by inadequate enforcement, corruption, and limited capacity of regulatory agencies such as the Minerals Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency. Despite numerous laws – such as the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006 – and policy measures designed to formalize and regulate small-scale mining, illegal operations continue unabated (Teschner, 2012; McQuilken & Hilson, 2016). This ongoing crisis highlights the gap between legislation and effective implementation, driven by entrenched political and traditional land tenure systems, which often facilitate illegal land leasing and mining activities (Adu-Baffour et al., 2021).

In response to the persistent threat of galamsey, the Ghanaian government has periodically introduced a range of measures, including outright bans on small-scale mining, community engagement schemes, and alternative livelihood programs (Yeboah, 2022). Notably, the 2017 campaign “Stop Galamsey” and operations such as Operation Vanguard exemplify efforts to clamp down on illegal miners, involving military and police forces to seize equipment and arrest offenders (Boafo et al., 2019). However, enforcement remains inconsistent, often hampered by corruption, political interference, and the involvement of traditional authorities who lease land to miners, thereby complicating regulatory efforts (Hausermann & Ferring, 2018). The history of galamsey in Ghana is thus marked by a pattern of initial regulation, subsequent illegal proliferation, and intermittent crackdowns – reflecting a complex interplay of economic necessity, weak governance, and environmental sustainability challenges. Addressing this historical trajectory requires a comprehensive approach that integrates legal reform, community participation, and sustainable economic alternatives to effectively curb illegal mining and protect Ghana’s natural resources for future generations.

In Ghana, it has become a pressing issue, posing complex challenges that threaten environmental health, human rights, and food security. This practice results in significant land and water degradation, adversely affecting local ecosystems and the livelihoods of communities dependent on agriculture and fishing. Understanding the gravity and intricacies of these challenges requires a comprehensive examination of galamsey’s implications. The environmental impact of galamsey is particularly alarming, especially due to water pollution. Mining activities introduce hazardous substances such as mercury, cadmium, and arsenic into rivers, contaminating water bodies. These pollutants threaten aquatic life and pose serious health risks to humans by entering the food chain through fish consumption (Adusei et al., 2024). Additionally, the destructive mining process

destroys fertile agricultural land, reducing crop production and contributing to higher food prices, which worsens food insecurity among local populations (Nyantakyi-Frimpong et al., 2021). Beyond environmental concerns, galamsey has profound human rights implications. Communities exposed to toxic substances face severe health risks, infringing on their right to a healthy environment and highlighting the urgent need for protective measures (Clément, 2024). The degradation of natural resources also hampers local economies, leading to increased poverty and food insecurity. Families struggle to subsist, creating a cycle of economic stagnation and social vulnerability ("Now we've all turned to eating processed foods," 2023). The impact on food security is equally critical. Illegal mining activities have led to a decline in food production, forcing communities to rely more on processed foods, which often compromise nutritional quality and elevate health risks (Nyantakyi-Frimpong et al., 2021). This shift threatens long-term sustainability and community health, as galamsey's adverse effects undermine agricultural practices and nutritional well-being ("Now we've all turned to eating processed foods," 2023).

While galamsey may offer short-term economic benefits to individuals, its long-term consequences for health, environment, and food security are deeply troubling. Addressing these issues requires urgent policy interventions that promote sustainable mining practices, involve affected communities, and safeguard ecological and human rights. The health consequences of galamsey are severe. Communities engaged in illegal mining experience high rates of respiratory and waterborne diseases due to pollution from mining operations. The release of harmful substances like mercury, cyanide, and particulate matter contributes to respiratory conditions such as chronic bronchitis and silicosis. Regions like Western and Ashanti report respiratory disease rates over twice those of unaffected areas, with cases rising from 430 to 560 per 100,000 people between 2021 and 2024 (Abofra, 2024). Chronic exposure to heavy metals like arsenic and

cadmium can cause kidney issues, metabolic disorders, and hypertension (Awewomom et al., 2024; Ofori et al., 2024). Moreover, poor sanitation and contaminated water sources increase vulnerability to waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid, with affected regions experiencing an annual incidence of 1,180 cases per 100,000 people – far higher than in unaffected areas (Abofra, 2024; Tuor, 2023). Factors such as deforestation and stagnant water from mining pits also heighten malaria risks (Aboka, Cobbina, & Doke, 2018; Asare, Baddoo, & Calys-Tagoe, 2024).

Mercury exposure poses additional risks, especially for neurological and developmental health. Gold processing often involves mercury, which can cause brain damage, developmental delays in children, and birth defects (Awewomom et al., 2024; Obiri et al., 2016). Studies show elevated mercury levels in miners and nearby residents, indicating bioaccumulation in water systems and food chains (Obiri et al., 2016; Ofori et al., 2024). These health issues impose substantial economic burdens, with treatment costs for galamsey-related illnesses ranging from GHS 250 to 300 per patient annually – straining Ghana’s already stretched healthcare system. Rural clinics often lack the capacity to diagnose and manage chronic poisoning, highlighting the need for better healthcare infrastructure (Awewomom et al., 2024; Ofori et al., 2024). Despite awareness of these health risks, enforcement of mining regulations remains weak due to political interference and corruption, allowing galamsey to persist (Awewomom et al., 2024). Proposed solutions include geospatial monitoring, development of clean mining technologies, and integrating toxicology units into local healthcare systems to better manage health and environmental risks (Ofori et al., 2024; Asare, Baddoo, & Calys-Tagoe, 2024).

The political landscape surrounding galamsey reflects a complex interplay of governance, economic necessity, environmental concerns, and social justice. Despite efforts to curb illegal mining, the practice persists largely due to socio-economic factors, especially poverty. Hilson

(2010) notes that both licensed and illegal mining are often driven by poverty, with many individuals engaging in galamsey as their only livelihood. Current estimates suggest that approximately 85% of small-scale miners participate in galamsey (Afriyie et al., 2022), indicating a significant gap in governmental regulation and enforcement. Political factors further complicate efforts to address galamsey. Corruption and lack of political will hinder effective regulation, with political influence from miners – who often form a substantial voting bloc – resisting stringent enforcement (Ntewusu, 2018). Political parties, such as the NPP and NDC, frequently oscillate between enforcement and courting mining communities for electoral support, often prioritizing short-term political gains over environmental and social concerns (Ajene & Adams, 2025). The Ghanaian government's confrontational approach, including campaigns like "Stop Galamsey Now" and military operations such as "Operation Vanguard," has aimed to suppress illegal mining. While these efforts demonstrate a commitment to environmental protection, they have also faced resistance from local communities dependent on galamsey for their livelihoods (Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2020; Annan, 2024). This tension underscores the need for a balanced approach that considers both environmental sustainability and socio-economic realities. The "Stop Galamsey" campaign, launched in 2017, was a response to widespread public concern about environmental degradation and health hazards associated with illegal mining. Civil society and government efforts focused on enforcement, including the deployment of military and police units to dismantle illegal operations. However, critics argue that these measures are often temporary and do not address the underlying economic drivers, such as poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods (Afriyie et al., 2022). Media portrayals have played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, emphasizing the environmental and health dangers of galamsey and galvanizing community support for regulatory action (Sojková, 2022).

From the discussion, galamsey, represents a multifaceted crisis rooted in economic necessity, weak governance, and environmental degradation. The pervasive environmental degradation, severe health risks, and socio-economic destabilization caused by galamsey in Ghana elevate it to a national crisis, as its impacts threaten the very foundation of the country's sustainable development. The widespread pollution of water bodies with toxic substances endangers public health and biodiversity, while the destruction of fertile land undermines food security and local livelihoods. Politically, the persistence of galamsey exposes weaknesses in governance, enforcement, and social equity, as poverty drives many into illegal mining despite regulatory efforts, perpetuating a cycle of environmental harm and economic hardship. The health burdens, including respiratory and waterborne diseases and developmental risks from mercury exposure, impose significant economic costs on the national healthcare system. Altogether, galamsey embodies a complex challenge that undermines environmental integrity, public health, economic stability, and social justice – making it a pressing national crisis that demands urgent, coordinated, and sustainable policy responses. While government interventions have sought to curb illegal mining, persistent socio-economic challenges and political dynamics complicate resolution efforts. Sustainable solutions must involve community engagement, alternative livelihoods, strengthened enforcement, and policies that balance economic development with environmental preservation.

iii. Political Dynamics and the Galamsey Crisis in Ghana: An Analysis of NPP and NDC Strategies

As Ghana approaches the December 2024 general election, the Galamsey crisis – illegal small-scale mining – remains one of the most politically charged issues shaping public discourse. The two dominant political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), continue to engage in mutual accusations and political maneuvering as each seeks to

influence public perceptions of responsibility and control. Both parties are simultaneously implicated in the perpetuation of the very practices they publicly condemn, a dynamic that complicates policy responses and entrenches partisan divisions. Although political contestation over Galamsey predates the 2024 electoral cycle, it continues to shape voter decision-making and remains central to national debate. The salience of the issue was particularly pronounced ahead of the 2020 general election. During a campaign tour of the Western Region in October 2020, former President John Dramani Mahama drew significant controversy by promising to grant amnesty to individuals imprisoned for illegal mining offenses if elected. Speaking at a rally in the Mpohor Constituency on October 22, 2020, Mahama asserted that he would "grant amnesty to all small-scale miners imprisoned under the President Akufo-Addo-led government at the peak of the Galamsey fight" (Citi Newsroom, 2020).

In response, the NPP accused the NDC of emboldening illegal miners through what it described as irresponsible campaign rhetoric. A Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Benito Owusu-Bio, condemned Mahama's pledge as reprehensible (Citi Newsroom, 2020). This accusation resurfaced ahead of the 2024 elections, with the NPP arguing that such promises contributed to increased illegal mining activity, particularly noting the reported surge in operations across 44 forest reserves and the alleged protection extended to miners by militant groups (Modern Ghana, 2024; MyJoyOnline, 2024). Complicating the issue further are allegations of collusion between actors affiliated with both parties. Dr. Ken Ashigbey of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey asserts that members of both the NPP and NDC maintain vested interests in illegal mining operations, claiming that NDC-aligned miners control approximately 70% of operations while NPP-affiliated actors provide equipment and logistical support (GhanaWeb, 2024; Modern

Ghana, 2024). Such allegations cast doubt on the sincerity of political commitments to combating Galamsey and highlight entrenched conflicts of interest that undermine enforcement efforts.

In the lead-up to the 2024 election, civil society mobilisation around Galamsey has intensified significantly. A broad coalition of religious institutions, professional associations, labor unions, student groups, and advocacy organizations increasingly frame illegal mining as an existential national crisis with far-reaching implications for public health, environmental sustainability, and national security. Democracy Hub is coordinating a nationwide “Stop Galamsey Now” protest; the Catholic Church, led by Archbishop John Bonaventure Kwofie, is organizing a large-scale environmental prayer walk supported by nearly fifty civil society groups; UTAG, Organised Labour, and the TUC are threatening a nationwide strike demanding a state of emergency; the Ghana Medical Association is drawing attention to severe health consequences such as kidney failure and cancer; and the Ghana Water Company Limited warns of diminishing water quality and supply disruptions. These interventions have elevated Galamsey to a central electoral issue, with petitions submitted to the President and widespread public demonstrations. However, questions persist regarding whether this heightened activism is translating into meaningful policy reform or whether it will materially influence voter behavior.

In response to mounting pressure, both parties outline policy proposals intended to demonstrate commitment to resolving the crisis. The NDC’s policy framework includes technologically driven interventions such as AI-enabled tracking of excavators and geo-fencing of mining concessions (Centre for Democratic Development, 2024). Yet, critics question the feasibility and political will required to implement such innovations effectively (GhanaWeb, 2024). Conversely, the NPP pledges bipartisan cooperation to eradicate illegal mining but continues to accuse the NDC of politicizing the crisis and failing to take decisive action (Modern Ghana, 2024; CDD, 2024). This

climate of mutual suspicion undermines the development of coherent national strategies and obstructs opportunities for collaboration. Despite various government interventions, including discussions around declaring a state of emergency and enforcing stricter law enforcement measures, political interference and partisanship remain major impediments to effective governance in the Galamsey sector. Both parties face criticism for prioritizing electoral calculations over urgent environmental and health concerns (CDD, 2024; GhanaWeb, 2024). This persistent politicization hampers efforts to develop comprehensive, sustainable, and depoliticized solutions to illegal mining. Overall, the political dynamics surrounding Galamsey in Ghana reveal a complex interplay of accusations, collusion, civil society pressure, and competing policy proposals. As both parties seek electoral advantage, their actions and rhetoric continue to complicate national efforts to address the illegal mining crisis in a substantive and sustained manner.

iv. Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme: A Critical Overview

Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP) emerged as a pivotal strategy within the broader context of the country's debt restructuring efforts, particularly in light of economic challenges intensified by external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The DDEP aimed to address the unsustainably high levels of public debt, which necessitated a comprehensive and strategic approach to debt management. The primary objective of the DDEP was to restructure approximately GHS 137 billion in domestic debt, a figure that was later expanded. This restructuring was essential for meeting the debt sustainability targets set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and unlocking a crucial \$3 billion bailout package (Ministry of Finance [MOF], 2023). The mechanics of the program involved bondholders exchanging their existing bonds for new ones, characterized by extended maturities ranging from 2027 to 2037 and

reduced coupon payments – 0% in 2023, 5% in 2024, and 10% from 2025 (Reuters, 2024) which would later be known to as “Haircut”. Launched on December 5, 2022, the DDEP underwent multiple deadline extensions, with the final deadline set for January 31, 2023. Initially, pension funds were excluded from participation; however, they were later incorporated into the program, reflecting the government’s responsiveness to stakeholder concerns (Africanews, 2023). Participation rates in the DDEP were notably high, with approximately 85% of eligible bondholders engaged by February 2023. Notably, pension funds joined the initiative by September 2023, achieving a participation rate of 95% (Boakye et al., 2024). The expected outcomes of the DDEP included a reduction in debt servicing costs, intended to close Ghana’s financing gap, as well as an external debt restructuring plan targeting \$10.5 billion in relief over the period from 2023 to 2026 (Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana [ICAG], 2022). Additionally, the new bonds issued under the DDEP were positioned as benchmark securities, leading to an upgrade in Ghana’s local currency rating by S&P from "selective default" to "CCC+/C" following the completion of the program (MOF, 2023). However, the DDEP faced significant challenges. The financial sector, particularly banks, experienced liquidity strains due to the reduced coupon payments and extended maturities associated with the newly issued bonds. This situation necessitated regulatory adjustments, such as implementing zero risk-weighting for the new bonds to mitigate the impact on financial stability (Bank of Ghana [BOG], 2022). Additionally, public resistance emerged, particularly surrounding the initial exclusion of pension funds. Backlash from the public prompted the government to exempt individual bondholders from participation before ultimately including pension funds in the program (Africanews, 2023).

Looking ahead, negotiations for the restructuring of external debt, estimated at around \$20 billion, remained a critical focus area for the Ghanaian government (Akorlie & Adombila, 2023). As

Ghana sought to stabilize its economy, the emphasis on fiscal consolidation and structural reforms continued. These efforts aimed to address persistent inflation and stabilize exchange rates, which are essential for promoting long-term economic recovery (Amarteifio-Taylor & Owino, n.d.).

v. Confronting the Debt Exchange Program in Ghana: Public Responses and Aftereffects

The government's approach, marked by its urgency to stabilize the economy, generated apprehensions among stakeholders, particularly among bondholders and the general public. Several civil society organizations and labour unions vocally opposed the program, emphasizing that it would disproportionately affect ordinary citizens, pensioners, and vulnerable groups, many of whom relied on fixed-income securities for their livelihoods (Baffoe et al., 2023). Protests erupted across major cities, especially in Accra, where citizens gathered to express their frustrations. Demonstrators argued that the DDEP was essentially a "haircut" that would inflict economic pain on the most susceptible segments of society. The public's response was not merely spontaneous but orchestrated through organized campaigns, social media mobilization, and grassroots advocacy, reflecting a collective realization of the economic and social ramifications of the government's fiscal measures (Koomson, 2023). Ghanaian journalist, Albert A. Amonoo highlighted that the "discontent was not only about the debt exchange itself but also about the perceived mismanagement and lack of transparency surrounding the economic situation" (Amonoo, 2022). Post-DDEP discourse illuminated critical themes around social equity, government accountability, and fiscal management. Analysts noted a transition from merely opposing the DDEP to demands for more comprehensive government reform regarding fiscal policy and economic governance. Academic scholars have posited that such public engagement represents a pivotal moment in Ghana's democratic evolution, where citizens, galvanized by socio-economic challenges, are increasingly holding their leaders accountable (Owusu, 2023). In the

aftermath, the government faces a dual challenge: the need to reassure investors about its commitment to economic reform while addressing public concerns about the efficacy and fairness of its strategies. Critics argued that unless the government engages in genuine dialogue with stakeholders and implements social safety nets, the DDEP could exacerbate existing inequalities (Antwi & Adjei, 2023).

vi. Political Responses to Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Program: An Analysis of Party Tactics and Discourse

The announcement of the implementation of the DDEP elicited a range of responses from political parties, significantly shaping the discourse around the nation's fiscal policy and economic recovery efforts. As the DDEP aimed to restructure Ghana's unsustainable debt levels amid an economic crisis, political parties employed various strategies to position themselves in relation to the program, balancing public sentiment against their political calculus. The ruling party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), framed the DDEP as a necessary and urgent measure vital for securing the nation's economic stability. According to President Nana Akufo-Addo, the DDEP was designed to create a "sustainable debt and fiscal framework" that would lead to economic recovery and restore investor confidence (Ghana News Agency, 2022). The government emphasized the program's necessity to lay the groundwork for further negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) aimed at securing financial assistance. This narrative, however, faced criticism from opposition parties who argued that the government's fiscal mismanagement brought about the need for such drastic measures (Aidoo, 2023). The main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), adopted a markedly critical stance on the DDEP. They characterized the government's approach as a bailout for financial elites at the expense of ordinary Ghanaians. During parliamentary debates, NDC leaders argued that the DDEP would lead to economic

hardship for pensioners and vulnerable populations (Owusu, 2023). This critique resonated with the electorate, positioning the NDC as a champion of the underprivileged. The party called for more extensive consultations and transparency in the debt restructuring process, reflecting a commitment to participatory governance (Koffie, 2023). Political communication played a crucial role in shaping public opinion surrounding the DDEP. Social media emerged as a battleground for both parties, providing a platform for the dissemination of competing narratives. The NDC utilized social media to mobilize public sentiment against the government, highlighting testimonies from affected citizens and emphasizing the potential risks of the DDEP (Akosua, 2023). Conversely, the NPP sought to mitigate criticism by showcasing endorsements from certain economic experts and institutions, framing the DDEP as a responsible policy option. The aftermath of the DDEP revealed a profound shift in political discourse regarding economic governance in Ghana. Political analysts noted that the opposition's effective critique of the DDEP allowed it to regain momentum and influence within public discourse, challenging the NPP's longstanding narrative of economic competence (Boadu, 2023). The political repercussions of the DDEP extended beyond immediate fiscal impacts, influencing party strategies leading into future elections. The NDC's mobilization against the DDEP provided a fresh platform for consolidating support, reflecting a broader demand for accountability and reform in how economic policies are crafted and implemented.

In summary, the persistent and multifaceted nature of galamsey in Ghana underscores its status as not merely an environmental or economic issue but a profound political crisis that intertwines governance, socio-economic challenges, and political legitimacy. The crisis is further compounded by economic strategies such as the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), which has ignited public debate and political contention due to its social and economic implications. The DDEP, aimed at stabilizing Ghana's economy through debt restructuring, has faced resistance from

citizens, civil society, and opposition parties who perceive it as disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations and exacerbating inequalities. This economic measure has become entangled in the political discourse, fueling accusations, mistrust, and partisan strategies that reflect and reinforce the broader crisis of governance and social justice. The responses – from military crackdowns on galamsey to contentious debt policies – highlight the cyclical pattern of regulation, resistance, and reform that characterizes Ghana’s complex political landscape.

Furthermore, the political landscape, marked by partisan accusations, collusion, and competing narratives, illustrates how galamsey and the DDEP have become arenas for political legitimacy and power struggles. Both parties leverage these issues to mobilize support and discredit opponents, transforming local environmental and economic challenges into national political battlegrounds. This intricate interplay of environmental degradation, socio-economic hardship, and political maneuvering frames galamsey and the DDEP as intertwined crises that demand nuanced understanding and strategic intervention.

To deepen our understanding of how these crises (galamsey and the DDEP) are constructed, perceived, and managed, the study adopts a theoretical framework grounded in key communication and media theories: Framing and The Blame Game Framework, and The Crisis-Opportunity Framework. These theories will facilitate an analysis of how political actors, media outlets, and societal institutions shape narratives around these crises, influence public perception, and mobilize support or opposition. They will also help examine how various stakeholders frame galamsey and the DDEP either as environmental catastrophes, socio-economic challenges, or political conspiracies – thus revealing the underlying power dynamics and ideological positions that sustain or challenge the status quo. By applying these frameworks, the study aims to uncover the discursive strategies and media mechanisms that reinforce or contest the dominant narratives,

ultimately illuminating the role of communication in transforming complex economic and environmental issues into arenas of political contestation with far-reaching implications.

2.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

i) Framing

Framing theory in politics explains how the way issues are presented influences public opinion and attitudes. Being one of the major theories in research on political communication (Cacciatore et al., 2016), framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue (Chong & Druckman 2007) and a critical activity in the construction of social reality as it helps shape the perspectives through which people see the world (Hallahan, 1999). According to Chong & Druckman (2007), the impact of framing depends on several factors, including the perceived strength of the frame and the context in which it is communicated. Frames are conceptual structures that shape how individuals interpret and evaluate issues, guiding their perceptions and judgments. Entman (1993), argues that framing involves the selection and salience of information. Within any research design, frames are characterized along a continuum of perceived strength, which reflects how persuasive or compelling they are. Weak frames are typically seen as less persuasive, while strong frames are more likely to influence opinions because they resonate more deeply or are deemed more credible. For example, emphasizing “public safety” might be a strong, persuasive frame against hate rallies, whereas focusing on “preventing litter” would be weaker. Researchers often assess a frame’s strength through pretests where participants rate its persuasiveness. Most prior studies have examined situations where only one type of frame is presented, either strong or weak. However,

real-world political debates often involve competing sides that promote different interpretations of an issue, sometimes with varying quantities and strengths of messages. Chong & Druckman (2007), Druckman highlights that little research has explored these competitive contexts, where opposing sides may present equal amounts of messages of unequal strength or differing combinations of strong and weak frames. Understanding how individuals respond to these competing frames is essential because the literature suggests two main possibilities.

The first is the “loudness” hypothesis, which posits that the side with the most frequent messaging – regardless of the strength – is more influential. This idea is supported by scholars like Chong (1996) and Zaller (1992), who argue that the side that expends more resources on propaganda and sends more signals will dominate the debate because their messages are more accessible and memorable. In this view, individuals tend to accept the most repeated frame because it most easily comes to mind, rather than because of its inherent strength. The second hypothesis emphasizes the importance of frame strength itself. According to this view, stronger frames will exert greater influence regardless of how often they are repeated. Factors that increase a frame’s strength include its source credibility, alignment with core values, and consistency with individuals' prior beliefs. When a frame is credible and resonates with someone’s values, it is more likely to shape opinions even if it is less frequently presented. The effectiveness of a frame is generally measured by its ability to produce different opinion distributions compared to alternative frames. If exposure to a particular frame leads to significantly different attitudes than exposure to another, that frame is considered influential. This comparative approach underscores that framing effects are context-dependent and influenced by the presence of competing messages.

Chong & Druckman (2007), also integrates theories of attitude structure and persuasion to explain how frames influence opinions. Individuals tend to base their attitudes on a limited set of

considerations – those that are accessible, available in memory, and deemed appropriate at the moment. Accessibility refers to how easily a consideration can be retrieved from memory, which increases through repeated exposure or contextual cues. As a result, repeated framing can make certain considerations more accessible, thereby increasing their influence on attitudes. Prior beliefs and knowledge further modulate susceptibility to framing. More knowledgeable individuals are less affected by frames unless the frames align with their existing beliefs. Conversely, individuals with strong prior attitudes tend to dismiss new considerations introduced by frames, especially if these considerations conflict with their beliefs. Moreover, increased exposure to a particular frame can heighten the accessibility of its associated considerations, making them more likely to influence opinions over time. The impact of frames also depends on individuals' motivation to process information. Motivated individuals are more discerning and tend to be influenced only by strong frames that they perceive as relevant and applicable. Less motivated individuals, however, may rely on heuristics and be influenced by both strong and weak frames, especially when exposure is high. Interestingly, in competitive environments, weak frames can sometimes backfire among motivated respondents, leading their opinions to shift in the opposite direction of the intended message. This suggests that the broader context and the nature of the competing messages are crucial factors in determining framing effects. Chong & Druckman (2007), framing theory emphasizes that the influence of political messages depends on the interplay of frame strength, repetition, individual motivation, prior beliefs, and the competitive environment. Recognizing these factors helps explain when and how framing will shape opinions, highlighting the complexity of political communication and the importance of context in persuasive effects.

In a study, Brugman and Burgers (2018) also conducted a systematic review of political framing experiments from the 21st century, revealing patterns in how different disciplines use various types

of frames over time. Their findings show that emphasis frames are more common than equivalence frames, and issue-specific frames are more prevalent than generic frames. Specifically, only about 10% of frames studied were equivalence frames, while most were issue-specific. The review also compared frame preferences across disciplines. Psychology studies tend to use more equivalence frames than others, likely reflecting their origins in Kahneman and Tversky's work, but still only about one-fifth of psychology experiments employed such frames. Communication studies, conversely, favor generic frames more than other fields. Studies outside political science, communication, or psychology tend to use more emphasis and issue-specific frames. Political science research aligns most closely with the overall trends observed in the broader literature. Interestingly, these patterns have remained stable over time, with little change since the early 2000s. There has been a slight decline in the use of equivalence frames, especially in psychology and other disciplines, but no notable shift in the use of generic frames. This stability persists despite ongoing debates about the "true" nature of frames, suggesting that disciplinary preferences and research practices influence framing approaches more than theoretical developments. The study also notes limitations, such as not analyzing the influence of highly cited studies and focusing solely on experimental research, which may differ from content analysis approaches. Overall, Brugman and Burgers conclude that research on political framing remains discipline-specific and relatively unchanged over time, with little influence from theoretical debates about what constitutes a "true" frame. These studies underscore the importance framing in political discourse analyses. Framing theory is pivotal to understanding how political issues, such as the crisis exploitation of Galamsey and the Deepening Economic Problem (DDEP) in Ghana's lead-up to the 2024 general elections, influence public opinion and political behavior. By shaping the way information about these issues is presented – whether emphasizing environmental degradation,

economic hardship, or political accountability – framers can sway perceptions and attitudes among voters and stakeholders. The theory emphasizes that the strength, frequency, and context of frames significantly impact their effectiveness, with strong, credible frames resonating more deeply, especially in a competitive environment where opposing messages vie for attention. Given the complex socio-political landscape surrounding Galamsey and DDEP, understanding how different frames – such as emphasizing economic development versus environmental harm – are constructed, disseminated, and received is crucial for analyzing political communication strategies and their potential to influence electoral outcomes. Moreover, insights from recent research, including Brugman and Burgers (2018), highlight that disciplinary differences and the stability of framing patterns over time suggest that political actors may rely on established framing practices to reinforce particular narratives, thereby shaping voter perceptions in a targeted and strategic manner during this critical electoral period.

ii) Blame Game Framework

The dynamics of political crises, such as those surrounding Galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), often hinge on the strategic deployment of blame within public discourse. As Hansson, Page, and Fuoli (2022) articulate, questions of who deserves blame and for what are central to political struggles and protests, serving as powerful tools for persuasion, legitimation, and alliance formation. These blame narratives are discursively constructed, positioning blame makers and blame takers in relation to their audiences to influence political outcomes. Building on this, the Blame Game Framework, as detailed by 't Hart and Boin (2009), emphasizes that during crises, political actors – both opposition and incumbents – engage in blame-shifting to protect or attack reputations. Leaders of opposition parties often aim to erode the credibility of the incumbent government by attributing blame for societal failures, harm, or crises.

Their goal is to attack the status quo, seeking to sway public opinion and gain political advantage (Weaver, 1986). Conversely, government officials strive to avoid blame by framing their actions as justified or constrained by external factors, aiming to maintain legitimacy and public trust (Hansson, 2017). Hansson (2017) conceptualizes blame games as discursive performances – stage-managed interactions where actors articulate and defend strategic definitions of “good governance,” “policy success,” or “crisis causality.” These are not merely personal attacks; they serve broader political functions such as challenging or reinforcing social orders, legitimizing particular actors as problem fixers, and creating new political alliances (Stone, 2012). The strategic use of blame involves argument models and maneuvering designed to persuade audiences of specific causal attributions and normative judgments.

From a discourse-analytic perspective, blame functions as an active strategy to persuade audiences to support particular actors or policy directions (Hansson et al., 2022). Protesters and political actors often generate blame narratives to challenge existing social orders, legitimize alternative narratives, or portray themselves as problem solvers. These narratives can serve to legitimize new political alliances and pressure policymakers (Stone, 2012; Johannesson & Weinryb, 2021). The systematic analysis of these blame strategies can be effectively conducted through linguistic frameworks such as Appraisal theory, which examines how evaluative language constructs moral judgments about actors, behaviors, or outcomes (Hansson et al., 2022). This approach distinguishes between various types of judgments – propriety (moral standing), veracity (truthfulness), capacity (competence), and tenacity (resolve) – which collectively evaluate the character, actions, and persistence of political figures. For instance, in the context of gālamsey, blame may be articulated through judgments of propriety (e.g., characterizing politicians as corrupt), veracity (calling officials dishonest), capacity (accusing them of incompetence in

managing environmental issues), or tenacity (questioning their resolve to address the crisis). Furthermore, blame can be directed toward character, behavior, or outcomes. Blaming character involves personal attacks, such as labeling politicians as “corrupt” or “liars,” which aims to undermine credibility (Hansson et al., 2022). Blaming behavior centers on specific actions – such as approving illegal mining or mismanaging policies – while blaming outcomes assesses tangible effects like environmental degradation or economic hardship caused by DDEP. These discursive strategies are often employed in social media debates, protest slogans, or political speeches to frame narratives and sway public perception. In the case of Galamsey, blame narratives may focus on the moral failings of politicians or officials who facilitate or overlook illegal mining activities, framing them as morally corrupt or incompetent. During DDEP, blame may be directed at government officials for mismanagement or poor financial oversight, emphasizing failures in capacity or decision-making. The construction of blame thus functions as a strategic tool to mobilize public opinion, delegitimize opponents, and justify political actions, often exploiting crises for electoral or political advantage.

Hansson et al. (2022) further underscore that blame strategies often involve argumentation schemes employing topoi – content-specific reasoning shortcuts that resonate with the audience’s shared beliefs. Opposition actors might draw on topoi of government failure or moral transgressions to connect negative outcomes directly to incumbents’ negligence or misconduct. Conversely, government defenders may invoke topoi of external influence or systemic complexity to justify their actions and deflect blame. In all, both Hansson (2017) and Hansson et al. (2022) highlight that crisis exploitation in politics is fundamentally rooted in strategic blame attribution and deflection, articulated through discursive argumentation that appeals to shared norms, fears, and values. By analyzing these argument models and strategic maneuvering, researchers can better

understand how political actors shape narratives around crises like galamsey and DDEP, either to attack opponents or justify their actions.

iii) Crisis-Opportunity Framework

Boin, Hart, and McConnell (2008) present a comprehensive examination of how crises serve as framing contests within political spheres, fundamentally reshaping the discourse, authority, and strategic behavior of actors involved. They argue that crises inherently dislocate established social and political orders by casting shadows that generate threat and uncertainty, thereby challenging the legitimacy of incumbent institutions and authorities (Boin et al., 2008). Such dislocation creates a political space ripe for actors to redefine issues, propose new policies, or leverage the crisis to gain popularity – often riding waves of accountability and learning processes (Wagner-Pacifici, 1986; Howarth et al., 2000).

A key insight from their analysis is that incumbent elites are not always threatened by crises; in fact, some may actively seek to manipulate or even create crises to enhance their authority, aligning with Edelman's (1977) observation that regimes prone to crisis management are likely to find crises that suit their interests. Conversely, opposition figures and interest groups may inflate or discover crises to advance their agendas, exemplifying the 'garbage can' model where problem identification and solution promotion are opportunistically linked (Cohen et al., 1972; Kingdon, 2003). This strategic behavior underscores the contested nature of crisis framing, whereby different actors attempt to shape the narrative around the crisis's causes, responsibility, and implications (Hart, 1993; Tarrow, 1994). Crises are arenas for framing battles, where actors deploy meaning-making efforts to defend or undermine social orders, legitimize new coalitions, and influence policy directions (Boin et al., 2008). These framing contests are characterized by competing narratives about severity, agency, and responsibility, which are often reflected in the

language and symbols used by political actors (Hansson et al., 2022). For example, governments may shift blame externally – attributing crises to natural or foreign causes – thus deflecting accountability, while opposition actors may internalize blame, emphasizing government failure or misconduct.

Boin et al. (2008) also explore how the outcomes of crisis exploitation are shaped by elite maneuvering within various forums – mass media, inquiry commissions, parliament – each offering opportunities and constraints. They highlight that postcrisis processes such as investigations and inquiry reports are politically charged arenas where agency, independence, and framing influence whether elites regain control, damage their reputation, or shift blame. Notably, the success of these efforts hinges on situational characteristics, timing relative to elections, and media coverage, which can amplify or diminish actors’ strategic positioning. While some leaders benefit from crisis-driven popularity boosts – like Rudy Giuliani post-9/11 – the same crises can also damage reputations, especially when responsibility and accountability are foregrounded. Moreover, long-term outcomes – such as policy reforms or paradigm shifts – are contingent on the political context, actors’ strategic choice, and the media environment (Boin et al., 2008). Crisis exploitation is not solely a matter of blame but involves learning and reform efforts, which are inherently political processes. Genuine learning – such as policy adjustments or organizational change – is rare and often superficial, as political actors tend to prefer symbolic reforms that preserve the status quo. The politicization of crisis inquiries and reform proposals reflects the deeply political nature of the postcrisis landscape, where truth-seeking and accountability frequently clash with interests and power dynamics.

Boin, Hart, and McConnell (2008) again asserts that crises are transformative moments – not only for institutions and policies but also for the broader governance paradigm – where threat politics

and securitization have become dominant features of modern political life (Beck, 1992). These developments extend the scope of crisis management beyond technical responses to include permanent shifts in political culture, media practices, and governance strategies (Boin et al., 2008). Recognizing the political game behind crisis exploitation is thus vital for understanding how crises shape societal trajectories and reconfigure the relations of authority and accountability.

2.3. Theory Relevance to the Study

i) Framing Theory

Framing theory is central to understanding how political actors in Ghana strategically present issues like galamsey and the DDEP to influence public perception and electoral behavior. The way these crises are framed – whether emphasizing environmental degradation, economic hardship, or governance failure – can significantly shape voter attitudes and support for different political parties. The theory explains how political actors manipulate the presentation of issues to create compelling narratives that resonate with voters' values and beliefs. For example, during the lead-up to the 2024 elections, opposition parties might frame galamsey as a failure of the incumbent government's environmental policies, while the ruling party might frame it as a national security threat requiring urgent action. Understanding the strength, frequency, and context of these frames helps analyze how political communication influences electoral outcomes. Furthermore, the concept of competing frames aligns with Ghana's politically charged environment, where multiple narratives vie for dominance, shaping public discourse and decision-making processes.

In essence, framing theory provides a lens to examine how political actors craft, disseminate, and contest narratives around crises, which is fundamental to understanding strategic crisis exploitation in Ghana's electoral context.

ii) Blame Game Framework

The blame game framework is highly pertinent to analyzing how political actors in Ghana attribute responsibility for crises like galamsey and DDEP to their opponents or external factors. During election campaigns, parties often engage in blame-shifting – opposition parties may blame incumbents for environmental degradation or economic mismanagement, while the ruling party may deflect blame by highlighting external influences or systemic issues. This strategic attribution of blame is used to delegitimize opponents, rally voter support, and justify policy positions. The framework also captures how discursive practices – through speeches, social media, or protests – mobilize moral judgments and reinforce narratives that favor particular political interests. By studying blame attribution, the research can uncover how political actors frame crises as failures or successes, shaping public perceptions of competence, integrity, and trustworthiness. Thus, the blame game framework illuminates the strategic use of moral and causal narratives to exploit crises politically, which is central to the electoral strategies in Ghana’s polarized political environment.

iii) Crisis-Opportunity Framework

The crisis-opportunity framework explains how political actors in Ghana may either seek to create, manipulate, or amplify crises to serve their strategic interests, especially during elections. Crises like galamsey and DDEP destabilize the political landscape, providing opportunities for incumbents to demonstrate leadership or for opposition parties to criticize governance failures. The framework highlights how crises are battlegrounds for framing contests, where different actors attempt to define the severity, causes, and solutions to crises to gain political advantage. It also sheds light on how political elites may use crises to redefine issues, mobilize support, or push for policy reforms – either superficially or substantively. Importantly, the framework underscores that crises are not merely disruptive but are often exploited as strategic tools to reshape political

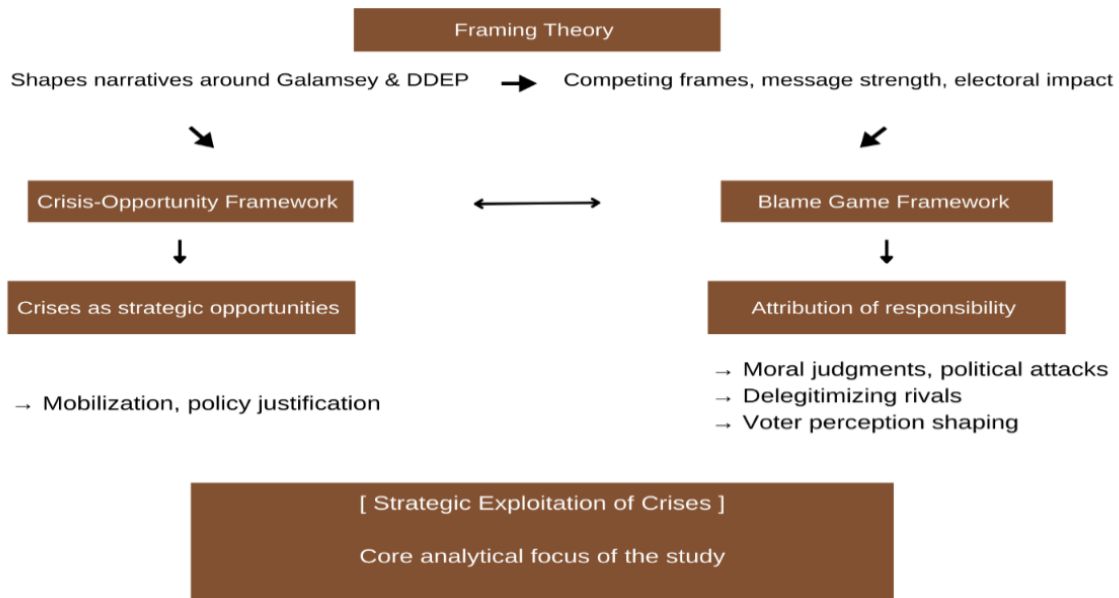
narratives, reinforce legitimacy, or undermine opponents. In the context of Ghana’s upcoming elections, this theory helps analyze how crises are leveraged as strategic opportunities by political actors to influence electoral outcomes and political legitimacy.

Table 2.0 theoretical relevance of the Framing Theory, Blame Game Framework and Crisis opportunity Framework to Crisis Exploitation.

Theory	Relevance to the Study: "Strategic Exploitation of Crises in Ghanaian Politics"
Framing Theory	Explains how Ghanaian political actors craft and present narratives around crises (Galamsey and DDEP), influencing public perception and electoral behavior. It helps analyze how issues are emphasized, the strength of messages, and the contest between competing frames during election campaigns.
Blame Game Framework	Highlights how political parties attribute responsibility for crises to opponents or external factors, using blame to delegitimize rivals, rally support, and shape voter perceptions. It provides a lens to study moral judgments, discourse strategies, and political attacks during the crises.
Crisis-Opportunity Framework	Describes how crises are exploited by political actors as strategic opportunities to redefine issues, mobilize support, or justify policies. It emphasizes the role of crises as battlegrounds for framing contests that influence legitimacy, policy direction, and electoral outcomes.

By integrating these three theories – framing, blame game, and crisis-opportunity – the study gains a comprehensive analytical toolkit to explore how Ghanaian political actors strategically manipulate crises to influence public opinion and electoral behavior. These theories collectively address the construction, contestation, and exploitation of narratives during societal upheavals, offering insights into the strategic dimensions of crisis management and political communication in Ghana’s electoral context.

Diagram 1.0 Triangulating Strategic Crisis Narratives: A Theoretical Framework for Ghanaian Political Exploitation



The above diagram illustrates the conceptual framework visually represented as a triangle, illustrating the interconnected roles of three key theories – Framing Theory, the Blame Game Framework, and the Crisis-Opportunity Framework – in shaping the strategic exploitation of crises within Ghanaian politics. Each vertex of the triangle encapsulates one of these theories, highlighting their unique contributions to understanding how political actors manipulate crises such as galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) to achieve electoral and political objectives. At the apex of the triangle lies Framing Theory, which provides the foundational mechanism for narrative construction. This theory explains how political actors

strategically craft and present specific frames around crises, influencing public perception regarding issues like environmental degradation and economic hardship. The strength of these messages, their frequency, and the competing nature of alternative frames are crucial factors that determine their impact on electoral support and voter attitudes. The bottom left vertex represents the Crisis-Opportunity Framework, emphasizing how crises serve as strategic leverage points. Political actors exploit these moments to redefine issues, mobilize support bases, and justify specific policy responses. This process often involves engaging in legitimacy battles, where different actors seek to shape the narrative around the causes and consequences of crises to influence policy directions and electoral outcomes.

On the bottom right is the Blame Game Framework, which centers on responsibility attribution. This framework elucidates how political actors assign blame to opponents or external factors, employing moral judgments and strategic political attacks to delegitimize rivals and sway voter perceptions. Through responsible blame-shifting, actors attempt to reinforce their legitimacy while undermining that of their opponents. These three theoretical lenses are interconnected and dynamically influence one another. Arrows within the framework indicate bidirectional relationships, demonstrating how narrative construction (Framing Theory), responsibility attribution (Blame Game), and strategic leverage (Crisis-Opportunity) are mutually reinforcing processes in crisis exploitation.

At the core of this conceptual model lies the overarching theme of Strategic Exploitation of Crises, which integrates insights from all three theories. This central focus explains how crises are transformed from mere disruptions into tools for political advantage, allowing actors to shape public discourse, influence electoral fortunes, and legitimize their policies or narratives.

Overall, this triangular configuration emphasizes the distinct yet interconnected roles of each theoretical perspective, collectively providing a comprehensive analytical lens through which to examine the strategic manipulation of crises in Ghanaian politics. This integrated approach not only clarifies the mechanisms of crisis exploitation but also underscores the importance of understanding the interplay between narrative framing, responsibility attribution, and opportunity recognition in shaping political outcomes.

2.3. Review of Related Studies

The study of crisis exploitation provides valuable insights into how political actors navigate emergencies, disasters, and scandals to further their interests and reshape political narratives. As crises often induce shifts in public perception and governance structures, understanding the mechanisms behind these dynamics is crucial. Many scholars have analyzed the relationships between crises, political strategies, and public sentiment; key contributions include the works of Boin, 't Hart, and McConnell (2009), and other related studies that reveal how crises can be strategically leveraged for political advantage. Boin, 't Hart, and McConnell (2009) present a foundational theory of crisis exploitation that underscores the significance of framing contests during crises. They argue that when societies face disruptive emergencies, public policies and the fate of political actors become precarious. Both governmental authorities and their critics engage in efforts to evade blame and fortify political capital through strategic interpretations of crises. By dissecting numerous cases of crisis-induced framing, the authors delineate the factors that inform the political and policy impacts of crises. Such insights reveal that adept political leaders can effectively "contain" crises and safeguard their reputations when they possess political capital, communicate cogently, and establish expert inquiry mechanisms. Conversely, oppositional forces are likely to gain leverage when crises are perceived to stem from endogenous causes, enabling them to capitalize on crises to undermine their rivals (Boin et al., 2009). The role of framing in crisis exploitation is further elucidated in the work of Hart and Tindall (2009), who highlight the role of leadership and rhetoric during economic downturns. They emphasize that crises provide a battleground for political contestation, where the narratives crafted by leaders can shift public opinion and redefine institutional legitimacy. This framing is essential, as it can determine which policies gain traction during a crisis. The various campaigns around the Domestic Debt Exchange

Program (DDEP) and the galamsey crisis in Ghana serve as pertinent examples, as political leaders utilize rhetoric surrounding these crises to craft narratives that resonate with citizens' concerns while seeking to position themselves strategically against their opponents (Hart & Tindall, 2009). In the context of populist politics, Tsagkroni (2022) suggests that the relationship between crisis management and populism is symbiotic, where populist actors not only emerge from crises but also exploit them to galvanize support. This exploitation can polarize political debates and destabilize traditional power structures, as seen in numerous global contexts. Populist leaders often gain momentum by depicting established political elites as incapable of addressing the pressing issues facing citizens, thus leveraging crises to repoliticize neglected concerns (Tsagkroni, 2022). The dynamics of populism in relation to crisis exploitation highlight the need for further exploration of how crises manifest opportunities for new political actors to emerge and challenge established governance structures. The exploration of framing and media dynamics extends to the work of Schmuck and Hameleers (2019), who analyze populist communication on social networking sites (SNSs). Their study reveals that political actors utilize populist rhetoric, characterized by negative emotions and an "us-versus-them" dichotomy, to connect with the electorate before elections. This finding echoes the insights of Edelman (1988) and others who emphasize the interplay between media narratives and public perception during moments of political volatility. The use of SNSs enables political actors to craft personalized communications that resonate with citizen experiences and concerns, especially in the context of crises like the DDEP and galamsey issue in Ghana. Complementing these theoretical frameworks, Hochstenbach (2025) investigates how public and political debates shape and politicize crises, emphasizing the necessity of framing in understanding the broader implications of housing crises. This discourse resonates with the mechanisms of exploitation seen in Ghana's galamsey crisis, where the framing

of issues can alter public expectations and political responses. Hochstenbach's work underscores the importance of analyzing the temporal dynamics of crisis frames and how varying interpretations can foster competing narratives that seek to institute or resist change. The examination of the socio-political dynamics surrounding Ghana's galamsey crisis reflects the complexities of governance and public expectations in a highly politicized environment. Political leaders oscillate between condemning illegal mining practices and acknowledging the economic dependencies of affected communities. This tension captures the essence of crisis exploitation, where political actors must navigate the delicate balance between public sentiment and electoral opportunism, as highlighted by Brändström (2016). The challenges inherently tied to crises often provoke deeper reflections on governance and accountability while shaping electoral behaviors and policy decisions. In summary, the literature on crisis exploitation elucidates a complex interplay of political strategies, framing contests, and public perceptions. The studies presented underscore how crises serve as strategic opportunities for political maneuvering, enabling actors to reshape narratives to mobilize support or detract from accountability. The case of the galamsey crisis in Ghana, alongside the DDEP, exemplifies how political actors can exploit socio-economic disruptions to fortify their positions within a rapidly evolving political landscape. As the upcoming elections approach, understanding these dynamics becomes essential for analyzing the broader implications of crisis exploitation for governance, democratic sustainability, and public trust in political institutions.

2.4. Conclusion

The review underscores that crisis exploitation is a complex, strategic process deeply embedded in the political, social, and media environments in which crises unfold. Through framing contests,

blame attribution, and the identification of opportunities amid disorder, actors – from governments and opposition parties to religious groups and businesses – seek to influence perceptions, legitimize their actions, and secure their interests. The theoretical frameworks examined reveal that these strategies are not merely reactive but are often carefully orchestrated efforts to shape narratives, mobilize support, and influence policy outcomes. The case studies from Ghana, including the galamsey crisis and the DDEP, exemplify how political actors exploit societal disruptions to reinforce existing power structures, distract from systemic failures, or push for reform – albeit often superficial or contested. Recognizing the political underpinnings of crisis management highlights the importance of responsible communication, accountability, and ethical considerations. As societies face an era marked by increasing threats and uncertainties, understanding the strategic dimensions of crisis exploitation becomes essential for safeguarding democratic integrity, promoting social justice, and fostering resilient governance capable of navigating the complexities of contemporary crises.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter delineates the research methodology employed to explore the strategic use of crises within Ghanaian politics. It begins by situating the study within a qualitative methodology, emphasizing the importance of capturing the depth, context, and subjective meanings embedded in political discourse and social responses. The subsequent sections outline the research approach, design, setting, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and procedures, as well as the analytical frameworks guiding the interpretation of findings. Through this comprehensive methodological framework, the study aims to generate nuanced insights into how crises are strategically constructed and exploited, providing a foundation for both scholarly understanding and practical policy considerations in Ghana's evolving political environment.

3.1. Research Approach

The study employed a Qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a methodology focused on exploring the depth and richness of social phenomena through understanding context and individual voices (Lim, 2023). It aims to uncover the “what,” “why,” “when,” “where,” “who,” and “how” behind social behaviors, emphasizing subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022; Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research methods have ancient roots, with their origins traced back to historians and travelers such as Herodotus and Marco Polo, but they only became consciously employed in social research during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Wax, 1971; Clifford, 1983). According to Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2016), qualitative methodology broadly involves producing descriptive data – people's words and observable behaviors – and represents an approach to understanding the empirical world (p. 7). Central to qualitative research is the focus on meaning; researchers aim to understand how

individuals interpret their experiences from their own perspectives, often employing phenomenological approaches that require researchers to set aside their preconceptions through techniques like "bracketing" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Psathas, 1973). Qualitative research is inherently inductive, emphasizing the development of concepts and theories grounded in data rather than testing preconceived hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers follow flexible designs, adapting their focus as they learn about the setting and participants' viewpoints (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The holistic approach of qualitative methods involves studying individuals and groups within their social contexts, capturing the human side of social life – such as emotions, moral struggles, and personal experiences – that quantitative methods might overlook (Burgess, as cited in Shaw, 1966). Qualitative researchers prioritize naturalistic, unobtrusive strategies – like participant observation and conversational interviews – to understand daily life in real settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). They value diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups, and aim to represent social realities from multiple vantage points (Becker, 1967; Lewis, 1965). Emphasizing meaningfulness over reliability, qualitative research seeks a close connection between data and lived experience, acknowledging that perfect reliability is unattainable but striving for systematic and rigorous inquiry (Deutscher, Pestello, & Pestello, 1993). Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2016) also describe qualitative research as a craft – an adaptable, skillful process where methods are guided by the researcher's judgment rather than strict rules, emphasizing flexibility and individual judgment throughout the research process (pp. 7–11).

Building on this understanding of qualitative methodology, it is important to consider the varying perspectives researchers hold regarding the relationship between the observer and the observed. Weng (2024) elaborates that qualitative researchers' views on this relationship are shaped by their

theoretical allegiances. Some, aligned with positivist beliefs, argue that reality exists independently and can be objectively discovered by an unbiased observer – similar to the perspective of researchers like Whyte, who believed social and physical facts can be empirically uncovered. Conversely, postmodernists contend that objective reality is nonexistent, asserting that all knowledge is inherently subjective, and ethnographic accounts are essentially autobiographical, with no absolute claim to truth (Denzin). Most qualitative researchers, however, adopt a position between these extremes, recognizing that while they can interpret others' perspectives with some degree of accuracy, complete objectivity is unattainable. As Becker (1996) states, researchers aim to honour and respect others' points of view, understanding that social reality is socially constructed – a concept exemplified by the case of food, whose significance is shaped by social and cultural contexts (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016).

Moving on, ethnography, grounded theory, action research, phenomenological research, and narrative research stand out as prominent approaches, each with distinct aims, processes, and advantages. Ethnography is a qualitative method focused on immersing the researcher within a community or organization to observe behaviors and interactions closely (Caulfield, 2022). The researcher seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of a group's culture, traditions, and social dynamics through prolonged engagement. The primary advantage of ethnography lies in its ability to capture authentic, firsthand insights into social practices, offering rich narratives about a community's way of life. However, it is labor-intensive, often requiring months of immersion, and presents challenges such as observer bias and ethical considerations regarding disclosure and sensitive information (Caulfield, 2022). Despite these difficulties, ethnography's strength is in providing detailed, contextualized accounts that might be inaccessible through other methods. Building on this, grounded theory offers a different approach by emphasizing the development of

new theories rooted in empirical data rather than testing existing hypotheses (Delve & Limpaecher, 2021). Its iterative process of data collection and analysis continues until theoretical saturation – when additional data no longer contribute new insights – is achieved (Charmaz, 2006). The strength of grounded theory lies in its ability to produce results that closely reflect real-world settings, facilitating the discovery of new phenomena. Nonetheless, this approach also encounters challenges, such as complex data collection procedures, lengthy timelines, and difficulties in maintaining consistent participant recruitment and analysis (Ugwu & Eze, n.d.).

Transitioning from these methods focused on theory and observation, action research shifts the emphasis toward practical problem-solving within specific settings. It aims to bring about immediate improvements by actively implementing solutions while simultaneously studying their effects (Streubert & Carpenter, 2002). Originating in the 1940s and popularized by Kurt Lewin, action research emphasizes collaboration and real-time intervention, making it particularly relevant in healthcare and social work contexts. While its practical orientation is a key strength, it also means that findings are typically context-specific and not intended for broad generalization. In contrast, phenomenological research centers on understanding the essence of lived experiences from the perspective of individuals (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). It seeks to examine how people perceive and interpret phenomena, requiring researchers to suspend their preconceptions to capture authentic descriptions of participants' emotions, perceptions, and beliefs (Groenewald, 2004). This approach is especially valuable for exploring personal, subjective experiences, such as health-related issues or social challenges, emphasizing depth and descriptive accuracy.

Lastly, narrative research complements phenomenology by focusing on the stories individuals tell about their lives. It aims to explore how people construct meaning through storytelling, analyzing the cultural and social discourses embedded in their narratives (Trahar, 2009). This methodology

highlights the richness of human experience by examining the ways stories shape understanding and identity, making it particularly useful for capturing complex social phenomena within their cultural contexts (Bochner, 2007; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). These qualitative methodologies provide diverse yet interconnected lenses for exploring human and social phenomena. Their selection depends on the specific research questions, context, and depth of understanding desired, demonstrating the flexibility and richness inherent in qualitative inquiry.

From the above perspectives, qualitative methodology is best suited for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex social, political, and contextual factors that influence how crises such as galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program are constructed, interpreted, and exploited by various actors in Ghana. Given the focus on understanding subjective perceptions, narratives, and strategic framing strategies, qualitative methods enable the researcher to capture rich, nuanced data through interviews, discourse analysis, and thematic examination of texts and speeches. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the meanings, motivations, and power dynamics underlying crisis exploitation, which quantitative methods—focused primarily on numerical data—may not adequately reveal. Ultimately, qualitative research provides the flexibility and depth necessary to unpack the subtle, context-dependent processes that shape political communication and social responses during times of crisis in Ghana.

3.2. Research Design

Research design serves as the systematic framework guiding researchers in collecting information and addressing research questions. It encompasses critical decisions about data sources, collection methods, and analysis techniques. The selection of a research design is influenced by factors such as the nature of the research question, ethical considerations, and underlying assumptions. Various types of research designs, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods designs, cater to

diverse research needs. A well-crafted research design is characterized by neutrality, reliability, validity, and the capacity for generalization. It should align seamlessly with the research problem and the theory being investigated. Researchers leverage different research designs to amass evidence, assess problems, test theories, and articulate phenomena (Yildiz, 2023; Satria, 2023; Perrin, 2023).

Building upon the broader discussion of qualitative methodologies, the multiple case study approach offers a compelling framework for investigating complex social and political phenomena. In the context of Ghana's 2024 election season, where crises such as the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and Galamsey have been strategically exploited by various actors, this methodology provides the depth, contextual understanding, and comparative insights necessary for nuanced analysis.

Adams et al. (2022) emphasize that multiple case studies are particularly suited to exploring phenomena that are embedded within intricate social, political, and institutional contexts. Unlike single case studies, which offer detailed insights into a specific instance, multiple case studies facilitate comparison across different settings, enabling researchers to identify patterns, divergences, and contextual influences that shape actors' behaviors. In Ghana's case, examining different regions or actor groups' engagement with the DDEP and Galamsey crises during the election season allows for a comprehensive understanding of how these crises are manipulated to serve political or economic interests (Gray, 2014).

The theoretical grounding for this approach aligns with constructivist paradigms, which recognize that social realities are constructed through interactions and narratives (Stake, 1995). This perspective is particularly relevant when studying crisis exploitation, as it involves actors' perceptions, strategic framing, and the socio-political narratives that underpin their actions. Yin

(2014) advocates for the use of systematic replication logic – either literal or theoretical – to enhance the robustness of findings across multiple cases. By selecting cases that exemplify different actors or regions involved in crisis exploitation, researchers can validate or challenge theoretical propositions about how crises are manipulated for political gain (Eisenhardt, 1989). In operational terms, employing a multiple case study design involves carefully selecting cases that are rich in information and represent diverse contexts within Ghana. Adams et al. (2022) recommend that case boundaries be clearly delineated based on temporal markers such as the 2024 election period – and geographical or actor-specific factors. This ensures the study remains bounded and manageable while allowing for meaningful comparison. Data collection in this methodology draws on multiple sources – interviews with stakeholders, media reports, official documents, field observations, and social media content – aligning with Gray’s (2014) assertion that triangulation enhances credibility and validity. Adams et al. (2022) further highlight that systematic data collection protocols, including pilot testing and detailed documentation, are crucial for ensuring rigor and facilitating cross-case analysis. Given the politically sensitive nature of the subject matter, ethical considerations such as confidentiality and informed consent are paramount (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Researchers must navigate risks associated with discussing politically charged crises carefully.

Analytical techniques involve within-case analysis – examining each case individually to identify actor strategies, narratives, and contextual factors – and cross-case analysis, which compares cases to uncover overarching patterns or contradictions (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The process of pattern matching is instrumental here; researchers compare observed patterns with theoretical expectations (Zach, 2006). For example, one might explore whether political actors exploit the DDEP to divert public attention from economic hardships or whether criminal groups leverage

Galamsey crises to expand illicit activities during election periods. The concept of the Quintain, as introduced by Stake (2006), guides the selection and comparison of cases. In this research, the Quintain is the deliberate or strategic exploitation of crises during elections in Ghana. Selecting cases that exemplify different actors' approaches – such as politicians, criminal syndicates, or civil society groups – enables the researcher to build a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon across diverse socio-political landscapes. Adams (2019) demonstrates that systematic case selection enhances internal validity and ensures that findings are meaningful and transferable.

Maintaining rigor throughout the process involves thorough documentation, and establishing an audit trail – practices advocated by Gray (2014) and Adams et al. (2022). These procedures help mitigate researcher bias, ensure transparency, and facilitate replication – key criteria for qualitative rigor. Ethical considerations, especially in politically sensitive environments like Ghana, require that researchers adopt a reflexive stance, protecting participant anonymity and being sensitive to potential repercussions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Ultimately, the strength of the multiple case study approach lies in its capacity to generate rich, contextualized insights into how crises are exploited for political advantage. It offers a systematic yet flexible framework to examine diverse actor strategies, regional differences, and socio-political narratives, thereby advancing both scholarly understanding and policy relevance. As Adams et al. (2022) articulate, this methodology not only uncovers patterns but also provides a platform for theory development and practical interventions aimed at safeguarding electoral integrity. In sum, employing a multiple case study design in this research facilitates a holistic, comparative analysis of crisis exploitation during Ghana's electoral season. It underscores the importance of contextual understanding, rigorous data collection, and systematic analysis – principles that are

vital for producing credible, transferable, and ethically sound findings in the dynamic landscape of Ghanaian politics.

3.3 Research setting

This study is set within the socio-political and economic environment of Ghana, focusing on the strategic exploitation of crises – specifically, the galamsey (illegal mining) crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – during the 2024 electoral cycle. The context encompasses the nation’s democratic processes, political party dynamics, media landscape, civil society activism, and community perceptions that shape and are shaped by these crises.

i. Geographical Context:

The research is rooted in Ghana’s diverse regions where the crises are most salient, including the Western and Ashanti regions for galamsey due to high activity and environmental impact, and Accra and other urban centers for the DDEP, where political discourse and public protests are prominent. These regions are characterized by contrasting socio-economic conditions, environmental challenges, and political engagement levels, providing a comprehensive landscape for analysis.

ii. Political Environment

The setting involves the two dominant political parties – the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) – whose campaigns, speeches, and policies are central to understanding crisis framing and exploitation. The political climate is highly competitive, with electioneering strategies often employing narratives around these crises to sway public opinion and voter behavior.

iii. Media and Public Discourse

The Ghanaian media landscape, including state-owned outlets, private media, social media platforms, and community radios, form a fertile ground for narrative construction and dissemination. The proliferation of social media, in particular, amplifies political and civil society voices, enabling rapid mobilization and contestation of crisis narratives.

iv. Temporal Context

The research focuses on a defined period – from the peak of political contestation (2022) and into the lead-up to the 2024 general elections. This timeframe captures the evolution of narratives, stakeholder responses, and strategic maneuvering during a politically charged season.

v. Methodological Implication

This setting informs the selection of qualitative case studies, interviews, and discourse analysis. It underscores the importance of contextual sensitivity, capturing the nuanced ways in which Ghanaian political actors, media outlets, civil society, and communities craft and respond to crisis narratives within their specific socio-political landscape.

3.4. Study Population

The primary political figures sampled include speeches and comments made by the National Communication Officers and Flagbearers of both the governing NPP and the Opposition NDC. These encompass campaign platform addresses, live TV interviews, and remarks during the launch of campaign activities and manifestos concerning DDEP and galamsey. Additionally, comments from other significant party members on the subject matter during the campaign launch and manifesto presentations will be analyzed to understand the framing and narrative strategies employed by both parties.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was employed to select the data sources who have direct involvement in the cases under study. The choice between purposive and convenience sampling hinges on the research purpose. Purposive sampling emphasizes depth and relevance, ensuring that selected data sources possess pertinent knowledge or experience (Leiner, 2014), whereas convenience sampling prioritizes accessibility but may limit the richness of data (Etikan et al., 2016). For this study, purposive sampling is preferable due to its capacity to target specific actors involved in crisis framing, ensuring data relevance and richness. The use of multiple cases – comprising political figures from both parties facilitates a comparative analysis of narratives and tactics employed during crisis exploitation. This aligns with the methodological recommendation that multiple case studies enhance understanding of complex social phenomena by revealing patterns across different contexts (Stake, 2006).

3.6. Data Collection Instruments

Data were gathered through analysis of speeches, televised interviews, campaign platform comments, social media posts, manifestos, and public statements through online search. These sources provided a comprehensive view of how crises are rhetorically constructed and employed by various actors within Ghana's political landscape.

3.7. Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this study was systematic, multi-phased, and aimed at capturing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how Ghanaian political actors and stakeholders strategically exploit crises such as galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP). The process involves multiple methods to ensure richness, triangulation, and validity of data, carried out as follows:

Step 1: Identification and Selection of Data Sources

i) Primary Sources

- Speeches, statements, and remarks by key political figures, including the NPP and NDC flagbearers, communication officers, and campaign leaders during the electoral period.

ii) Secondary Sources

- Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp groups) capturing public discourse and political narratives.

- Official government documents, policy statements, and campaign manifestos related to galamsey and DDEP.

- Social media content, including posts, comments, hashtags, and trending topics relevant to the crises.

Step 2: Data Gathering Techniques

i) Document Analysis

- Systematic collection of speeches, press releases, manifestos, and policy documents through online archives, official government and party websites.

- Compilation of social media posts, trending hashtags, and online debates during key political events and crises escalation periods.

Step 3: Data Recording and Management

- Media content, speeches, and online comments will be saved as digital files, screenshots, or transcripts.

- A secure digital database will be established for organizing and storing all raw data, with appropriate coding and labeling for easy retrieval.

Step 4: Ethical Considerations

- Prior to data collection, ethical approval will be sought from the relevant institutional review board.
- Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained by assigning pseudonyms and removing identifiable information from transcripts and reports.

Step 5: Data Collection Timeline

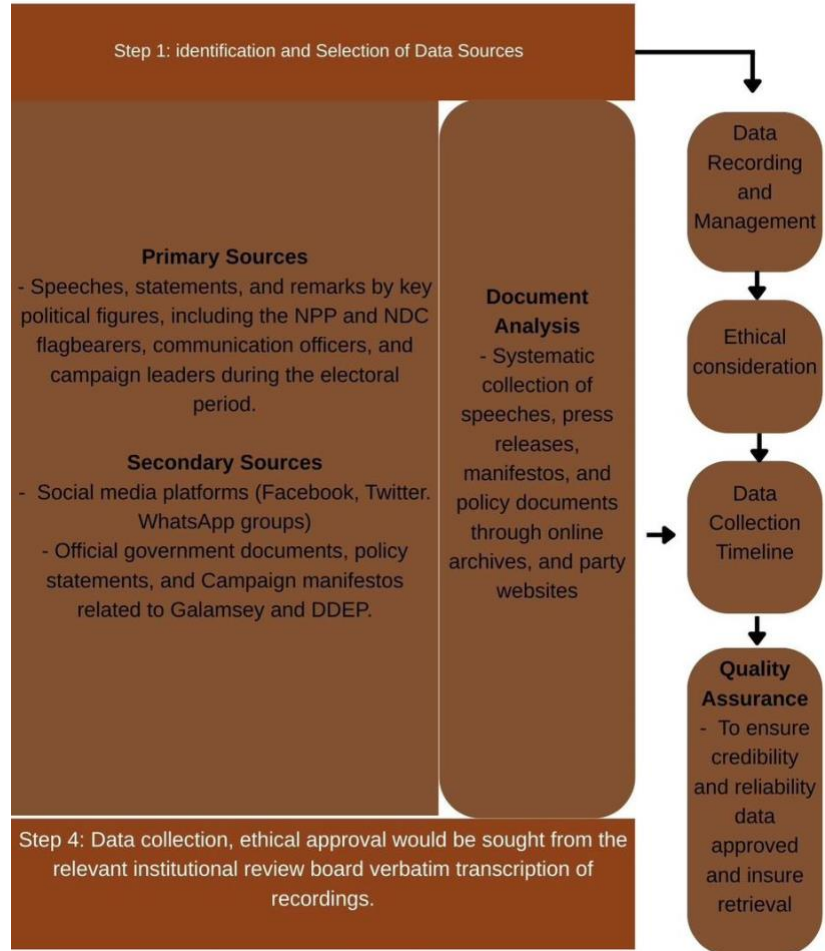
- The collection process will span approximately 8-12 weeks, allowing flexibility for scheduling, follow-up interviews, and data saturation.

Step 6: Quality Assurance

- To ensure credibility and reliability, data collection will involve multiple researchers (research team members) cross-checking and verifying data.
- Pilot testing data recording procedures will be conducted to refine questions and technical approaches.
- Regular debriefings will be held to monitor progress, address challenges, and ensure consistency across data sources.

The data collection process include document analysis, all conducted within an ethical framework. This multi-method approach ensures depth, breadth, and triangulation, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the strategic narratives and exploitation of crises in Ghana's political landscape during the 2024 election cycle.

Figure 2.0 summary of multi-phased systematic data collection for Crisis Exploitation



The above table is a summary of the systematic data collection, multi-phased, and aimed at capturing a comprehensive understanding of how Gnanan political actors and stakeholders strategically exploit crises such as a galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), during the 2024-election cycle.

3.8. Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected from speeches, interviews, public statements, and other textual sources were analyzed using a combination of qualitative methods to identify themes, framing strategies, and narratives employed by various actors in the exploitation of crises such as galamsey and DDEP. Thematic Content Analysis was employed as a systematic technique to uncover recurring ideas,

perceptions, and framing strategies across the textual data, providing a structured approach to interpret patterns within stakeholder communications, including those from political actors, civil society, activists, and industry representatives. This method, as outlined by Alhojailan (2012), facilitated detailed interpretation by classifying data into meaningful themes, revealing underlying patterns. Boyatzis (1998) emphasized that thematic analysis not only offers in-depth illustration of data but also links patterns to relevant theoretical frameworks, making it highly suitable for exploring complex social and political issues such as crisis framing and stakeholder narratives. In practice, the data were initially familiarized through repeated readings of transcripts, speeches, social media comments, and policy documents to develop an intimate understanding of the content and context of stakeholder communications related to the crises (Hatch, 2002).

A coding framework was also developed based on initial readings and relevant theoretical concepts related to crisis exploitation, framing, the blame game, and crisis opportunity frameworks. This framework guided the systematic coding of textual data, with segments of statements being tagged with codes representing preliminary themes such as “crisis framing,” “political blame-shifting,” and “activist resistance” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data analysis software like SPSS was utilized to enhance the efficiency of organizing and retrieving coded segments for further analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). The coded data were then examined to identify recurring themes across different stakeholder narratives, which included "narrative influence," "political blame," "activist mobilization," and "policy framing," thus providing a nuanced understanding of how crises are constructed and exploited within Ghanaian politics. Following the approach of Namey et al. (2008), the analysis moved beyond mere word counting to interpret both explicit ideas and implicit meanings, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder discourses.

In previous research, thematic analysis has been effectively employed to compare themes across different groups or time periods, thereby revealing how narratives evolve and influence public perception and policy responses (Creswell, 2009). Its flexibility, which accommodates both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) approaches, has made it adaptable for exploring emergent themes or testing predefined hypotheses within various studies (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Hayes, 1997). This technique has proven particularly suitable when the goal was to interpret stakeholder perspectives, identify framing strategies, and trace the influence of narratives throughout different phases of a crisis (Hatch, 2002), thus enabling researchers to analyze how political actors, civil society, and activists articulate their positions at various stages, and how these narratives shape public discourse and policy actions.

Discourse and Narrative Analysis have been established as essential qualitative techniques for examining how language constructs social and political realities, particularly within the context of crisis exploitation in Ghanaian politics. Prior research has demonstrated that this approach enables a nuanced understanding of how strategic framing and storytelling by political actors shape perceptions, influence public opinion, and either reinforce or challenge dominant narratives (Chilton, 2004). Paul Chilton (2004) emphasized that language plays a central role in political life, from micro-level speech acts to macro-level national discourses, a perspective that has informed subsequent analyses of political communication. In the Ghanaian crisis context, scholars have analyzed how political figures, activists, and media utilize metaphors, rhetorical devices, and symbolic expressions to reveal underlying power dynamics, ideological positioning, and framing strategies related to crises such as the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and Galamsey (Chilton, 2004). For instance, examining how leaders describe these issues as emergencies, opportunities, or threats has been instrumental in understanding their influence on public

engagement and mobilization. Discourse analysis has involved scrutinizing linguistic choices – such as word selection, metaphors, and speech acts – that shape social realities (Mey, 2001). For example, metaphors like “war,” “battle,” or “battlefield” have been analyzed for their role in mobilizing support or justifying policies, with rhetorical devices serving to reinforce particular narratives and frame issues either as crises requiring management or as opportunities for political advantage (Chilton, 2004).

furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that narrative analysis is essential in understanding how stories are constructed to interpret complex socio-political phenomena. Narratives have been shown to either align with or challenge dominant discourses, thereby influencing public perceptions of blame, responsibility, and potential solutions (Wodak, 1996). For instance, political leaders have crafted narratives that blame opposition parties for crises, framing these issues as results of mismanagement, while others have positioned themselves as the sole saviors with the solutions (Chilton, 2004). Such narratives serve to reinforce their political legitimacy and strategic interests. Discourse analysis has been employed to reveal how language is strategically used to shape perceptions, mobilize civil society, and legitimize political actions (Wodak, 1996). It has also been used to identify rhetorical devices and symbolic language that evoke emotional responses, thereby either broadening or constraining the scope for dissent (Chilton, 2004). Additionally, examining how political actors invoke themes like national identity, sovereignty, or moral values has provided insight into how crises are framed to advance specific political agendas (Wodak, 1996; Chilton, 2004).

In prior research, Habermas’s theory of communicative action and validity claims (Habermas, 1971, 1973, 1979) has served as a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing how language functions within social and political contexts. Discourse analysis has been employed to examine

whether political language adheres to or breaches these validity claims – namely, truthfulness, sincerity, and normative rightness – or whether it is strategically manipulated to serve vested interests (Wodak, 1996). For instance, analyses of political statements regarding the DDEP and Galamsey have revealed instances where representations are either based on factual accuracy or are used manipulatively to conceal underlying motives. Researchers have analyzed transcripts of speeches, media reports, social media posts, and policy documents to identify recurring themes, metaphors, and framing strategies, uncovering how such language shapes and reflects social realities and political power struggles during crises (Mey, 2001). Furthermore, these studies have considered intertextuality – how narratives are constructed across different texts – and the embedded power relations within language use. Employing discourse and narrative analysis has thus proven instrumental in understanding how Ghanaian political actors craft and utilize language to exploit crises, revealing the strategic, symbolic, and ideological functions of their stories in shaping social and political realities during times of crisis (Chilton, 2004; Wodak, 1996). Such analyses have been crucial in unpacking the influential role of language in constructing and perpetuating social and political narratives in crisis contexts.

The study further employed Comparative Analysis as a key methodological approach to understand the dynamics of crisis exploitation within Ghanaian politics, particularly in analyzing the narratives and framing strategies used by competing political parties and civil society actors. As demonstrated by Pickvance (2021), this approach involves examining multiple cases – such as political parties, advocacy groups, or social movements – to elucidate the causal conditions underlying observed similarities and differences. In this context, the analysis facilitated an exploration of how Ghanaian political actors constructed narratives around crises like the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and Galamsey, and how these narratives influenced

activism and public mobilization. By systematically comparing the framing strategies of the two dominant parties – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) – patterns and divergences in their discourse were identified. This comparison revealed whether their crisis exploitation strategies were rooted in similar causal mechanisms – such as economic insecurity, legitimacy concerns, or electoral strategy – or diverged due to ideological, institutional, or contextual factors (Pickvance, 2021). Additionally, the analysis examined narrative features like the use of metaphors, emotive language, and appeals to national identity across different actors. These features were analyzed to determine whether they functioned as causal tools that mobilized public sentiment or strategic devices aimed at undermining opposition. Furthermore, contrasting how advocacy groups framed issues like Galamsey and DDEP shed light on the influence of discourse in shaping activism, resistance, and policy debates.

Importantly, Pickvance (2021) emphasizes the significance of plural causation – the recognition that multiple causal pathways may produce similar or contrasting narratives. This perspective allows for a nuanced understanding that the framing strategies utilized by political parties and advocacy groups are often driven by complex, interrelated causal factors – such as socio-economic conditions, political ideologies, or external influences – operating through diverse mechanisms. For instance, a political party’s framing of a crisis as a threat to sovereignty may be motivated by strategic electoral considerations, while advocacy groups’ narratives may be influenced by social justice concerns. The application of comparative analysis further enables researchers to adopt different analytical orientations, such as universalising (identifying common patterns across cases) or differentiating (explaining variations). For example, if both parties employ similar discourse devices – such as framing the crises as national emergencies – this suggests a shared narrative strategy potentially rooted in common political culture. Conversely, if their framing diverges –

emphasizing external interference versus internal mismanagement – these differences can be explained through causal models that consider ideological orientations, institutional contexts, or socio-economic backgrounds (Tilly, 1984).

In executing this analytical approach, careful attention was paid to research design considerations, including case selection, comparability, and contextual factors. Pickvance (2021) emphasizes that the strength of causal inferences derived from comparative analysis hinges on selecting cases that are comparable along meaningful dimensions – such as socio-economic status, historical background, or institutional frameworks – while allowing for variation where relevant. This approach ensured that observed similarities and differences were both meaningful and analytically significant. Consequently, the comparative analysis proved to be a robust framework for dissecting the strategic deployment of narratives in Ghanaian politics surrounding crises like the DDEP and Galamsey. It facilitated an in-depth understanding of how political actors construct, employ, and mobilize discursive strategies based on underlying causal mechanisms. Employing this approach enabled the study to generate meaningful insights into the causal pathways and contextual factors shaping crisis exploitation, thereby contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical policy considerations (Pickvance, 2021).

3.9. Triangulation as a Data Analysis Technique in the Study of Crisis Exploitation in Ghana's Politics

In this study, triangulation was employed as a crucial methodological strategy to enhance the validity, credibility, and reliability of the findings, particularly in examining the phenomenon of crisis exploitation within Ghanaian politics, with a focus on the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and Galamsey. As Carter et al. (2014) and Patton (1999) have articulated, triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources, methods, theories, or investigators to cross-verify and

deepen the understanding of complex social phenomena. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of political narratives, activism, and discourse surrounding these crises, triangulation provided a comprehensive lens through which to interpret divergent yet interconnected perspectives. Patton (1999) emphasized that such an approach allows for a more holistic understanding by examining phenomena from different vantage points. Accordingly, in this research, triangulation was applied through the analysis of speeches, public statements, media reports, and interviews with key stakeholders – including politicians, activists, and community leaders – thereby capturing a broad spectrum of voices involved in crisis framing and response. Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) outlined four types of triangulations, all of which were pertinent to this study.

Multiple forms of triangulation were employed to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. Method triangulation was utilized by combining thematic analysis of speeches and public statements with discourse analysis of media content and in-depth interviews, allowing for cross-validation of key themes such as economic sovereignty and environmental concerns (Polit & Beck, 2012). Investigator triangulation was applied by involving multiple researchers in analyzing the data, which helped mitigate individual biases and ensured a more comprehensive interpretation; for instance, one researcher focused on linguistic features while another examined the socio-political context (Denzin, 1978). Theory triangulation was also integrated by applying various theoretical frameworks – including discourse analysis, political economy, and social constructivism – to explore different dimensions of crisis narratives and test the consistency of the findings (Patton, 1999). Furthermore, data source triangulation was adopted by collecting information from diverse sources such as political speeches, media reports, interviews, and social media posts, enabling the comparison of perspectives from civil society groups, government officials, and media outlets to identify discrepancies or consensus in crisis framing (Fern, 1982;

Russell et al., 2005). For example, themes such as external manipulation or national sovereignty were cross-verified across these sources, ensuring a robust and nuanced understanding of how various actors contribute to and shape crisis narratives.

For the purpose of this study, method triangulation – combining thematic and discourse analysis – was employed to facilitate a nuanced examination of language, metaphors, and framing strategies used by political actors and social groups, aligning with the approaches outlined by Creswell (2009). Investigator triangulation involving multiple analysts was utilized to enhance objectivity and mitigate personal biases, especially given the politically sensitive nature of the cases, as recommended by Denzin (1978). Theory triangulation was also incorporated to interpret data through various lenses, revealing how different theoretical perspectives explain the mechanisms of crisis exploitation, in line with the suggestions of Patton (1999). Vivek and Nanthagopan (2023) emphasized that triangulation increases confidence in research data and fosters innovative understanding by integrating multiple perspectives, while also challenging assumptions and identifying outliers – such as divergent narratives that may reveal underlying power struggles or ideological conflicts. Nevertheless, Thurmond (2001) and Carter (2014) cautioned that triangulation can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, requiring careful management of conflicting data across sources. To ensure validity, data from different sources and methods were analyzed separately before synthesis, following best practices outlined by Carter (2014) and Morse (2009, 2003), to avoid misinterpretation or overgeneralization. Proper integration was deemed critical to prevent compromising the trustworthiness of findings, which could occur if data were not systematically cross-verified. Overall, triangulation provided a rigorous and comprehensive framework for analyzing how Ghanaian political actors and civil society groups constructed and deployed narratives around crises like the DDEP and Galamsey, aligning with the assertions of

Carter et al. (2014) and Vivek & Nanthagopan (2023), and ensuring the credibility and depth of the qualitative analysis in this politically charged environment.

3.10. Data Interpretation

The final stage of this research involved interpreting the findings within the theoretical frameworks of crisis exploitation and political communication, as demonstrated in prior studies that emphasize how strategic narratives are constructed, disseminated, and influence public discourse, political behavior, and activism related to issues like Galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) (Chilton, 2004; Mey, 2001). Given the distinct socio-political and economic contexts surrounding these two cases, each case study was analyzed separately to ensure a nuanced understanding and to capture the unique narratives, framing strategies, and stakeholder dynamics inherent in each crisis, following methodological approaches used by Stake (1995) and Yin (2014). The data collected – such as speeches, interviews, public statements, social media comments, and policy documents – were analyzed using a combination of qualitative methods, notably Thematic Content Analysis and Discourse and Narrative Analysis, consistent with techniques outlined by Boyatzis (1998) and Hatch (2002). These methods helped uncover themes, framing strategies, and language use employed by various actors, including political leaders, civil society, activists, and industry representatives, aligning with existing research on discourse analysis and strategic communication (Chilton, 2004; Mey, 2001).

Previous research has demonstrated the effective use of Thematic Content Analysis to systematically identify, analyze, and interpret recurring ideas, perceptions, and framing mechanisms within textual data (Alhojailan, 2012; Boyatzis, 1998). This method has been instrumental in understanding how crises are framed and exploited, as it enables detailed interpretation by classifying data into meaningful themes that connect patterns to broader

theoretical constructs. The process typically begins with familiarization, involving repeated readings of transcripts, speeches, media content, and social media comments to develop an intimate understanding of stakeholder communications related to each crisis (Hatch, 2002). A coding framework grounded in relevant theoretical concepts – such as crisis framing, blame-shifting, and activist resistance – has been used to guide the systematic coding process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analyzed through qualitative software tools, the coded data reveal key themes like "narrative influence," "political blame," "activist mobilization," and "policy framing," which help elucidate how actors articulate and deploy narratives within each crisis context. Complementing this, Discourse and Narrative Analysis have been employed to examine how language constructs social and political realities, focusing on metaphors, rhetorical devices, and symbolic expressions (Chilton, 2004). This approach has been particularly suited to investigating how political figures, activists, and media frame issues such as Galamsey and DDEP – as emergencies, opportunities, or threats – and how these framings influence public perception and policy responses. Discourse analysis typically scrutinizes linguistic choices, like metaphors such as "war" or "battle," and rhetorical strategies used in speeches and media reports to either mobilize support or justify policies, while narrative analysis explores how stories are constructed to assign blame, legitimize actors, or rally activism, shaping the social construction of each crisis. To compare and contrast these narratives across cases, researchers have systematically employed Comparative Analysis to uncover whether similar or divergent mechanisms underpin their exploitation, and to examine how causal factors – such as ideological orientation, socio-economic conditions, or external influences – differ across contexts (Pickvance, 2021). This comparison has provided nuanced insights into how actors articulate positions, mobilize support, and influence public discourse. To ensure the validity and depth of findings, triangulation strategies – including

method triangulation (combining thematic, discourse, and narrative analyses), investigator triangulation (multiple analysts), theory triangulation (various theoretical lenses), and data source triangulation (multiple textual sources) – have been widely adopted to cross-verify themes and interpretations (Carter et al., 2014; Patton, 1999; Vivek & Nanthagopan, 2023). This multi-layered approach has proven effective in capturing the complex realities of crisis narratives, enabling researchers to accurately compare and contrast how each crisis is strategically framed and exploited within Ghanaian political discourse.

Thematic Framework for Crisis Exploitation in Ghana: Galamsey and DDEP

1. Core Concept: Crisis Exploitation

- Strategic use of crises by actors to serve political, economic, or ideological goals.
- Transformation of crises into opportunities for influence, reform, or legitimacy.

2. Key Themes & Sub-Themes

A. Framing Strategies

i) Issue Presentation & Narrative Construction

- Emphasizing environmental vs. economic vs. political aspects.
- Use of metaphors (e.g., "war," "battlefield") to shape perceptions.

ii) Strength & Persuasion of Frames

- Strong vs. weak frames: credibility, resonance, frequency.
- Competitive framing: "Loudness" vs. "Strength" hypotheses.

iii) Context & Audience Engagement

- Prior beliefs, motivation, media environment.

B. Blame Game & Responsibility Attribution

i) Strategic Blame Shifting

- Incumbents blame opposition, external forces, or systemic issues.
- Opponents blame incumbents, corruption, mismanagement.

ii) Discourse & Argumentation

- Use of evaluative language (Appraisal theory): moral judgments, capacity, veracity.
- Argument schemes & topoi: "government failure," "moral transgressions."

iii) Mobilization & Legitimacy

- Blame narratives to delegitimize opponents or justify policies.
- Exploiting blame to galvanize support or undermine opposition.

C. Crisis-Opportunity Dynamics

i) Dislocation & Reframing

- Crises as moments to redefine authority, propose new policies.
- Political actors' interest in creating or amplifying crises.

ii. Manipulation & Learning

- Use of crises to gain electoral support, influence reform.
- Superficial reforms vs. genuine systemic change.

iii. Political Contestation & Power Struggles

- Framing battles over severity, responsibility, and solutions.
- Strategic maneuvering in media, inquiry forums, parliament.

D. Stakeholder & Actor Strategies

i) Government & Political Parties

- Framing crises as national necessity or threats.
- Campaigns, policy proposals, and public messaging.

ii) Opposition & Civil Society

- Critiquing government, mobilizing public dissent.
- Using media & social platforms to shape narratives.

iii) Media & Public Discourse

- Issue framing, emotional appeals, populist rhetoric.
- Social media as battleground for narratives and mobilization.

E. Ethical & Societal Implications

i) Manipulation & Ethical Concerns

- Use of crises for political gain at societal expense.
- Scapegoating vulnerable groups (e.g., miners, pensioners).

ii) Social Justice & Accountability

- Demands for transparency, equitable solutions.
- Social safety nets & community participation.

3. Interconnections & Flow

Framing Strategies influence the Blame Game, which in turn shapes Political & Public Responses.

- The Crisis-Opportunity theme explains how actors manipulate perceptions to redefine authority and advance interests.
- Stakeholder Strategies are mediated by the framing and blame narratives, with media acting as a conduit.
- Ethical implications underpin the entire process, highlighting risks of manipulation, injustice, and social destabilization.

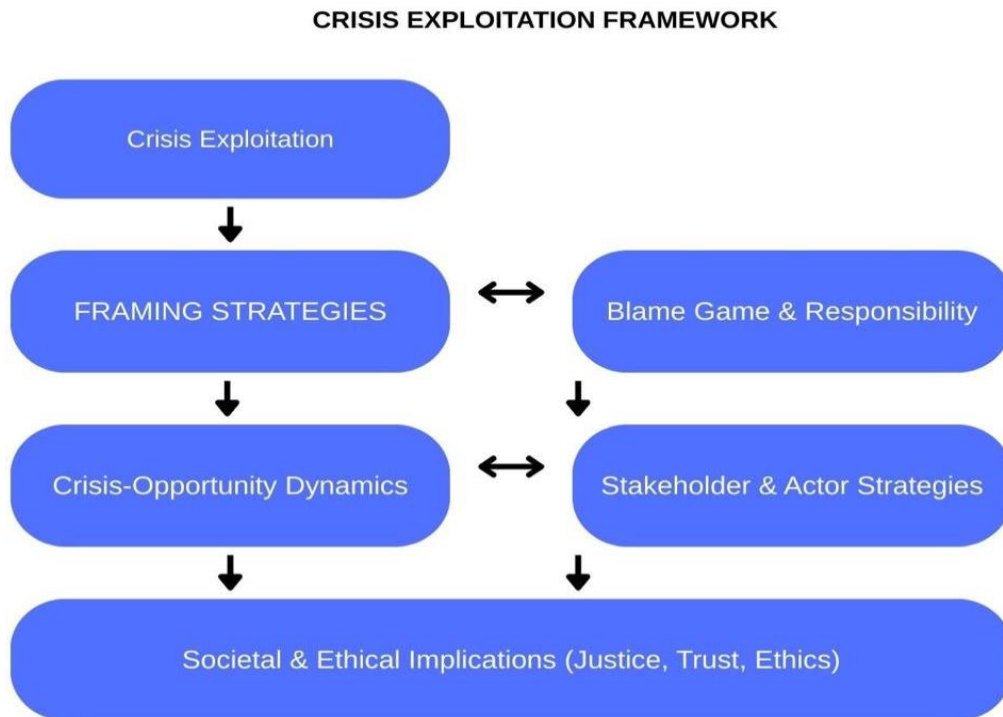
4. Visual Representation (Conceptual)

The following thematic map encapsulates the interconnected theme that was explored from the literature review:

- How issues are framed to influence perception.
- How blame is strategically assigned to legitimize or delegitimize actors.
- How crises are exploited as opportunities for political or social gain.
- The role of different stakeholders and media in shaping narratives.
- The ethical considerations and societal impacts of crisis exploitation.

This framework will serve as a guide for the analysis, helping to identify where and how different actors deploy strategies within each theme, both in the context of Galamsey and DDEP in Ghana.

Figure 3.0 Crisis Exploitation Framework



3.11. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board before the commencement of the study, and all activities adhered to national and international ethical guidelines for social research. Data management protocols ensured that all collected information was stored securely, with electronic files password-protected and physical documents kept in locked cabinets, and that data was used solely for academic and policy purposes. Throughout the research process, cultural sensitivity and respect for Ghanaian social norms were prioritized, fostering an environment of trust and impartiality. The research team maintained transparency about their methods and objectives, avoiding deception and striving to present findings objectively

(Staksrud, Kolstad, Bang, & Bomann-Larsen, 2022). Reflexivity was practiced to account for potential biases, and efforts were made to address power dynamics, ensuring voluntary participation and giving voice to marginalized perspectives. The team also recognized its responsibility to prevent the dissemination of misinformation or content that could exacerbate social or political tensions. Overall, all ethical considerations were diligently observed, ensuring that the study upheld the highest standards of integrity and social responsibility.

3.12. Limitations

The study has several limitations that warrant consideration. Its qualitative design means that interpretations of narratives, discourses, and themes are inherently subjective, and although measures such as investigator triangulation were employed to enhance credibility, some degree of researcher bias may remain. The study concentrated on a particular timeframe surrounding the 2024 election cycle, which means it may not reflect how narratives evolve over a longer period or include longer-term influences. While social media content was analyzed as part of the data, the study did not incorporate media reports from traditional outlets, nor did it include the perspectives of voters themselves to assess how these narratives directly influence voter perceptions and behavior. Ethical considerations around confidentiality and participant safety also constrained certain aspects of data collection. Despite triangulation efforts, discrepancies among sources – such as differing stakeholder accounts – present challenges in forming definitive conclusions. Limited access to certain regions or individuals due to resource constraints may have restricted the comprehensiveness of the data. Language and cultural factors, even with all participants speaking in English, might have influenced the interpretation of specific expressions or metaphors, especially those embedded in local contexts. The complexity of Ghana’s socio-political landscape and the interconnectedness of various factors make establishing causal relationships difficult

within the scope of this qualitative approach. Overall, these limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the results and considering their implications for policy and future research.

3.13. Chapter Summary

Chapter Three details the comprehensive research methodology underpinning the study of how crises are strategically exploited within Ghanaian politics, particularly during the 2024 election cycle. It establishes a qualitative approach as the core framework, emphasizing the importance of capturing nuanced, context-rich insights into political discourse, stakeholder perceptions, and social responses. The chapter outlines a multiple case study design, selecting diverse cases across regions and actor groups to facilitate in-depth comparison and pattern recognition. Data collection involved analyzing speeches, media reports, social media content, interviews, and official documents, employing methods such as thematic content analysis, discourse, and narrative analysis, all guided by rigorous triangulation strategies to enhance validity and credibility.

The research setting is contextualized within Ghana's socio-political landscape, highlighting key regional, political, media, and civil society factors that influence crisis narratives. The population includes political figures from major parties, civil society activists, and advocacy groups, selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance and depth. Ethical considerations prioritized informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, with measures taken to mitigate risks associated with politically sensitive topics. Data analysis focused on identifying framing strategies, blame attribution, and narratives that shape public perception and political behavior. The chapter emphasizes the importance of theoretical frameworks like crisis exploitation and political communication, alongside analytical approaches such as thematic, discourse, comparative, and triangulation techniques, to interpret complex social and political phenomena effectively. Limitations acknowledged include potential researcher bias, regional and participant selection

constraints, language and cultural influences on interpretation, and the challenge of establishing causality within qualitative research boundaries. Overall, this chapter provides a detailed blueprint for systematically investigating the strategic use and manipulation of crises in Ghanaian politics, laying a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis and findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the strategic exploitation of national crises – specifically the Galamsey environmental menace and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – by Ghana’s major political parties during the 2024 electoral cycle. As political actors navigate a complex landscape marked by economic hardship, environmental degradation, and governance challenges, understanding how these crises are framed and leveraged becomes crucial to comprehending the dynamics of political communication and manipulation in Ghanaian democracy.

Drawing upon a broad array of speeches, manifestos, media statements, and public addresses, this chapter systematically analyzes the narratives and rhetorical strategies employed by both the opposition (NDC) and the incumbent (NPP) parties. By applying theories of crisis framing, moral and emotional appeals, and strategic communication, the analysis reveals how political actors transform societal vulnerabilities into powerful tools for mobilization, legitimacy-building, and opposition positioning. Through a comparative lens, the chapter examines the similarities and differences in how each party exploits these crises to reinforce their political agendas, discredit opponents, and shape public perceptions. It also highlights the ethical considerations, risks, and implications of crisis exploitation in Ghana’s democratic processes, offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between crisis narratives and political power.

Ultimately, this chapter underscores the centrality of crisis framing in contemporary Ghanaian politics, illustrating how strategic communication during times of societal distress can influence electoral outcomes, policy debates, and the broader democratic trajectory.

4.1. Research Objective

This study aims to analyze the strategic exploitation of the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) by the two dominant political parties in Ghana in the lead-up to the 2024 elections, focusing on how the ruling and opposition parties framed these crises within their electoral narratives, policy justification, and voter mobilization, as well as uncovering the extent of exploitation for political gain alongside the associated risks, ethical dilemmas, and broader impacts on governance and democratic sustainability in Ghana.

4.2 Summary of Data Collection Approach

The data collection approach for this study was comprehensive, systematic, and designed to ensure depth, validity, and triangulation of findings. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with direct involvement or interest in the closed fishing season policy, including political figures from both major parties and community stakeholders. This targeted approach facilitated the collection of rich, relevant data crucial for understanding the strategic framing of crises within Ghanaian politics. Data were gathered through a multi-source analysis, including speeches, televised interviews, campaign platform statements, manifestos, and public statements obtained via online searches. These sources provided a broad and nuanced view of how various political actors construct and employ crisis narratives.

The data collection process involved several phases: identifying and selecting primary sources such as speeches, press releases, and social media content; conducting systematic document

analysis through online archives and official websites; and recording data as digital files, transcripts, or screenshots, which were organized within a secure digital database. Ethical approval was secured prior to data collection, ensuring adherence to research standards. The entire process spanned approximately 8-12 weeks, allowing for flexibility to include follow-up interviews and data saturation. Multiple researchers participated in data collection and verification, with regular debriefings to maintain consistency and credibility. This multi-method, triangulated approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how Ghanaian political actors strategically exploit crises like galamsey and DDEP, providing a solid foundation for the study's analysis of crisis framing and political manipulation during the 2024 election cycle.

4.3 Analysis of Key Findings

This study adopts a systematic approach to analyze how Ghanaian political actors and stakeholders strategically exploit crises such as the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and galamsey to shape political narratives and influence public perception. The primary objective is to understand the communication tactics employed by both the incumbent NPP and opposition parties during the electoral cycle, and how these tactics impact civil society, activism, and voter behavior. The investigation aims to uncover the ways in which crisis framing is employed to reinforce party legitimacy, mobilize support, and navigate the complex political landscape in Ghana.

The analysis focuses on examining key political speeches, televised interviews, campaign statements, social media discourse, and official government documents collected during the research period. It explores how these various sources are used to construct, amplify, or manipulate crisis narratives to serve political objectives. Special attention is given to the framing devices, rhetorical strategies, and messaging patterns that underpin the political communication surrounding the crises.

4.3.1. Analysis NDC Comments on Domestic Debt Exchange Program

i. Analysis of the full speech by His Excellency John Dramani Mahama on "Building the Ghana We Want."

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic Crisis & Urgency	National Crisis & Leadership	Acknowledgment of the dire economic situation	Ghana's economic decline, currency depreciation, debt crisis	"Our economy has lurched from crisis to crisis... currency, the Ghana Cedi, has depreciated by over 62%."
	Strengthening the Frame	Government's Role & Failures	Criticism of mismanagement and reckless borrowing	Overspending, misreporting, lack of decisive action	"The biggest blame for the current tragic situation... lies with the very people charged with managing the country."
	Audience Engagement	Public Suffering	Everyday hardship faced by Ghanaians	Rising prices, unemployment, health costs, business failures	"Prices of items including medication, salt, gari and cooking oil,

					are constantly on the rise."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Leadership Failure	Failure to act, denial of responsibility	"Since my speech in May, the situation has spiraled out of control."	"The President failed to address the nation and take responsibility."
	Argumentation	Policy Failures	Poor economic management, lack of reforms	Failure of Planting for Food and Jobs, mismanaged sectors	"The Planting for Food and Jobs programme.. grossly mismanaged."
	Legitimacy Building	Opposition & Alternatives	Alternative solutions from opposition	Outlined proposals for debt reduction, expenditure cuts	"We have already put out an eleven-point proposal."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Call for Unity & Sacrifice	Emphasizing collective effort	"We can save Ghana and build the Ghana we want"	"Let us rise! Let us hold each other's hands!"

	Manipulation / Learning	Optimism & Patriotism	Faith in the Ghanaian spirit	"Ghana's darkest days have always been followed by its finest hours."	"We always mobilize when all hope seems lost."
	Political Contestation	Responsibility & Leadership	Leaders and citizens working together	Emphasis on the need for honest contemplation... face the truth, accept faults and act.	"Government and the people must work together to turn around the economy."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Leaders	Leadership & Governance	Need for responsible leadership	Urging the President and armed forces to remain loyal	"I agree with the President and wish to add my voice to his call..."
	Citizens & Civil Society	Civic Responsibility	Role of Ghanaians in rebuilding	Encouragement for national unity, sacrifices	"We are ready to move mountains to protect and build Ghana."
	International & Regional Partners	External Support	IMF, bilateral partners, regional cooperation	Mention of IMF negotiations, international support	"We need an IMF programme, and the government

					must act quickly."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Leadership & Integrity	Leaders admitting faults, humility	"We need to accept where we have gone wrong"	"Government must accept publicly that they have gone wrong."
	Social Responsibility	Common Good & Unity	Putting national interest above personal or partisan gains	"Our lives are at stake, and we must act together."	"Let us put our shoulders and minds to the wheel."
	Corruption & Systemic Issues	Social Justice & Equity	Focus on vulnerable groups, equitable growth	Highlighting struggles of farmers, families	"Mothers suffering heartbreak, families struggling to survive."
Reform & Structural Change	Economic & Governance Reforms	Long-term Development	Structural reforms, diversification, local production	"We need fundamental shifts in our economic structure."	"We must revisit Operation Feed Yourself."
	Institutional Reforms	Improving Efficiency & Accountability	Strengthening institutions, fighting corruption	Call for transparency, reducing waste	"We need to introduce stricter public financial management."

	Sustainable Development	Future Planning	Infrastructure, energy, local industry	Investments in gas, energy, agriculture	"The Atuabo Gas Plant, and leveraging energy sectors."
--	--------------------------------	-----------------	--	---	--

Former President John Mahama’s address, delivered on October 25, 2022, occurred at a critical juncture in Ghana’s economic crisis, preceding the formal announcement of the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP). This timing is significant as it allowed Mahama to shape public perceptions and narratives around the crisis before the government officially launched the intervention, thereby potentially influencing public opinion and muddying the waters for the government.

Crisis Framing and Political Narratives:

Mahama employed a highly emotive and comprehensive crisis framing, depicting Ghana’s economic downturn as a culmination of years of mismanagement, reckless borrowing, and systemic corruption. By emphasizing the severity of the crisis – currency depreciation, soaring debt levels, inflation, and social hardship – he effectively constructed a narrative of systemic failure attributable primarily to incumbent governance.

This framing aligns with the Issue Framing role, where the opposition leader positioned the crisis as a "National Crisis & Leadership Failure," emphasizing that the crisis was avoidable and directly linked to the ruling government’s policies. This strategic framing seeks to shift the blame from the broader global context (e.g., COVID-19, Ukraine conflict) to specific domestic policy failures, thereby exploiting the crisis to paint the current administration as irresponsible and negligent.

Blame-Shifting and Political Strategy:

Mahama's critique was not merely diagnostic but also highly strategic in terms of blame-shifting. He explicitly accused the government of "reckless borrowing," "creative accounting," and "poor management," thus framing the crisis as a consequence of avoidable internal failures rather than external shocks. This approach serves two purposes:

1. Undermining the incumbent's legitimacy by portraying their policies as the root cause.
2. Positioning the opposition as a credible alternative with viable solutions, as evidenced by his detailed proposals for debt reduction, expenditure cuts, and structural reforms.

Furthermore, Mahama's assertion that "the biggest blame... lies with the very people charged with managing the country" functions as a form of political blame game, aimed at eroding confidence in the current leadership and rallying public support for his party's narrative.

Crisis Exploitation and Poisoning Public Perception:

Critically, Mahama's speech predated and arguably poisoned the public's perception regarding the government's handling of the economy. By articulating a narrative of systemic failure and moral culpability, he set a tone of distrust and pessimism, which could influence how the public perceives subsequent government policies, including the DDEP.

This strategic communication could have muddy the waters for the government in several ways:

- Undermining the credibility of the debt restructuring process by framing it as a "debt crisis" caused by irresponsible borrowing, thus framing the program as unjust or unfair.
- Eroding investor confidence, as Mahama's depiction of "reckless borrowing" and "mismanagement" could reinforce negative perceptions about Ghana's fiscal discipline.

- Pre-emptively influencing public opinion against the program, making it more difficult for the government to implement reforms that require citizen buy-in and cooperation.

Implications for Policy and Governance:

From an academic perspective, this strategic exploitation of the crisis exemplifies political communication tactics where opposition figures leverage socio-economic hardship to maximize political capital. It aligns with theories of crisis exploitation, where political actors frame crises to deepen existing discontent, rally opposition support, and discredit incumbents.

Such tactics, especially when employed before the implementation of unpopular policies like the DDEP, can compound governance challenges by:

- Creating a polarized environment, where government and opposition narratives clash, making consensus difficult.
- Weakening the policy legitimacy of critical reforms, as public trust is already compromised by prior narratives.
- Muddying the waters, as the opposition's framing may obscure the complexities of the crisis, reducing it to a moral failure rather than a multifaceted issue requiring nuanced solutions.

John Mahama's speech thus exemplifies strategic crisis exploitation, where the opposition leader pre-emptively frames Ghana's economic woes as a consequence of irresponsible governance, thus poisoning the public's perception even before the government's official policy response (the DDEP). This tactic complicates policy implementation, as it fosters skepticism and resistance among the citizenry, making it more challenging for the government to rally support for necessary reforms. The timing and tone of Mahama's address reflect a calculated effort to maximize political

gains from the crisis while undermining the incumbent government’s efforts—an illustration of how political actors can leverage crises for partisan advantage.

ii. Analysis of the full speech by Dr Cassiel Ato Forson on the Ghana Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and the broader economic situation as of October 27, 2022.

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic Crisis & Urgency: Debt Crisis & Unsustainability	Ghana’s Debt Situation	Recognition of Debt Unsustainability	Ghana’s debt is highly unsustainable, and the country has lost the ability to pay	"Everyone has confirmed that Ghana's debt is unsustainable ... we have lost the ability to pay."
	Strengthening the Frame	Debt Restructuring	Need for Principal Haircut	Countries undergo principal haircut; Ghana faces similar pain	"A principal haircut... means the value of your bond will be called and reduced."
	Audience Engagement	Imminent Default	Risk of Recession & Collapse	Ghana on the brink of sovereign insolvency; risk of default	"Ghana is now going to suffer reputational damage,

					moving from heavily indebted poor country to sovereign insolvency stress."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Government & Leadership Failures	Failure to Act Early	Government ignored early alerts on debt sustainability	"In 2021, we warned that debt had reached unsustainable levels, but the government refused to act."
	Argumentation	Economic Mismanagement Failures and Neglect	Over-reliance on borrowed growth	Failure to implement reforms; overborrowing	"They inherited a lot of growth from the natural resource sector but failed to sustain it."
	Legitimacy Building	Political Myopia	Prioritizing politics over sustainability	Short-term gains at the expense of future stability	"Leaders focus on next election rather than economic stability."

Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Debt Restructuring	Use restructuring to restore sustainability	Need for debt relief (~45% of GDP)	"Ghana needs debt relief of about 45% of GDP to become sustainable."
	Manipulation / Learning	Reform & Recovery	Implementing reforms to prevent future crises	Diversification, better debt management	"Reforms are necessary to prevent future crises and restore growth."
	Political Contestation	Policy Adjustments	Embracing austerity and restraint	Cutting unnecessary expenditure, rationalizing policies	"Ghana must undertake serious austerity, cut waste, and improve revenue collection."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Leaders	Collective Responsibility	Shared effort to resolve crisis	Citizens, policymakers, institutions must work together	"The future of Ghana depends on our collective effort and sacrifice."
	Citizens & Society	Social Impact & Sacrifice	Accepting hardship for national recovery	Increased taxes, austerity measures	"Ghanaians must brace for tough times,

					including possible tax hikes and expenditure cuts."
	International & Regional Partners	Debt Negotiation	Engage creditors for restructuring	Domestic and foreign bondholders, banks, multilateral institutions	"Expect haircuts on domestic bonds, foreign bonds, and bilateral loans."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Accountability & Leadership	Leaders' failure to act early	Government's negligence worsened crisis	"Government refused to heed warnings and failed to act early."
	Social Responsibility	Protecting Vulnerable Groups	Safeguarding pensions, savings	Impact on pensioners, depositors, low-income groups	"Pension funds, depositors, and workers will suffer."
	Corruption & Systemic Issues	Patriotism & Unity	Working together for recovery	Citizens, leaders, civil society unite	"Ghana's future depends on unity and collective sacrifice."

	Fair Burden Sharing	Equity in Pain	Distributing sacrifices fairly	Domestic and external creditors to share burden	"Haircuts will affect bondholders, banks, pensioners, and contractors."
Reform & Structural Change	Long-term Reforms	Economic Diversification	Shift from reliance on natural resources	Investing in manufacturing, agriculture	"Diversify economy to reduce dependence on volatile sectors."
	Governance & Transparency	Institutional Strengthening	Improving debt management and oversight	Better debt tracking, accountability	"Strengthen oversight, transparency, and responsible borrowing."
	Developmental Policy	Building Resilience	Implementing sustainable policies	Focus on inclusive growth, job creation	"Reforms should target sustainable growth and social stability."

The Speech delivered by Dr Cassiel Ato Forson (the Opposition NDC;s Spokesperson on Finance in Parliament), serves as a classic example of crisis exploitation in the context of Ghana's debt management crisis. A closer examination of his speech through the lens of the Issue Framing, Blame & Responsibility, Crisis to Opportunity, Stakeholder Engagement, Ethical & Societal, and

Reform & Structural Change frames reveals a deliberate attempt to frame the debt crisis as a catastrophic event that necessitates a fundamental transformation of the government's economic policies.

Issue Framing: Creating a Sense of Urgency and Culpability

Forson's speech masterfully employs issue framing to create a sense of urgency and culpability surrounding the debt crisis. By emphasizing the unsustainability of Ghana's debt and the country's loss of ability to pay, he effectively frames the crisis as a catastrophic event that demands immediate attention and. This framing strategy serves to shift the public's attention away from the government's economic policies and towards the perceived incompetence of the ruling party in managing the country's finances.

Moreover, Forson's invocation of the need for a principal haircut, a concept typically associated with debt restructuring, cleverly exploits the public's limited understanding of financial jargon to evoke fear and anxiety regarding the government's handling of the debt crisis. This rhetorical device muddies the waters, creating a sense of uncertainty and mistrust among the public towards the government's economic policies (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Blame & Responsibility: Shifting the Burden of Culpability

Forson's speech also employs blame & responsibility framing to shift the burden of culpability away from the opposition party and towards the government. By highlighting the unsustainable nature of the debt and the government's alleged inability to manage it, he skillfully deflects attention from the opposition's own economic policies and towards the perceived shortcomings of the ruling party. This framing strategy serves to create a sense of moral outrage and indignation among the public, further eroding trust in the government's economic management.

Crisis to Opportunity: Seizing the Moment to Advance Opposition Interests

Forson's speech also represents a classic example of crisis to opportunity framing, where the opposition party seeks to leverage the debt crisis to advance its own interests and undermine the government's authority. By framing the crisis as a catastrophic event that necessitates fundamental policy changes, he effectively creates an opportunity for the opposition to present itself as the champion of economic reform and fiscal responsibility. This framing strategy serves to create a sense of momentum and inevitability around the opposition's policy agenda, further eroding the government's credibility and effectiveness.

Stakeholder Engagement: Influencing Public Opinion and Policy Debates

Forson's speech also demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of stakeholder engagement, where he seeks to influence public opinion and policy debates through strategic framing and messaging. By framing the debt crisis as a catastrophic event that demands immediate attention and action, he effectively creates a sense of urgency and concern among the public, which can be leveraged to pressure the government into adopting the opposition's policy agenda.

Ethical & Societal: Highlighting the Human Cost of Economic Mismanagement

Forson's speech also raises important ethical and societal concerns surrounding the human cost of economic mismanagement. By highlighting the devastating impact of the debt crisis on ordinary Ghanaians, he effectively creates a sense of moral imperative around the need for economic reform and fiscal responsibility. This framing strategy serves to emphasize the importance of prioritizing the well-being of citizens over partisan interests and policy agendas.

Reform & Structural Change: Pushing for a Paradigm Shift in Economic Policy

Finally, Forson's speech represents a call for a paradigm shift in Ghana's economic policy, where the opposition seeks to supplant the government's policies with its own vision for economic reform and fiscal responsibility. By framing the debt crisis as a catastrophic event that necessitates fundamental policy changes, he effectively creates a sense of momentum and inevitability around the opposition's policy agenda, further eroding the government's credibility and effectiveness.

In conclusion, Forson's speech serves as a paradigmatic example of crisis exploitation in the context of Ghana's debt management crisis. Through a sophisticated use of issue framing, blame & responsibility, crisis to opportunity, stakeholder engagement, ethical & societal, and reform & structural change frames, he effectively creates a sense of urgency and concern among the public, while shifting the burden of culpability away from the opposition party and towards the government. This rhetorical strategy serves to create a sense of momentum and inevitability around the opposition's policy agenda, further eroding the government's credibility and effectiveness. As such, Forson's speech represents a masterclass in crisis exploitation, highlighting the importance of carefully examining the framing strategies employed by opposition parties in Ghana's parliamentary debates.

iii. Analysis of Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson's Post-DDEP Announcement Press Conference Speech (Minority in Parliament, December 5, 2022)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic Crisis & Urgency:	Ghana's Debt Crisis	Rapid Growth of Debt	Debt increased from 55% to	Ghana's debt has become

	Debt Explosion & Unsustainability			110% of GDP in 6 years	110% of GDP within six years."
	Strengthening the Frame	Past Administration's Debt Profile	No hidden debts or bonds initially	Inherited debt of 55%, no ESLA bonds or hidden debts	"Inherited public debt of 55% of GDP in 2017, with no hidden debts."
	Audience Engagement	Default & Restructuring	Ghana officially defaults on external debt	Announced default, leading to downgrades	"Ghana has officially announced default of its external debt."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Government & Management Failures	Excessive borrowing & mismanagement	Accumulation of ESLA bonds, Sinohydro, cocoa bills	"Government borrowed excessively, leading to the current mess."
	Argumentation	Denial & Misinformation	Government denies haircuts; Forson disputes	"Government says there will be no haircut; I disagree."	"The government claims no haircut; that is false."

	Legitimacy Building	Neglect of Early Warnings	Failure to act early on debt sustainability	Early warnings ignored, leading to crisis	"We warned early, but they refused to act."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Debt Restructuring	Restructuring as the only option	Ghana must restructure debt; faces steep haircuts	"Ghana must default and restructure; steep haircuts are inevitable."
	Manipulation / Learning	Long-term Recovery	10-15 years to recover	Mess created will take decades to fix	"It will take at least 15 years to recover from this mess."
	Political Contestation	Call for New Government	Urgent need for leadership change	Change of government needed to manage crisis	"We must remove this government quickly."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Leaders	Collective Responsibility	Citizens must prepare for hardships	Citizens must brace for tough times	"We will weather the storm together."
	Citizens & Society	Haircuts & Losses	Losses on bonds & bondholders	63% loss on Dutch bonds, steep haircuts	"Ghanaians must brace for tough times, including

					possible tax hikes and expenditure cuts."
	International & Credit Rating Agencies	Impact of Default	Downgrades, loss of credibility	Ghana downgraded to D; risk of further downgrades	"Rating agencies will downgrade Ghana further."
	Public & Private Sector	Economic Hardship	Suffering of workers, pensioners	Long recovery, economic pain for all	"Bondholders will lose approximately 63% of investments."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Accountability & Leadership	Leaders' failure to manage debt	Crisis caused by mismanagement	"The mess is due to poor management and governance."
	Social Responsibility	Safeguarding the Vulnerable	Pensions, low-income groups	Long recovery times threaten social safety nets	"All of us will face difficult times."
	Patriotism & Unity	National Solidarity	Facing hardships united	Need for collective effort	"As Ghanaians, we must

					unite to face this."
	Fair Burden Sharing	Equitable Sacrifice	Losses shared among bondholders, citizens	Haircuts affect bonds, pensions, public funds	"Bondholders, pensioners, and the government will suffer."
Reform & Structural Change	Long-term Reforms	Economic Restructuring	Need for sustainable growth	Reforms to prevent recurrence	"This crisis calls for fundamental reforms."
	Debt Management & Transparency	Better Oversight	Implement responsible borrowing	Improve debt tracking, oversight	"We need transparent and responsible debt management."
	Diversification & Investment	Building Resilience	Reduce reliance on borrowing	Diversify economy, develop productive sectors	"Reforms should target sustainable growth and social stability."
	Governance & Accountability	Institutional Strengthening	Improve governance structures	Strengthen financial oversight	"Government must build stronger

					institutions. "
--	--	--	--	--	--------------------

From an analytical perspective, the recent statements by Ato Forson highlight a strategic exploitation of the ongoing debt crisis by the opposition as a means to hold the government accountable and to advocate for urgent reforms. The opposition effectively frames the crisis not merely as a consequence of mismanagement but as an opportunity to underscore systemic failures and to galvanize public and political support for a fundamental restructuring of Ghana’s economic governance.

Crisis as a Catalyst for Political and Structural Change

Forson’s emphasis on the steep escalation of Ghana’s debt – from 55% to 110% of GDP within six years – serves as a potent issue framing, positioning the crisis as a result of reckless borrowing and policy failures by the incumbent government. By explicitly linking the crisis to specific missteps – such as the accumulation of ESLA bonds, Sinohydro loans, and cocoa bills – the opposition underscores a narrative of preventable mismanagement, which they leverage to argue that the crisis is an avoidable consequence of poor governance.

Furthermore, Forson’s assertion that Ghana is now in default of its external debt and the mention of downgrades to credit ratings serve as a stark warning, framing the crisis as a pivotal moment that exposes structural weaknesses. This framing not only heightens the sense of urgency but also positions the opposition as the voice of accountability, advocating for a decisive shift away from the current governance model.

Crisis Exploitation as a Means of Advocacy

The opposition's narrative capitalizes on the crisis to advocate for radical reforms – calling for debt restructuring, governance reforms, and a change in leadership. Forson's acknowledgment that the crisis will require "15 years minimum" to recover underscores the severity of the situation, framing it as a systemic failure that demands comprehensive, structural change rather than superficial fixes.

By emphasizing the steep haircuts and the potential losses faced by bondholders – such as the 63% loss on Dutch bonds – the opposition underscores the gravity of the crisis, framing it as a moment where tough decisions are inevitable. This positioning serves to justify their call for a new government capable of implementing sustainable policies, thus exploiting the crisis as a political opportunity to advance an alternative governance narrative.

Strategic Use of Crisis Narratives

The opposition's use of crisis exploitation aligns with broader political theories on issue framing, where a severe crisis is harnessed to rally support for reform agendas. Forson's rhetoric effectively portrays the crisis as a failure of the current administration, emphasizing the need for urgent change, sacrifice, and responsible leadership. This not only mobilizes public sentiment but also seeks to delegitimize the incumbent government's handling of the economy.

In sum, the opposition's articulation of Ghana's debt crisis exemplifies strategic crisis exploitation – transforming an economic catastrophe into a platform for political accountability, reform advocacy, and leadership change. This approach leverages the severity of the crisis to foster a sense of collective urgency, positioning the opposition as the custodians of Ghana's economic future and the architects of necessary reforms. Such a narrative underscores the importance of

crisis as a catalyst for systemic change, while also serving as a powerful opposition tool to influence policy direction and public opinion.

iv. Analysis of Minority Leader Haruna Iddrisu’s speech on the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) (December 5, 2022)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic Crisis & Urgency: Debt Restructuring & Its Impact	Ghana’s Debt Crisis	Reduced interest rates and principal payments	Bonds replaced with new instruments, interest payments drastically cut	"In 2023, interest paid will be 0%, in 2024 only 5%, and in 2025, 10%."
	Strengthening the Frame	Economic and Social Hardship	Impact on livelihoods, pensions, jobs	Reduced interest income for bondholders, potential economic downturn	"Those depending on interest for livelihood will suffer."
	Audience Engagement	Lack of Clear External Bond Treatment	External bonds’ treatment yet to be disclosed	"Details of external bonds’ treatment are yet to be disclosed."	"The President said debt to GDP will improve in 2028; where will he be?"

Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Reckless Borrowing & Mismanagement	Excessive debt, misjudged policies	"They have failed the Ghanaian people with reckless mismanagement."	"They have no business collapsing the economy."
	Argumentation	Questioning Leadership & Lawfulness	Constitutionality of actions, Article 181	"We demand accountability and adherence to the law."	"Walking back on processes with law supporting them."
	Legitimacy Building	Contradictions & Broken Promises	No haircut vs. announced cuts	"President said no haircut; Minister announced steep haircuts."	"Who should we believe?"
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Debt Restructuring & Future Outlook	Managing debt to avoid future crises	"Debt to GDP will improve, but what economy will be inherited?"	"What economy will President Mahama inherit in 2025?"
	Manipulation / Learning	Need for Fiscal Discipline	Reducing government size, prudent borrowing	"We need immediate reduction in government size."	"It will take at least 15 years to recover from this mess."

	Political Contestation	Call for Government Resignation	Political accountability	"We demand that the economic management team resign."	"They have failed the people."
Stakeholder Engagement	Citizens & Bondholders	Impact of Debt & Restructuring	Losses for bondholders, pensioners	Bondholders face significant losses; pensions at risk	"Bondholders will lose principal; pensions will suffer."
	Citizens & Society	Haircuts & Losses	Losses on bonds & bondholders	63% loss on Dutch bonds, steep haircuts	"Ghanaians must brace for tough times, including possible tax hikes and expenditure cuts."
	International & Legal Authorities	Law & Constitutional Processes	Adherence to legal procedures	"We will see how they walk back on processes with law supporting them."	"In accordance with Article 181."
	Media & Public	Informing & Shaping Public Opinion	Transparency & accountability	Calling for media coverage & public awareness	Invited media to question and report on policy principles.

Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Responsibility for Crisis	Leadership's failure to manage debt	"Government's reckless management led to crisis."	"They have no business collapsing the economy."
	Social Responsibility	Social Welfare & Fairness	Impact on livelihoods, pensions	Hardship for those dependent on government bonds & pensions	"Reducing interest payments harms livelihoods."
	Political Morality	Opposition & Criticism	Ethical stance against tax hikes & levies	Rejection of VAT increase, levies	"We do not support a 2.5% VAT increase."
Reform & Structural Change	Debt Management & Policy	Need for Better Planning & Engagement	Early consultation and transparency	Criticism of late consultation and lack of transparency	"They should have consulted earlier."
	Economic Reforms	Fiscal Discipline & Cost-Cutting	Reduce government size, cut unnecessary expenditure	Calls for expenditure discipline	"A reduction in the size of government is necessary."
	Institutional & Governance Reforms	Strengthening Oversight & Accountability	Building institutions to prevent recurrence	Need for responsible borrowing, law adherence	"We want accountability and adherence to the law."

	Economic Diversificati on & Growth	Long-term Resilience	Reduce reliance on debt & government bonds	Focus on sustainable growth	"Diversify the economy to avoid future crises."
--	---	-------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	---

Haruna Iddrisu’s address in Parliament exemplifies strategic crisis exploitation, a common tactic employed by opposition leaders to scrutinize, challenge, and leverage national crises for political advantage. His speech reveals a nuanced understanding of the Ghanaian debt crisis as not only an economic catastrophe but also a political opportunity to assert accountability, demand transparency, and push for systemic reforms.

Framing the Crisis as Systemic and Political:

Iddrisu meticulously constructs the debt crisis as a consequence of reckless mismanagement and corrupt governance – attributes he attributes to the ruling government’s failures. By emphasizing the “reckless borrowing,” “mismanagement,” and “collapse of the economy,” he positions the crisis as a failure of leadership rather than an inevitable economic downturn. This framing serves to delegitimize the current administration’s narrative that the crisis is unavoidable or externally imposed, thereby rallying public sentiment towards accountability and change.

Strategic Use of Crisis as a Political Weapon:

The opposition leader exploits the crisis to question the legitimacy of the government’s policies and intentions, especially regarding debt restructuring. His pointed questions about transparency – such as the treatment of external bonds and adherence to constitutional procedures – highlight

perceived procedural illegitimacies. This tactic aims to undermine the government's credibility, framing their actions as lawless or reckless, thus mobilizing public opinion against them.

Moral High Ground & Ethical Framing:

Throughout the speech, Iddrisu invokes moral authority by emphasizing the impact of the crisis on vulnerable populations – pensioners, low-income earners, and public servants dependent on interest income. This ethical appeal serves to reinforce the opposition's role as defenders of the common people, contrasting their stance with what they portray as the government's callousness and incompetence.

Crisis as a Catalyst for Institutional and Policy Reforms:

Iddrisu leverages the crisis to advocate for systemic reforms – calling for the resignation of the economic management team and a reduction in government size. By framing the crisis as a failure of institutions and policies, he positions the opposition as the custodians of long-term stability and responsible governance. This strategic positioning aims to reset the political narrative, emphasizing that the current crisis provides an impetus for fundamental reform rather than merely a temporary setback.

Exploiting Crisis for Political Mobilization and Legitimacy:

In a broader sense, Iddrisu's speech seeks to capitalize on the crisis to bolster opposition legitimacy. By highlighting the inadequacies and failures of the government, he aspires to rally public support and prepare the ground for future electoral gains. The emphasis on constitutional legality, accountability, and moral responsibility functions as a counter-narrative to government claims, thus exploiting the crisis to reinforce opposition's moral and political authority.

Limitations and Risks of Crisis Exploitation:

While opposition figures can benefit from crisis exploitation, there are inherent risks. Over-politicization may lead to perceptions of opportunism, undermining credibility if proposed solutions lack feasibility or if opposition rhetoric appears overly partisan. Iddrisu’s focus on constitutional legality and calls for government resignation are potent but require careful framing to avoid accusations of obstructionism or populism.

Haruna Iddrisu’s speech exemplifies a strategic use of crisis exploitation, where the opposition leverages Ghana’s debt crisis to challenge governance legitimacy, advocate for systemic reforms, and position itself as the defender of national interests. His approach underscores the importance of framing, moral authority, and procedural legitimacy in opposition leadership during times of national distress. However, the effectiveness of such strategies depends on balancing critique with constructive alternatives to ensure that crisis exploitation advances not just political interests but also the broader goal of national recovery and stability.

v. Analysis of NDC’s National Communications Officer, Sammy Gyamfi’s speech on the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic Crisis & Urgency: Predatory Governance &	Government as Predator	Expropriating citizens’ savings	Government seizing citizens’ funds meant for health, rent, education	"This is predatory governance.. . expropriating our hard-

	Expropriation				earned monies"
	Strengthening the Frame	Debt Exchange as Forced & Unfair	Bonds maturing before settlement not paid	Bonds maturing before the settlement date won't be paid	"If your bonds mature before the settlement date, you will not be paid"
	Audience Engagement	Impact on Pensioners & Citizens	Pensioners picketing, government ignoring concerns	Pensioners protesting, government silence	"Pensioners are picketing; the President and Vice President silent"
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Government's Reckless Spending & Mismanagement	Spending on luxury and non-essential projects	51 million Ghana cedis on fuel, millions on vehicles and the cathedral	"Spent 15 million Ghana cedis on tyres, 51 million on fuel"
	Argumentation	Misuse of Resources	Wasted COVID funds, loans, and aid	\$6 billion from COVID, over \$1 billion from IMF,	"COVID alone gave them \$6 billion; IMF gave \$1 billion"

				funds misused	
	Legitimacy Building	Profligate Priorities	National Cathedral, biblical museum	Funding projects with no tangible economic benefit	"Paid 28 million Ghana cedis for a biblical museum, cathedral project"
	Failure of Leadership	Incompetence & Corruption	Finance minister Ken Ofori-Atta's role	Call for dismissal of the finance minister	"Ken Ofori- Atta must be dismissed; he's pretending to cure the problem"
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Need for Structural Reforms	Dissolving economic management team	"Dissolve the Bawumia- led economic managemen t team"	"We need competent hands to manage the crisis"
	Manipulation / Learning	Prioritizing Spending & Cutting Wast	Stop reckless expenditures	Citing wasteful spending to justify the crisis	"In nine months, they spent millions on tyres, fuel, vehicles"
	Political Contestation	Suspending DDEP &	Suspend the debt	Urging suspension	"The debt exchange

		Building Consensus	exchange program	to protect pensioners & citizens	must be suspended and fought"
Stakeholder Engagement	Citizens & Bondholders	Protecting Vulnerable Groups	Supporting pensioners & vulnerable citizens	Pensioners protesting, need for solidarity	"Support pensioners; they must be encouraged"
	Government & Law	Legal & Moral Responsibility	Accountability and transparency	Criticism of government's secrecy & unfair treatment	"Government telling pensioners to go to hell"
	Media & Public	Raising Awareness & Mobilization	Call to join the struggle	Citizens urged to oppose the debt exchange	"All must join this fight, whether directly affected or not"
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Injustice & Hardship	Taking away citizens' savings	Pensioners and bondholders suffering from austerity	"This is wickedness; unacceptable"
	Social Responsibility	Leadership & Moral Responsibility	Leaders must be responsible & transparent	Criticism of leadership's failure	"They should set priorities right and stop

					wasteful spending"
	Political Morality	Social Justice & Fairness	Ensuring fairness in economic policies	Pensioners and ordinary citizens bearing the brunt	"Pensioners picketing in the sun, government ignoring concerns"
Reform & Structural Change	Economic Reforms & Governance	Dismantling Corruption & Waste	Sacking ineffective leaders	Call for dismissals and leadership overhaul	"Ken Ofori-Atta must be dismissed; economic team dissolved"
	Fiscal Discipline & Budget Management	Reducing Unnecessary Expenditures	Cutting luxury spending	Citing spending on vehicles, retreats, projects	"They spent millions on unnecessary projects"
	Institutional & Governance Reforms	Addressing Root Causes	Managing debt sustainably	Emphasis on responsible management & transparency	"Address the root causes; stop profligate spending"

Sammy Gyamfi's speech frames the DDEP implementation within a broader context of predatory governance and systemic mismanagement. His analysis can be dissected along three primary dimensions: issue framing, ethical and societal implications, and the call for structural reform.

Issue Framing and Governance Dynamics:

Gyamfi categorizes the government's approach, particularly the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), as a form of **predatory governance** – where public officials, entrusted with safeguarding citizens' resources, instead expropriate these assets through coercive and opaque mechanisms. He underscores the **coercive nature** of the DDEP, emphasizing that the so-called voluntary participation by bondholders is misleading; in reality, bonds maturing before the settlement date are not paid, constituting a form of enforced austerity. The lack of transparency around the **settlement date** further exacerbates the precarious position of bondholders and pensioners, highlighting a governance failure rooted in opacity and unilateral decision-making.

Gyamfi criticizes the government's failure to communicate clear timelines and payment schedules, which undermines trust and exposes the **unpredictability** inherent in its fiscal policies. This opaque stance signifies a breach of fiduciary responsibility and points to a governance model that neglects the principles of transparency and accountability – cornerstones of democratic institutions.

Ethical and Societal Dimensions:

Transitioning into societal implications, Gyamfi vividly portrays the hardship faced by vulnerable groups, particularly pensioners, who are protesting under scorching sun – a symbolic representation of their suffering and neglect. His discourse frames this as an ethical failure, where leadership's priorities are misaligned with societal needs. The government's expenditure on

conspicuous projects – luxury vehicles, the National Cathedral, biblical museums – amidst austerity measures targeting pensioners and bondholders, exemplifies a profligate and unjust allocation of national resources.

He condemns the moral irresponsibility of leaders like Ken Ofori-Atta, whose continued tenure, according to Gyamfi, perpetuates mismanagement. The critique extends to the social justice realm, emphasizing that the burdens of economic mismanagement disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, undermining principles of fairness and equity. Gyamfi's framing underscores the ethical imperative for leaders to prioritize responsible resource allocation and to uphold moral integrity in governance.

Calls for Structural Reforms and Long-term Solutions:

Gyamfi advocates for **fundamental structural reforms**, including the dissolution of ineffective economic management teams and the dismissal of leaders perceived as responsible for the current crisis. He emphasizes that short-term austerity measures like debt exchanges are akin to **fighting water with a basket**, suggesting that without addressing the root causes – reckless borrowing, misallocation of resources, and lack of fiscal discipline – Ghana's economic challenges will persist.

Furthermore, he calls for fiscal discipline, including cutting wasteful expenditures on luxury projects and unnecessary government retreats, which divert funds from critical social needs. The emphasis on long-term reform reflects an understanding that sustainable economic recovery hinges on good governance, transparency, and accountability, rather than superficial financial manipulations.

In sum, Sammy Gyamfi’s discourse provides a nuanced critique of Ghana’s governance failures, highlighting the ethical ramifications of economic mismanagement and the urgent need for systemic reforms. His framing underscores that without moral responsibility and transparent leadership, Ghana risks perpetuating a cycle of economic hardship that disproportionately affects its most vulnerable citizens. His call to suspend the DDEP, dissolve ineffective teams, and prioritize responsible governance is rooted in an ethical imperative to restore public trust and ensure equitable economic development.

vi. Analysis of NDC’s Running Mate, Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang’s speech on the Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) (December 5, 2024)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic Crisis & Urgency:	Sacrifice & Loss	Pensioners losing dividends due to haircut	Pensioners’ sacrifices being undermined by haircut	"Pensioners sacrificed to make investments, but haircut took their dividends"
	Injustice & Hardship for Pensioners				
	Strengthening the Frame	Decline in Sales & Economic Activity	Reduced sales, credit sales affected	Sales decline across sectors due to haircut	"The haircut has affected everybody; sales have declined even on credit"
	Audience Engagement	Women as the Most Affected	Women suffering most	Women bearing the	"Women are the ones

			from economic hardship	brunt of the economic crisis	suffering the most"
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Unfair Treatment & Neglect	Introduction of haircut despite service to country	Poor treatment of pensioners and citizens	Implicit criticism of government's handling of the crisis
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Hope for Renewal	Promise of renewal	Encouraging citizens to remain hopeful	"There is hope; we will renew this hope on Saturday"
	Mobilization & Support	Call for Unity & Support	Rallying people for future change	Call for collective support	"I thank all of you for coming"
Stakeholder Engagement	Citizens & Pensioners	Acknowledging Sacrifices	Recognizing pensioners' sacrifices	Highlighting pensioners' role in nation-building	"Pensioners sacrificed to make investments"
	Political & Social Leaders	Leadership & Future Hope	Promoting political engagement	Encouraging citizens to believe in positive change	"We will renew this hope"
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Injustice & Disappointment	Pensioners betrayed despite service	Pensioners' sacrifices overlooked	"Despite their diligent service, their dividends

					were taken away"
	Social Responsibility	Women's Suffering	Women most affected	Highlighting gendered impact of economic policies	"Women are the ones suffering the most"
	Resilience & Optimism	Hope Amidst Hardship	Encouragement for the future	Inspiring confidence and collective effort	"There is hope; we will renew this hope"
Reform & Structural Change	Political Mobilization	Campaign for Change	Calling for support on Saturday	Urging citizens to rally for future renewal	"I leave you with one phrase: there is hope"

Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang's speech during the final campaign rally for the National Democratic Congress (NDC) provides a compelling narrative that encapsulates the socio-political and economic grievances of the affected populace, particularly pensioners and women, amidst Ghana's ongoing economic crisis. Through her rhetoric, she constructs a vivid frame of social injustice, economic hardship, and resilient hope, which serves to mobilize citizens towards collective political action.

Firstly, her articulation of the sacrifices made by pensioners underscores a moral appeal rooted in social justice. By emphasizing that pensioners "sacrificed to make investments for a better future," she highlights their role as foundational contributors to national development. The mention of the

"haircut" – a policy measure that resulted in pensioners losing their dividends – serves as a potent symbol of betrayal, illustrating how economic policies have undermined the very citizens who dedicated their lives to nation-building. This framing aligns with the broader political narrative that the government's policies are unjust and disproportionately harmful to vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, Opoku-Agyemang's acknowledgment of the economic ripple effects – specifically the decline in sales and credit transactions – broadens the scope of the crisis from individual pensioners to the wider economy. This highlights the interconnectedness of social grievances and macroeconomic stability, emphasizing that the adverse impact extends beyond pensioners to affect small businesses and consumers, thereby undermining economic confidence.

A critical gendered dimension is also woven into her speech, where she explicitly states that "women are the ones suffering the most." This statement not only personalizes the hardship but also underscores systemic gender inequalities exacerbated by economic mismanagement. It aligns with academic discourses on social justice, illustrating how economic crises disproportionately impact marginalized groups, particularly women, who often bear the brunt of socio-economic shocks.

Opoku-Agyemang's invocation of hope – "there is hope; we will renew this hope on Saturday" – serves as a strategic rhetorical device aimed at fostering resilience and collective agency. It functions to counteract despair, mobilize support, and reinforce the moral legitimacy of the opposition's call for change. Her closing gratitude further personalizes the message, strengthening social cohesion and encouraging political participation.

From an ethical and societal perspective, her speech underscores a narrative of betrayal and resilience. The depiction of pensioners' sacrifices being betrayed despite diligent service

constructs a moral high ground that criticizes the incumbent government’s failure to uphold social contracts. The gendered emphasis on women’s suffering adds a layer of social justice advocacy, framing the political contest as a struggle for fairness and moral integrity.

In all, Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang’s speech exemplifies strategic political communication that seeks to unify diverse social groups under a common cause rooted in justice, hope, and collective renewal. It employs moral appeals, social justice framing, and future-oriented optimism to galvanize citizen support against perceived economic mismanagement and social injustice, thus contributing to the broader political discourse on governance and social equity in contemporary Ghana.

vii. Detailed analysis of the NDC’s 2024 Manifesto in the context of the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP), focusing on the arguments made by the government and how the manifesto seeks to capitalize on the victims of DDEP

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Economic Hardship & Debt Crisis	Impact of DDEP on Citizens	Highlighting the hardships faced by pensioners, small investors, and ordinary Ghanaians due to debt restructuring	"Launch a forensic audit into the NPP’s collapse of indigenous Ghanaian banks and financial institutions at a supposed cost of GH¢25 billion." (implying

					mismanagemen t and crisis)
	Strengthenin g the Frame	Call for Justice & Fairness	Victims of DDEP & Collapsed Financial Sector	Emphasizing the need for accountability and redress for those affected by debt restructurings	"Restore the licenses of wrongfully collapsed financial institutions and create employment opportunities for persons who lost their jobs."
	Audience Engagement	Rallying Citizens for Change	Offering an Alternative to Current Policies	Promising to reverse or mitigate the effects of DDEP and related policies	"We will: Scrap the following draconian taxes within our first 100 days... and implement social interventions to ease hardships."
Blame & Responsibili ty	Blame Shifting	Blame on Incumbent Governme nt	Mismanagem ent & Corruption Leading to Economic Crisis	Accusing the current government of mismanageme nt, illegal printing of money, and	Launch a forensic audit into the illegal printing of money by the Bank of Ghana to finance the

				misappropriation	corrupt Akufo-Addo/Bawumi a government."
	Argumentation	Policy Failures & Economic Collapse	DDEP & Financial Sector Collapse	Framing DDEP as part of broader mismanagement, leading to inflation, poverty, and loss of savings	"Hyperinflation and over 850,000 Ghanaians pushed into poverty in 2022 due to mismanagement."
	Legitimacy Building	Alternative & Credibility	Promoting Their Own Economic Reforms	Presenting their policies as credible solutions to restore stability and protect citizens	"Implement an Economic Transformation Agenda (ETA)... to promote modernized agriculture, exports, and job creation."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Economic Crisis as an Opportunity	For Structural Reforms & Justice	Positioning the crisis as a chance to overhaul mismanagement and restore confidence	"Launch a forensic audit into the illegal printing of money and the Gold-for-Oil initiative."

	Manipulation / Learning	Learning from Past Mistakes	Reforms & Restoring Trust	Emphasizing transparency, fiscal discipline, and strengthening institutions	"Review and enforce the Fiscal Responsibility Act and establish an Independent Fiscal Council."
	Political Contestation	Framing as Opponents of Bad Governance	Positioning NDC as the Restorers of Trust	Highlighting how NDC policies will correct current missteps and protect victims of DDEP	"Restructure the Bank of Ghana to strengthen independence and operational efficiency."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Legal & Institutional Reforms	Restoring Confidence & Fiscal Discipline	Reforms in public debt management, banking sector, and fiscal laws	Constitute the Independent Public Debt Management Office (DMO)."
	Civil Society & Miners	Protecting Citizens & Investors	Compensation & Fair Treatment	Advocating for redress for those affected by debt restructuring and financial mismanagement	"Restore the licenses of wrongfully collapsed financial institutions and create employment."

	International & Regional	International Support & Oversight	Attracting Investment & Restoring Credibility	Implicitly seeking international support for reforms and debt management	Not explicitly detailed but implied through calls for fiscal discipline and institutional reforms.
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Duty to Protect Citizens	Justice for DDEP Victims	Framing the need for accountability and fairness in debt management	"Launch a forensic audit into the illegal printing of money; investigate mismanagement."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Justice for the Poor & Pensioners	Compensation & Fair Treatment	Emphasizing the importance of protecting vulnerable groups from the fallout of mismanagement	"Implement social interventions to alleviate hardships and protect the vulnerable."

The NDC’s 2024 Manifesto employs the crisis exploitation frame as a strategic rhetorical device to position the current economic turmoil – exacerbated by the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – as a crisis that demands urgent structural reforms. This framing serves to legitimize the opposition’s policy proposals, framing them not merely as solutions but as necessary responses to

a crisis caused by mismanagement, corruption, and fiscal irresponsibility under the incumbent government.

In particular, the manifesto emphasizes the need for enhanced fiscal discipline and effective debt management as critical pillars for restoring macroeconomic stability. The approach reflects an understanding of the crisis as a systemic failure rooted in governance lapses, which must be addressed through institutional reforms and transparency.

How the Manifesto Strategically Exploits the Crisis

1. Reframing the Crisis as an Opportunity for Structural Reform:

The NDC positions the economic crisis – marked by hyperinflation, high debt levels, and the collapse of indigenous banks – as an opportunity to overhaul fiscal and debt management systems. By framing the crisis as a consequence of mismanagement and opacity, the manifesto justifies the need for independent and robust institutions such as the Public Debt Management Office (DMO) and the Fiscal Responsibility Act enforcement.

2. Legitimizing Institutional Reforms:

The manifesto calls for the establishment of the DMO under the Public Financial Management Act to ensure transparent, effective, and accountable public debt management. The DMO is envisioned as a specialized agency that would centralize debt issuance, monitor public debt sustainability, and prevent reckless borrowing – addressing systemic flaws that contributed to the crisis.

3.Enforcing Fiscal Discipline and Transparency:

The manifesto advocates for reviewing and enforcing the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2018 (Act 982) and establishing an Independent Fiscal Council. These measures are designed to impose fiscal discipline, limit government excesses, and promote accountability – crucial steps in restoring market confidence and stabilizing the macroeconomy.

4. Restoring Confidence and Market Stability:

The manifesto emphasizes restoring confidence in Ghana’s domestic bond and capital markets, essential for sustainable debt management. The NDC proposes reforms that would strengthen Ghana’s debt management capacity, reduce risks of default, and re-establish the country’s credibility among international investors.

Intended Strategies for Achieving Fiscal Discipline and Debt Management

- Institutional Strengthening: Establishing independent bodies such as the Public Debt Management Office and an Independent Fiscal Council aims to insulate fiscal and debt decisions from political interference, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- Legal and Policy Reforms: Revising laws like the Fiscal Responsibility Act and Public Procurement Law to enforce fiscal discipline, promote transparency, and curb wasteful spending.
- Debt Restructuring and Management: By emphasizing debt sustainability, the NDC seeks to avoid reckless borrowing, promote responsible lending, and ensure that debt levels remain within manageable thresholds – thus preventing future crises similar to that caused by the DDEP.

- Restoring Market Confidence: Through these reforms, the manifesto aims to demonstrate to investors and international partners that Ghana is committed to prudent fiscal management, thereby attracting foreign investment, stabilizing the cedi, and reducing borrowing costs.

The NDC’s crisis exploitation strategy centers on presenting the current economic predicament – amplified by the DDEP – as a systemic failure rooted in poor fiscal discipline and opaque debt management. By proposing institutional reforms, legal enforcement, and transparency measures, the manifesto seeks to capitalize on public dissatisfaction, positioning itself as the only credible agent capable of restoring fiscal responsibility and economic stability. This framing not only seeks to address the immediate crisis but also to rebuild long-term confidence in Ghana’s economic governance.

viii. Message by the NDC’s National Chairman, Johnson Asiedu Nketia

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Economic Crisis & Unsustainable Debt	Domestic Debt Burden	Reference to “domestic debt exchange” and the hardships caused by economic mismanagement	"We have introduced new and fanciful terms such as 'haircuts' and 'domestic debt exchange' into our

					economic management lexicon."
	Strengthening the Frame	Economic Mismanagement & Impact on Citizens	Hardships & Loss of Savings	Pensioners demanding their savings, collapsed economy, infrastructure decline	"Pensioners who invested in Government Bonds have had to picket the Ministry of Finance to demand their savings."
	Audience Engagement	Call for National Unity & Action	Building Trust in Policy Solutions	Emphasizing solutions based on social democratic ideals to address the crisis	"Our manifesto provides a solid framework for 'Building the Ghana We Want Together.'"
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Government's Role in Economic Decline	Corruption & Mismanagement	Blaming the government for economic collapse, corruption, nepotism, and environmental destruction	"Underpinning all these setbacks has been the massive corruption, nepotism, favouritism,

					and impunity."
	Argumentation	Policy Failures & Environmental Damage	Illegal Mining & Environmental Destruction	Destruction caused by illegal mining activities aided by officials	"The most devastating destruction of our environment through uncontrolled illegal mining activities."
	Legitimacy Building	Opposition's Alternative & Credibility	Social Democratic Solutions	Presenting their manifesto as clear, actionable, and rooted in social democratic ideals	"Our policy on the 24-hour Economy and other policies will help create an egalitarian society."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Economic & Environmental Crisis as Opportunities	Rebuilding & Restoring Ghana	Proposing solutions to reset and rebuild the country's economy and environment	Let us join hands to reset and Build the Ghana We Want Together."

	Manipulation / Learning	Learning from Past Mistakes	Implementing Sustainable Policies	Emphasizing the need for responsible economic and environmental policies	"Our manifesto provides a solid framework for 'Building the Ghana We Want Together.'"
	Political Contestation	Positioning as Opponents of Bad Governance	Opposing Bad Policies & Environmental Damage	Framing the opposition as the alternative to reckless policies	"We urge Ghanaians to vote for the NDC to change the current trajectory."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Policy & Legal Reforms	Addressing Debt & Illegal Mining	Promising law reforms, responsible debt management, and environmental regulation	"Our manifesto provides clear solutions to address the many problems."
	Civil Society & Miners	Responsible Mining & Citizens' Role	Combating Illegal Mining	Call for collective effort in fighting illegal mining and	"We must join hands to build the Ghana we want, ending illegal mining."

				environmental degradation	
	International & Regional	Global & Regional Support	Economic Recovery & Environmental Conservation	Implicit call for international support and regional cooperation	Not explicitly stated in the speech.
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Duty to Rebuild Ghana	Responsible Economic & Environmental Practices	Framing responsible policies as morally necessary for national revival	"Let us join hands to reset and build the Ghana we want."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Justice for Citizens & Environmental Justice	Addressing Past Neglect & Environmental Damage	Emphasizing the need for accountability in managing debt and natural resources	"Pensioners demanding their savings highlight the failure of current management."

From the table, it is evident that Johnson Asiedu Nketia strategically exploited the economic and environmental crises to frame the NDC’s political agenda as a necessary and responsible alternative for national recovery. The reframing of crisis as an opportunity for renewal aligns with a common political communication tactic where crises are used to justify policy shifts, galvanize support, and delegitimize the incumbent government.

Specifically, Nketia capitalizes on Ghana’s economic mismanagement – highlighted by debt mismanagement, pensioner hardship, and infrastructure decay – to depict the current administration as fundamentally incapable of addressing these pressing issues. By emphasizing the "most ignoble degeneration" since 2017, he constructs a narrative that positions the crises as both a result of current governance failures and as a catalyst for the need for urgent change.

Furthermore, the environmental degradation caused by illegal mining (Galamsey) is framed not merely as a problem but as a crisis that can be turned into an opportunity for responsible policies and sustainable development. The language of “reset” and “building the Ghana we want together” suggests a strategic exploitation of the crisis to rally collective action towards reform, portraying the crises as collective wake-up calls rather than insurmountable barriers.

This approach demonstrates a sophisticated use of crisis exploitation, where the opposition leverages existing vulnerabilities to present itself as the moral and practical solution. It also seeks to mobilize public support by framing the crises as opportunities for transformation, thus shifting the narrative from despair to hope, and positioning the NDC as the agent of positive change.

4.3.2. Analysis of NPP Comments on Domestic Debt Exchange Program

i. Analysis of President Akufo-Addo’s Speech (30 Oct 2022)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Issue Presentation & Narrative Construction	Economic Crisis & External Shocks	Global & Domestic Challenges	COVID-19 impact, Ukraine war,	"Our economy was thrown into turmoil... inflation has

				inflation, debt	eaten away incomes"
	Strength & Persuasion of Frames	Credibility & Resonance	Reassuring citizens, emphasizing efforts	"We emerged from the pandemic with low mortality rates"	"We have shown resilience through hard times"
	Context & Audience Engagement	Public Motivation & Beliefs	Call for support, patriotism	"Support us to get our economy back into shape"	"All of us are in this together"
Blame & Responsibility	Strategic Blame Shifting	External & Internal Blame	Global shocks & domestic management	"Many malevolent forces have come together"	"External shocks worsened our situation"
	Discourse & Argumentation	Moral Judgments & Evaluations	Framing challenges as moral failures	"Some traders slap high margins, exploiting hardships"	"False rumours causing panic in forex markets"
	Mobilization & Legitimacy	Blame Narratives & Support	Over severity, responsibility	"There will be no haircuts; deposits are safe"	"Government took measures to protect depositors"

Crisis to Opportunity	Dislocation & Reframing	Crisis as Opportunity	Reframing economic problems as reform opportunities	"Turn this crisis into a chance to build resilience"	"Use the crisis to address structural weaknesses"
	Manipulation / Learning	Use of Crisis for Support	Justifying IMF support, reforms	"We have gone to IMF to repair finances"	"Negotiations are at advanced stages"
	Political Contestation & Power Struggles	Framing Battles	Over severity, responsibility	"Many malevolent forces have come together"	"External shocks and mismanagement"
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Political Parties	Policy & Messaging	Reforms, austerity, support	"30% salary cuts, social programs"	"Progress with ID1F, infrastructure"
	Opposition & Civil Society	Critique & Dissent	Questioning government's handling	Not explicitly detailed but implied in social debates	Potential platform for opposition critique
	Media & Public Discourse	Issue Framing & Mobilization	Spreading information &	"False rumours about haircuts"	"Measures to restore forex market order"

			misinformati on		
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Ethical Concerns	Political Gains & Misinformati on	Use of false rumours, panic	"Persons publishing falsehoods will be acted against"	"False WhatsApp messages causing panic"
	Social Justice & Accountability	Protecting Vulnerable Groups	Social safety nets & transparency	"Increased support for persons with disabilities"	"No depositors will lose their money"

From the analysis of President Akufo-Addo’s speech through the lens of the specified framing strategies and responsibility attributions reveals a sophisticated narrative construction aimed at balancing crisis acknowledgment with strategic reassurance. The President employs issue presentation and narrative construction to frame the economic challenges – highlighting external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war – while simultaneously emphasizing the government’s resilience and ongoing reform efforts. This dual framing serves to reinforce the credibility of the government’s response and foster public trust.

Furthermore, the speech strategically shifts blame onto external forces and systemic weaknesses, employing a blame game that attributes responsibility for the economic downturn to both global shocks and internal mismanagement, thereby deflecting sole accountability and dispersing blame across multiple axes. This aligns with the discursive tactic of moral evaluation, where challenges

are depicted as moral failures of external actors or systemic flaws, reinforcing the moral legitimacy of government actions.

The crisis-opportunity dynamic is prominently utilized as a reframing device, transforming the economic downturn into an opportunity for structural reforms and resilience-building. The President positions the crisis as a catalyst for positive change – turning adversity into a strategic moment for reform – thus aligning with the political contestation framework that seeks to legitimize policies as necessary responses to extraordinary circumstances.

Stakeholder strategies further reveal a deliberate effort by the government to mobilize support and cultivate legitimacy. Through policy measures such as salary cuts, social safety nets, and infrastructural projects, the government aims to project control and resilience, fostering a narrative of collective effort and patriotic duty. Meanwhile, the discourse also acknowledges societal vulnerabilities, addressing societal and ethical concerns by emphasizing transparency, social justice, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

However, the speech also navigates potential ethical pitfalls, such as the manipulation of crisis narratives and the dissemination of misinformation, which could undermine societal trust if perceived as purely political manipulation. The explicit mention of combating false rumors underscores an awareness of the societal implications of information control and the importance of ethical communication.

The speech exemplifies an integrated framing strategy that combines issue construction, blame attribution, and reframing to shape public perception, legitimize government policies, and foster a collective sense of resilience. It demonstrates an awareness of the complex interplay between crisis

management, political legitimacy, and societal trust, which is crucial for effective political communication during times of economic hardship.

ii. Analysis of Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta's DDEP Announcements

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Issue Presentation & Narrative Construction	Economic Crisis & Unsustainable Debt	External shocks and internal mismanagement	Rising global prices, COVID-19, Ukraine war, debt distress	"Ghana's public debt is unsustainable ... debt servicing now absorbs more than half of government revenues"
	Strength & Persuasion of Frames	Credibility & Urgency	Emphasizing debt crisis as a national priority	"Urgent action needed to restore debt sustainability"	"Debt stock exceeds 100% of GDP, threatening economic stability"
	Context & Audience Engagement	Public & Stakeholder Motivation	Call for collective effort to restore stability	"Let us all participate to rebuild our economy"	"Together, we will emerge stronger"
Blame & Responsibility	Strategic Blame Shifting	External & Internal Blame	Global shocks, domestic	COVID-19 pandemic,	"External shocks exposed

			mismanagem ent	rising prices, Ukraine war"	Ghana's vulnerabilitie s"
	Discourse & Argumentati on	Moral & Evaluative Language	Framing crisis as a moral duty	"Our collective responsibilit y," "difficult times"	We must act responsibly to restore stability"
	Mobilization & Legitimacy	Blame & Support Building	Emphasizing responsibility of all	"All stakeholders must support the debt exchange"	"Participation is crucial for our recovery"
Crisis to Opportunit y	Dislocation & Reframing	Crisis as Catalyst	Turning debt crisis into a recovery opportunity	"Debt restructuring is a path to economic revival"	"Restoring macroecono mic stability will support growth"
	Manipulatio n / Learning	Use of Crisis for Policy Support	Justifying IMF support, reforms	"We have negotiated an IMF program"	"Debt exchange is part of a broader reform agenda"
	Political Contestation & Power Struggles	Framing Responsibilit y	Balancing blame and solutions	"External shocks and internal missteps"	"We are working to stabilize the economy"
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Political Parties	Policy & Communicati on	Debt restructuring, fiscal reforms	"Launching the DDEP, urging	"Participation essential for

				participation "	macroeconomic stability"
	Opposition & Civil Society	Critique & Dissent	Questioning government's handling	Not explicitly detailed but implied in debates	Opposition could critique the debt burden and reforms
	Media & Public Discourse	Issue Framing & Mobilization	Spreading information, shaping public opinion	"Reassuring bondholders, emphasizing transparency "	"Participation will help Ghana recover"
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Ethical Concerns	Political & Financial Ethics	Ensuring fair treatment, avoiding coercion	"No principal haircut on bonds," "voluntary participation "	"Government commits to safeguarding bondholders' investments"
	Social Justice & Accountability	Protecting Vulnerable Groups	Safeguarding pensioners, retirees	"Special provisions for retirees, safeguarding savings"	"Protecting the interests of pensioners and retail investors"

From the table, Ken Ofori-Atta's addresses concerning Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) exemplify a strategic deployment of crisis framing, responsible attribution, and stakeholder mobilization within the framework of political communication during a macroeconomic crisis. His speeches serve as a case study in how governments communicate

complex financial restructuring initiatives amid heightened economic distress, aiming to secure public support and maintain institutional legitimacy.

Crisis Framing and Issue Construction

Ofori-Atta employs a problem-focused framing by explicitly articulating the severity of Ghana's debt unsustainability, citing empirical indicators such as debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 100%, and the proportion of revenues dedicated to debt servicing. This aligns with Entman's (1993) concept of framing as "selection and salience," where the government emphasizes external shocks (COVID-19), global inflation, and geopolitical conflicts—to contextualize the crisis. The framing aims to evoke a sense of urgency, positioning the debt restructuring as a necessary and responsible response to external vulnerabilities, thus seeking to generate consensus around the need for sacrifice.

Responsibility Attribution and Moral Framing

Ofori-Atta skillfully balances internal and external blame attribution. While acknowledging external shocks, he emphasizes domestic mismanagement and the imperative for collective effort. This dual attribution aligns with Gamson's (1992) theory of blame avoidance and responsibility framing, which suggests that leaders often diffuse responsibility while emphasizing shared duty. Phrases like "our collective responsibility" and "we must act responsibly" invoke a moral obligation, framing the crisis as a moral test of national solidarity rather than solely an economic failure, thus maintaining legitimacy and fostering civic engagement.

Reframing Crisis as an Opportunity for Recovery

The speeches transition from crisis acknowledgment to opportunity framing – presenting debt restructuring as a pathway to macroeconomic stability and long-term growth. This aligns with the

concept of adaptive framing (Snow & Benford, 1988), which transforms perceptions of crises from insurmountable threats to catalysts for reform. By emphasizing the benefits of the debt exchange – restored fiscal space, investor confidence, and eventual economic growth – Ofori-Atta attempts to reorient public perception from despair to hope, leveraging the narrative of resilience and collective effort.

Stakeholder Engagement and Participatory Rhetoric

The addresses are characterized by inclusive language targeting various stakeholder groups – individual bondholders, banks, pension funds, and the general populace. The government employs appeal to shared identity and social contract rhetoric, invoking notions of patriotism (“Ghana is our home,” “Let us do this together”) to foster voluntary participation. This approach reflects a consensus-building strategy consistent with the common-sense model of crisis communication, where leaders seek to align public values with policy objectives.

Ethical Considerations and Legitimacy Maintenance

Ofori-Atta emphasizes the voluntary nature of the debt exchange and explicitly states that no principal haircut will affect individual bondholders, especially retirees and vulnerable groups. This aligns with the oral legitimacy framework where transparent and ethically framed communication theorized to sustain public trust (Chilton, 2004; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). By explicitly addressing fears of unfair treatment, the government aims to mitigate perceptions of coercion or injustice, preserving social legitimacy during a politically sensitive restructuring.

Use of Cultural and Religious Rhetoric

The speeches incorporate culturally resonant references such as the invocation of Proverbs 23:18 and the phrase “Nkabom” (unity) to deepen emotional engagement and reinforce collective

identity. This use of cultural framing aligns with narrative theory, which posits that culturally embedded symbols and stories enhance message resonance and social cohesion, especially in societies with strong communal values.

Ofori-Atta’s communication strategy exemplifies a nuanced application of crisis framing, moral responsibility, stakeholder inclusion, and cultural symbolism to navigate a complex economic reform process. His speeches serve as an illustrative case of how government officials can construct a legitimacy-enhancing narrative that balances realism about economic hardships with optimism about recovery, thereby fostering a cooperative climate essential for the success of the debt restructuring. Their effectiveness hinges on the ability to maintain transparency, evoke shared values, and manage perceptions of fairness – elements central to the broader literature on political crisis communication and institutional legitimacy.

iii. Analysis on NPP’s Communication Director Richard Ahiagbah’s Comments on DDEP

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Issue Presentation & Narrative Construction	Debt Crisis & Need for Sacrifice	Limited options, decision-making under crisis	"Country must make a decision," "we are in a debt trap"	"We are in a situation where we have to decide"
	Strength & Persuasion of Frames	Confidence & Long-term Vision	Building trust in the process	"If we get the support and voluntary participation	"This is an opportunity to build ourselves sustainably"

				, we can redeem our country"	
	Context & Audience Engagement	National Unity & Responsibility	Call for collective effort	"As a country, we must rise to the occasion"	"We need to make necessary investments today"
Blame & Responsibility	Strategic Blame Shifting	No explicit blame attributed	Focus on collective responsibility	N/A	N/A
	Discourse & Argumentation	Moral & Rational Justification	Emphasis on the necessity of support	"Support from institutional investors is critical"	"Participation will help us escape the debt trap"
	Mobilization & Legitimacy	Building Consensus & Support	Confidence in voluntary participation	"If we have the level of participation, we can succeed"	"This is the moment for us to rise as a nation"
Crisis to Opportunity	Dislocation & Reframing	Crisis as an Opportunity	Building long-term resilience	"Leverage the occasion to build ourselves sustainably"	"This crisis can be used to position Ghana better"
	Manipulation / Learning	Use of Crisis for Strategic Gains	Long-term structural change	"We must do the necessary	"This is not just short-term, but

				investments today"	long-term planning"
	Political Contestation & Power Struggles	Not explicitly detailed	Focus on consensus and national effort	N/A	N/A
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Political Parties	Advocacy & Leadership	Call for voluntary support	"The ministry is seeking clarity and support"	"The government has made commitments towards achieving outcomes"
	Opposition & Civil Society	Not explicitly detailed	Critical role in oversight	N/A	N/A
	Media & Public Discourse	Issue Framing & Public Support	Spreading awareness and reassurance	"People fear the unknown, but it's necessary"	"We must rise above fears and support the process"
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Ethical Concerns	Trust & Transparency	Concerns about fairness and support	"Support must be voluntary, not coercive"	"We are committed to building consensus"
	Social Justice & Accountability	Collective Responsibility	Long-term sustainability	"Making sacrifices now for a better future"	"Government has committed to making significant cuts"

Richard Ahiagbah's discourse on Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) exemplifies a strategic deployment of crisis communication aimed at fostering national consensus and mitigating public resistance amidst a challenging macroeconomic environment. His narrative constructs the debt crisis not merely as a fiscal challenge but as a collective moral duty, emphasizing the necessity of sacrifice and shared responsibility to navigate the country out of its "debt trap."

Crisis Framing and Narrative Construction:

Ahiagbah employs a constructivist framing that positions Ghana's economic difficulties as an unavoidable juncture requiring deliberate decision-making. By explicitly acknowledging the limited precedents such as Jamaica and Greece, he tactically leverages comparative international examples to legitimize the necessity of the debt restructuring, despite limited direct parallels. This comparative framing serves to reduce uncertainty and foster perceived legitimacy of the policy, aligning with theories of issue framing which suggest that how issues are presented significantly influences public acceptance and stakeholder buy-in.

Legitimization and Trust-building:

A critical element in his communication strategy involves building trust and confidence through emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and the government's commitment to transparency and fairness. Phrases such as "support from institutional investors is critical" and "support must be voluntary, not coercive" are designed to assuage fears of coercion, which could trigger resistance or perceptions of illegitimacy. This approach aligns with legitimacy theory,

where the perceived fairness and transparency of policies influence public compliance and stakeholder cooperation.

Responsibility Attribution and Moral Appeal:

While Ahiagbah does not explicitly assign blame, his emphasis on collective effort and rising to the occasion subtly appeals to moral responsibility, framing the debt crisis as a shared challenge that demands sacrifice from all sectors – government, investors, and citizens alike. This moral framing is a common strategy in crisis communication to foster social cohesion and collective resilience, especially in contexts where public trust may be fragile.

Crisis as an Opportunity for Strategic Repositioning:

He articulates the crisis as an opportunity for long-term structural reforms, suggesting that the current challenge can catalyze sustainable economic rebuilding. This aligns with opportunity framing in crisis communication literature, which posits that effectively portraying a crisis as an avenue for positive change can enhance stakeholder support and facilitate transformative reforms.

Stakeholder Strategy and Political Legitimacy:

Ahiagbah's appeal to stakeholder inclusivity – notably calling on institutional investors, political actors, and the broader public – demonstrates an understanding of multi-actor stakeholder theory. His discourse aims to foster cooperative engagement by articulating shared goals and emphasizing the government's commitment to making significant sacrifices, such as "significant cuts" in the budget. This strategy is consistent with legitimacy and coalition-building theories, where inclusive messaging and shared sacrifices are employed to foster broad-based support and legitimacy for difficult reforms.

Implications for Political Communication:

Overall, Ahiagbah’s discourse exemplifies a deliberate, strategic framing that balances the necessity of unpopular policy measures with assurances of fairness and long-term benefits. It reflects an understanding that in crisis contexts, political actors must manage ambiguity, fear, and resistance through credible narratives that emphasize collective responsibility, transparency, and resilience. His emphasis on long-term sustainability over short-term gains aligns with policy legitimacy strategies that seek to embed reforms within a shared moral and national development narrative.

Richard Ahiagbah’s commentary on the DDEP can be seen as a sophisticated example of crisis communication that employs issue framing, legitimacy building, and stakeholder engagement strategies. His discourse seeks to transform a potentially contentious policy into a shared national enterprise grounded in moral responsibility and long-term vision. This approach exemplifies how political actors can leverage strategic narrative construction to foster social cohesion and facilitate difficult policy reforms during economic crises.

iv. Analysis on Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia's Aide Dennis Miracles Aboagye's Comments on DDEP

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Issue Presentation & Narrative Construction	Legitimacy & Procedural Fairness	Proper process & system adherence	Parliamentary approval, constitutional procedures	The Finance Minister has gone through the proper channels... Parliament

					approved the debt restructuring"
	Strength & Persuasion of Frames	Confidence in Governance & Institutional Processes	Trust in legal and procedural frameworks	"People should not fight or debate systems"	"Procedures are in place, and the process is legitimate"
	Context & Audience Engagement	Respect for Institutional Roles	Parliament's role in oversight & approval	"Parliament has approved the budget and the debt restructuring"	"The Minister will brief Parliament and seek approval"
Blame & Responsibility	Strategic Blame Shifting	No explicit blame, focus on process	Emphasis on process legitimacy	N/A	N/A
	Discourse & Argumentation	Rational Justification	Procedural compliance ensures legitimacy	"The Minister has sought approval and will brief Parliament"	"Negotiations are within legal and constitutional bounds"
	Mobilization & Legitimacy	Support for Government Actions	Confidence in Minister's process	"The timing is right, and the Minister has completed his consultations"	"There is no illegality or wrongdoing"

Crisis to Opportunity	Dislocation & Reframing	Crisis as a Catalyst for Action	Use of procedural momentum to advance reforms	"It's the right time for negotiations"	"The process is ongoing, and Parliament is involved"
	Manipulation / Learning	Embracing Institutional Roles	Building trust in parliamentary oversight	"Parliament will be briefed, and approval sought"	"This process is transparent and constitutional"
	Political Contestation & Power Struggles	Not explicitly discussed	Focus on process and legality over politicization	N/A	N/A
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Political Parties	Advocacy & Leadership	Parliament's role in approving measures	"Minister has sought parliamentary approval"	"The government has made commitments towards achieving outcomes"
	Opposition & Civil Society	Oversight & Debate	Ensuring transparency	"We should not litigate or fight the process unnecessarily"	"Support the process, not undermine it"
	Media & Public Discourse	Issue Framing &	Reinforcing procedural legitimacy	"System works, and	"Let's trust the legal and

		Support Building		processes are respected"	constitutional process"
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Ethical Concerns	Trust & Transparency	Avoiding unwarranted accusations	"No illegality has been committed; processes are clear"	"Support the government's transparent approach"
	Social Justice & Accountability	Trust & Transparency	Respect for bondholders' rights	"People have different preferences; some want immediate payment"	"Support the process, respecting individual choices"

Miracles Aboagye’s discourse on Ghana’s debt restructuring process exemplifies a strategic deployment of institutional legitimacy and procedural rhetoric to reinforce trust in the government’s actions amidst a complex financial crisis. His commentary predominantly employs a procedural framing, emphasizing that the debt exchange process is anchored within constitutional and legislative frameworks, specifically referencing the approval of the 2023 budget by Parliament. This framing serves to legitimize the government’s actions, positioning them as compliant with established legal norms, thereby minimizing perceptions of illegality or arbitrariness.

A salient feature of Aboagye’s discourse is his reliance on institutional authority and role legitimacy. He underscores the importance of parliamentary oversight, portraying Parliament as an active participant rather than a mere passive observer. By emphasizing the Minister of Finance’s adherence to parliamentary approval – highlighting that the Minister has sought parliamentary

backing before proceeding – he constructs a narrative that frames the debt restructuring as a transparent, parliamentary-sanctioned process. This aligns with the discursive strategy of institutional triangulation, which seeks to reinforce the act’s legitimacy through recognized state institutions.

Furthermore, Aboagye employs a rhetorical strategy of reassurance aimed at mitigating potential resistance or skepticism from the public and opposition stakeholders. He explicitly advises against “litigating everything,” advocating for a measured acceptance of the process based on its procedural integrity. This rhetorical stance functions to preempt contestations and reduce politicization by positioning the process as legally sound and procedurally transparent.

Additionally, his remarks reflect a trust-building approach, emphasizing that the negotiations are ongoing, within legal bounds, and that the government, particularly the Minister of Finance, has acted in good faith with proper consultation. By invoking the notion that “people have different preferences” regarding debt repayment—some preferring immediate payout, others accepting restructuring—he subtly appeals to the principle of individual stakeholder agency while advocating for collective institutional cooperation.

From a broader theoretical perspective, Aboagye’s framing aligns with constructivist views of discourse, wherein the power of language is employed to shape perceptions of legitimacy, authority, and procedural correctness. His discourse functions as a rhetorical device to foster social cohesion and political stability during a period of economic uncertainty. It also illustrates the discursive management of crisis, transforming a potentially contentious process into a legally and procedurally sanctioned act that commands institutional and public confidence.

Miracles Abogaye’s discourse exemplifies strategic communication that leverages procedural legitimacy, institutional authority, and rhetorical reassurance to manage perceptions surrounding Ghana’s debt restructuring. This approach aims to uphold trust, minimize political friction, and reinforce the narrative that the government’s actions are lawful, transparent, and in the national interest—critical elements in fostering social cohesion and political stability during times of economic distress.

v. Detailed Analysis of NPP Manifesto on DDEP

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Economic Crisis & Debt Management	The inherited debt crisis, mismanagement, and economic instability	Highlighting the inherited debt and economic mismanagement that precipitated the DDEP crisis	"Ghana’s economy under NPP has made positive strides, recent challenges notwithstanding."
	Strengthening the Frame	Successful Management & Resilience	Progress made despite the crisis	Emphasizing the restructuring of debt and recovery efforts, contrasting past mismanagement	"Following the domestic debt restructuring of GHC203.4 billion in 2023, Ghana reached agreement with bilateral and Eurobond creditors."

	Audience Engagement	Call for Confidence & Support	Reassuring Ghanaians of recovery and prudent management	Positioning NPP as capable of steering the economy out of crisis	"Despite the economic decline and turbulence inherited, we have delivered positive outcomes that have benefited Ghanaians."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Critique of Past Management	Past mismanagement leading to the DDEP crisis	Implicitly blaming previous NDC mismanagement for the debt crisis and economic instability	"The inherited economic crisis, including unsustainable debts, power sector debts, and financial sector turmoil."
	Argumentation	Successes in Debt Restructuring & Reforms	Debt negotiations and restructuring as evidence of responsible management	Detailing debt agreements and restructuring efforts to regain fiscal stability	"Ghana's agreement with G20 and Eurobond creditors, resulting in debt cancellation of US\$4.7 billion."

	Legitimacy Building	Confidence in Policy & Leadership	Demonstrating competence in debt and economic management	Highlighting achievements in debt restructuring, stabilization, and economic recovery	"Progress towards a debt-to-GDP ratio of 55%, inflation reduction, and increased foreign reserves."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Crisis as a Catalyst for Reform	Turning inherited crisis into an opportunity for fiscal discipline	Framing debt restructuring and reforms as steps toward sustainable growth	"Reconstructed Ghana's debt profile to ensure future fiscal sustainability."
	Manipulation / Learning	Learning from Past Mistakes	Systematic reforms to prevent recurrence of crises	Emphasizing reforms like establishing a Fiscal Responsibility Council and legal frameworks	"Amended the Fiscal Responsibility Act to enforce fiscal discipline."
	Political Contestation	Positioning as the Responsible Stewards	NPP as the party capable of restoring fiscal health	Asserting their role in stabilizing Ghana's economy and managing the crisis effectively	"We have managed the crisis, stabilized the currency, and restored confidence."

Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Institutional & Legal Reforms	Strengthening debt and fiscal management institutions	Establishing or reforming agencies like the Fiscal Responsibility Council and Debt Office	"Establishing an independent Fiscal Responsibility Council, restructuring the Debt Management Office."
	Civil Society & Miners	Confidence & Transparency	Restoring trust through transparency and credible reforms	Highlighting debt restructuring transparency and progress in economic management	"Negotiated debt relief and restructuring with international and local creditors."
	International & Regional	International Support & Credibility	Engaging international creditors and agencies	Showcasing successful negotiations with G20, IMF, and bilateral creditors	"Reached agreements with bilateral and Eurobond holders, reducing debt burdens."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Duty to Stabilize Economy	Restoring fiscal discipline and economic integrity	Framing reforms as moral and responsible actions to protect future generations	"Implementing fiscal rules to ensure sustainable debt levels and economic stability."

	Social Justice & Accountability	Protecting Citizens & Investors	Ensuring debt sustainability benefits all Ghanaians	Emphasizing responsible debt management to prevent future crises	"Debt restructuring aimed at securing economic stability for current and future generations."
--	--	---------------------------------	---	--	---

The NPP’s 2024 Manifesto strategically employs a frame of responsible governance and successful crisis management to appeal to voters who have been adversely affected by the DDEP crisis. By emphasizing their role in resolving a deeply inherited fiscal and debt crisis, the NPP constructs an image of competence, resilience, and economic stewardship. The party’s narrative transitions from highlighting the severity of the inherited crisis – characterized by unsustainable debt levels, macroeconomic instability, and systemic failures – to showcasing concrete achievements such as debt restructuring agreements, stabilization of macroeconomic indicators, and institutional reforms.

This approach aligns with the issue framing and legitimacy building strategies identified in the table, where the NPP positions itself as the responsible actor capable of restoring economic stability. By blaming past mismanagement and highlighting their reform, the party appeals to voters’ desire for accountability, stability, and future prosperity, thereby building trust and confidence. Furthermore, framing the crisis as an opportunity for systemic reform allows the NPP to portray itself as proactive and solutions-oriented, contrasting itself with previous mismanagement that precipitated the crisis.

In terms of audience engagement, the NPP’s emphasis on achievements like debt relief, macroeconomic stabilization, and institutional reforms functions as reassurance to the electorate that their votes will sustain these positive trajectories. This appeals particularly to voters who have experienced hardship due to the crisis, such as inflation, unemployment, and economic uncertainty. The narrative of recovery and resilience is crafted to foster a sense of hope and confidence in the party’s capacity to navigate future economic challenges.

Overall, the NPP’s appeal post-DDEP crisis hinges on reframing the crisis as a managed recovery – highlighting their role in turning inherited systemic failures into opportunities for sustainable growth –thereby positioning themselves as the trustworthy custodians of Ghana’s economic future.

4.3.3. Analysis of NDC Statements on Galamsey

i. Analysis of Flagbearer of the Opposition NDC’s statements on Galamsey (Mahama Fellowships with the Clergy Streamed live on 1 Oct 2024)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Environmental Sustainability	Responsible Mining	Emphasis on the for legal, sustainable small-scale mining that does not harm the environment	"Small scale mining is recognized by law and must be done in a manner that does not harm the environment ."
	Strengthening the Frame	Law Enforcement	Auditing & Responsibility	Promising audits of	"We'll audit all

		& Accountability		concessions and holding owners responsible for illegal activities	concessions.. and identify the beneficial owners."
	Audience Engagement	Public and Miner Cooperation	Skills & Land Reclamation	Encouraging miners to adopt responsible practices; reclaim land post-mining	"Small scale miners will be compelled to undertake skills training and land reclamation."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Illegal Mining as Moral & Environmental Wrong	Responsibility of Concession Owners	Concession owners will be held accountable for illegal activities	"If illegal mining takes place on your concession, that concession will be taken away."
	Argumentation	Legal & Moral Justification	Criminalization of Illegal Mining	Framing illegal mining as morally wrong and destructive	"We will wage a war against illegal mining or galamsey."

	Legitimacy Building	Government's Role	Law & Policy Reforms	Promising amendments to laws and bans on new leases in forests	"We shall ban granting new mining leases in forest reserves."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Environmental Degradation as Opportunity	Environmental Restoration Initiatives	Initiatives like Tree for Life and Blue Water to restore polluted areas	"We shall promote responsible mining and reclaim polluted water bodies and degraded lands."
	Manipulation / Learning	Sustainable Development	Land Reclamation & Responsible Mining	Using reclamation funds and training to promote sustainable practices	"A portion of revenues from small-scale mining will be used for land reclamation."
	Political Contestation	Positioning as Environmental Protectors	Opposing Malpractices	Framing opposition as defenders of the environment	"We will wage a war against illegal mining."

Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Regulatory & Enforcement Role	Law Reforms & Bans	Promising to amend laws, impose stiffer penalties	"We shall amend the Minerals and Mining Law to impose stiffer punishments."
	Civil Society & Miners	Responsible Mining & Community Involvement	Skills & Environmental Reclamation	Engaging miners in responsible practices and land cleanup	"Small scale miners will be compelled to undertake skills training."
	Media & Public Discourse	Shaping Public Perception	Environmental Justice	Promoting responsible practices and accountability	"We will identify beneficial owners and hold them responsible."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Justification for Reforms	Responsible & Legal Mining	Framing reforms as morally necessary for environmental health	"You can't serve in government and mine at the same time."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Fair Resource Management	Land & Revenue Reclamation	Ensuring funds go towards land reclamation	"Land reclamation funds will be used to

				and environment al health	restore mined lands."
--	--	--	--	---------------------------------	-----------------------------

John Mahama’s speech strategically exploits the crisis of galamsey – Ghana’s widespread illegal mining activity – as a potent rhetorical device to construct a narrative centered on environmental degradation and national security. This exploitation aligns with the broader framework of crisis communication, whereby political actors leverage societal crises to mobilize support, legitimize policy positions, and differentiate themselves from opponents.

1. Framing the Crisis as an Environmental Emergency

The speech vividly depicts illegal mining as a moral and environmental catastrophe, emphasizing its destructive impact on water bodies, land, and public health. This framing heightens the perceived severity of the crisis, transforming galamsey from a mere economic issue into an existential threat to Ghana’s natural resources. By doing so, the opposition elevates the urgency of their proposed solutions, positioning responsible mining and environmental restoration as the only viable responses.

2. Crisis as an Opportunity for Moral and Political Repositioning

The opposition reframes the crisis as an opportunity – rather than merely a problem – by proposing comprehensive land reclamation, tree planting, and water restoration initiatives. This reframing aligns with the concept of "crisis exploitation," where actors leverage a crisis to promote a narrative of renewal and responsible governance. The speech presents the crisis as a moral failing of previous administrations, thereby positioning the opposition as the custodians of environmental justice and sustainable development.

3. Mobilization Through Fear and Hope

The speech employs fear appeals – highlighting the dire consequences of illegal mining – coupled with promises of hope through law reforms, land reclamation, and community engagement. This dual strategy intensifies emotional engagement, prompting the public to support stringent measures and responsible practices. The threat of environmental collapse is used to justify draconian policies, while the promise of restoration energizes support for the opposition’s agenda.

4. Legitimation of Policy Measures via Crisis Narrative

By portraying the galamsey crisis as a failure of past policies, the opposition legitimizes their proposed reforms, such as banning new leases, amending laws, and enforcing stricter penalties. The crisis thus becomes a justification for extraordinary policy measures, which might have been politically contentious otherwise. This aligns with theories of crisis exploitation, where actors capitalize on societal fears to push for reforms that consolidate their political capital.

5. Strategic Use of Moral and Ethical Language

The speech employs moral language – describing illegal mining as morally wrong and environmentally destructive – to deepen the emotional impact and reinforce the narrative of crisis. This moral framing mobilizes societal values, compelling the public to see responsible mining not just as an economic activity but as a moral duty to protect Ghana’s future.

The opposition Leader’s speech exemplifies effective crisis exploitation by framing galamsey as an urgent environmental disaster that demands immediate action. They leverage the crisis to justify strict reforms, energize their political base, and position themselves as the champions of environmental justice. This strategic framing aligns with theories of crisis communication, where societal fears are harnessed to legitimize policies, mobilize support, and redefine political

identities. Such exploitation underscores the power of narrative construction in political discourse, especially in contexts where crises threaten national well-being and resource sustainability.

ii. Analysis of Sammy Gyamfi's Statement on Galamsey at a Press Conference on 25 Apr 2023

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of Corruption Allegations	State Capture & Grand Corruption	Alleged Involvement of Presidential Officials	Mention of high-profile government officials and their links to corruption	"The documentary reveals dealings between President Akufo-Addo, Vice President Bawumia, and gold smuggling mafias."
	Strengthening the Frame	Evidence & Investigative Findings	Alleged Money Laundering & Bribery	Use of investigative reports and testimonies to build case	"Al Jazeera's documentary exposes inflated contracts and illegal dealings involving top officials."

	Audience Engagement	Call for Action & Accountability	Demand for Probes & Investigations	Calls for Parliament and Special Prosecutor to investigate	"We call on Parliament to set up a bipartisan, televised investigation into these scandals."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Leadership Complicity	President and Vice President as Masterminds	Direct accusations linking top leaders to corruption and illegal activities	"President Akufo-Addo and Vice President Bawumia are implicated in the gold smuggling and money laundering schemes."
	Argumentation	Moral & Legal Accountability	Corruption as a National Threat	Framing corruption as immoral and damaging to Ghana	"This corruption is destroying Ghana's image and resources, and must be prosecuted."
	Legitimacy Building	Public Outcry & National Interest	Protecting Ghana's Integrity	Emphasis on Ghanaian people's right	"Ghanaians deserve justice and transparency

				to transparency	from their leaders."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Environmental & Economic Damage	Galamsey and Corruption Destroying Resources	Linking illegal mining and corruption to environmental degradation	"Galamsey was a scam, and corruption has led to environmental destruction."
	Manipulation / Learning	Need for Systemic Reform	Strengthening Anti-Corruption Measures	Calling for investigations to prevent future malpractices	"A bipartisan investigation is necessary to expose and stop these corrupt practices."
	Political Contestation	Opposition & Government Accountability	Opposition's Role	Positioning the NDC as defenders of justice	"The NDC demands thorough investigation and justice for Ghana."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Institutional Responsibility	Investigative & Legal Action	Calls for Parliament and the Special Prosecutor to act	"We urge Parliament and the Special Prosecutor to probe these allegations."

	Civil Society & Media	Public Awareness & Advocacy	Exposing Corruption	Highlighting media's role in uncovering scandals	"Media and civil society have exposed these corrupt networks."
	International & Regional	Global Exposure	African Corruption Networks	Mention of cross-border money laundering and gold smuggling	"These illicit activities span across Africa, involving foreign collaborators."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Outrage & Justice	Fight Against Corruption	Framing corruption as a moral failure of leadership	"Corruption by top officials is a betrayal of Ghanaian values."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Call for Accountability	Protecting Ghana's Resources	Emphasizing the need to safeguard national assets	"Ghanaian resources are being looted; justice must be served."

Sammy Gyamfi’s address, delivered as the National Communications Officer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), exemplifies a strategic and deliberate use of crisis exploitation within the political communication landscape. His speech was crafted not merely as a routine political statement but as an orchestrated effort to leverage an unfolding crisis – allegations of

high-level corruption, environmental degradation, and national resource plunder – to serve the opposition’s political objectives.

Context and Setting as Amplifiers of Crisis Exploitation

The nationwide coverage of the press conference, attended by multiple media outlets, positioned the NDC’s narrative at the forefront of public discourse. The use of projected images, including alleged photographs of implicated officials and environmental destruction, served as visual cues that heightened emotional engagement and credibility. These visual aids functioned as powerful symbols of the crisis, transforming abstract allegations into tangible evidence that could resonate emotionally and cognitively with the audience.

Strategic Framing of the Crisis

Gyamfi’s speech frames the allegations of corruption and environmental destruction as a profound national crisis – one that threatens Ghana’s sovereignty, integrity, and future. By linking allegations of corruption directly to environmental degradation, he constructs a narrative of systemic failure at the highest levels of government, thus elevating the issue from mere political scandal to a matter of national survival. This framing exploits the crisis to galvanize public anger and demand for accountability, positioning the opposition as the custodians of national integrity and moral rectitude.

Exploitation of Crisis through Moral and Emotional Appeals

The speech employs moral outrage and emotional appeals, portraying the ruling government as complicit and culpable, thereby exploiting the crisis to delegitimize the incumbent administration. The references to environmental destruction, the alleged involvement of national leaders in illicit activities, and the call for bipartisan investigations evoke feelings of betrayal, injustice, and

urgency. These appeals serve to deepen the crisis perception, making it not only a matter of corruption but also a moral failure that necessitates immediate and decisive action.

Use of Visual Evidence as a Crisis Amplifier

The projected images, such as polluted water bodies and faces of implicated officials, are instrumental in reinforcing the gravity of the crisis. Visual evidence in political communication functions as a form of "truth claim," transcending verbal rhetoric and appealing directly to the audience's perceptual and emotional faculties. In this context, images of environmental devastation and implicated individuals serve to solidify the narrative of widespread corruption and ecological destruction, thereby intensifying the perceived severity of the crisis.

Implications of Crisis Exploitation in Political Strategy

By framing the allegations as a national crisis, the opposition not only seeks to mobilize public opinion but also aims to delegitimize the incumbent government's authority and moral standing. This approach exploits the crisis as a political resource – an opportunity to rally citizens around the opposition's calls for investigations, reforms, and accountability. It also seeks to widen the legitimacy gap between the ruling party and the public, emphasizing that the crisis is symptomatic of systemic rot that only a change in leadership can address.

Sammy Gyamfi's speech exemplifies a sophisticated deployment of crisis exploitation within political communication. The strategic framing of corruption allegations as a national crisis, reinforced by visual evidence and emotional appeals, aims to mobilize public outrage, delegitimize the incumbent government, and position the opposition as the moral and political alternative. The setting (national media coverage with visual aids) amplifies this exploitation, ensuring that the crisis remains salient in public consciousness and discourse. This approach underscores the

importance of crisis as a political resource, manipulated to serve partisan objectives in a competitive democratic environment.

iii. Analysis of Sammy Gyamfi's on Press Conference on Galamsey

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Government's Lack of Commitment	Deception & Hypocrisy	Accusations that government's fight is a sham, driven by political interests	"The so-called fight against Galamsey is nothing but a scam."
	Strengthening the Frame	Evidence of Government Collusion	State-backed complicity	Mention of officials involved in aiding illegal mining	"Active participation and aiding of illegal mining by government officials."
	Audience Engagement	Call for Action	Demand for accountability	Urging prosecution of officials and companies involved	"We demand immediate prosecution of all government functionaries involved."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Leadership and Political Will	President Akufo-Addo's role	Accusation that the President has	"President Akufo-Addo promised to

				failed despite promises	fight Galamsey but failed to walk his talk."
	Argumentation	Environmental & Economic Damage	Environmental degradation and loss of trust	Linking corruption and illegal mining to environmental destruction	"Water bodies polluted, forests destroyed, environment degraded."
	Legitimacy Building	Public Outcry & Moral Responsibility	Ghanaian citizens' right to a clean environment	Framing failure as a betrayal of national trust	"Ghanaians are tired of empty promises and lip service."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Environmental Catastrophe & Political Failure	The ongoing environmental disaster	Pollution levels, missing excavators, armed conflicts	"Water bodies are polluted; illegal miners operate with impunity."
	Manipulation / Learning	Need for Systemic Reform	Strengthening enforcement	Calls for confiscation, prosecution, and reforms	"Confiscate assets, prosecute culprits, and enforce laws."

	Political Contestation	Opposition & Governance Critique	NDC as defenders of the environment	Positioning as the voice demanding action	"The NDC calls for accountability and action against corruption."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Institutional Responsibility	Enforcement of laws	Calls for prosecution, confiscation, and disciplinary actions	"Prosecute corrupt officials, close illegal companies, and confiscate assets."
	Civil Society & Miners	Advocacy & Exposure	Media's role in exposing corruption	Highlighting investigative reports and public awareness	"Media has played a vital role in revealing the truth."
	International & Regional	Cross-border & Global Impact	Foreign collaborators in illegal mining	Mention of Chinese and foreign involvement	"Foreign collaborators like Chinese miners are aiding illegal activities."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Outrage & Justice	Corruption and environmental destruction	Framing officials as betrayers of national trust	"Government officials have betrayed Ghana's environment"

					for personal gain."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Protecting Ghana's Resources	Call for responsible governance	Emphasis on protecting water, land, and forests	"Water is life; destruction of environment threatens our future."

As the National Communications Officer for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Sammy Gyamfi’s public address is not merely a personal or partisan statement but functions as an official position of the opposition party. His articulated narrative aims to leverage the ongoing environmental and political crises surrounding illegal mining (Galamsey) to galvanize public support, pressure government accountability, and position the NDC as the legitimate custodian of national environmental integrity. This strategic framing effectively transforms the crisis into an opportunity for political mobilization, positioning the opposition as the moral and patriotic alternative.

Setting and Media Dynamics

The nationwide coverage of this press conference, coupled with the use of projected images and videos, underscores a deliberate media strategy rooted in crisis exploitation. The setting – an organized, high-profile media event – serves multiple functions:

- **Amplification of the Crisis:** By drawing media attention to the environmental degradation and alleged government complicity, the NDC amplifies the perceived severity of the crisis.

- **Visual Evidence as Proof:** The projection of images – **such** as polluted rivers, armed clashes, and missing excavators – serves as visual 'embodying' of the crisis, transforming abstract allegations into concrete, visceral realities. This aligns with the concept of visual rhetoric in crisis communication, where images reinforce verbal messages and evoke emotional responses.

- **Legitimization of the Opposition's Position:** The formal setting, with media present, lends authority to Gyamfi's accusations, framing the crisis as a national emergency demanding urgent political action.

Crisis Exploitation Strategy

From an academic perspective, Gyamfi's speech exemplifies crisis exploitation – a process whereby political actors turn crises into opportunities to foster political capital, influence public opinion, and delegitimize opponents.

1. Defining the Crisis:

- The narrative constructs the illegal mining problem as a national crisis, characterized by environmental destruction, economic loss, and governance failure.

- The use of images depicting polluted water bodies, armed conflicts, and missing assets visually reinforces this framing, aligning with the spectacle concept in crisis communication – where visual elements dramatize the crisis's severity.

2. Attribution of Responsibility:

- The speech strategically attributes blame to the ruling government, emphasizing **government complicity** and **political misconduct**, thus framing the crisis as a **failure of leadership**. This

enhances the opposition's moral high ground and positions them as the true custodians who can remedy the situation.

- The explicit linking of environmental degradation to corruption and political collusion exploits the crisis to intensify public outrage against incumbents, fostering **moral outrage**.

3. Mobilization and Call for Action:

- By demanding investigations, prosecutions, and systemic reforms, the opposition transforms the crisis into a call for accountability. The narrative seeks to exploit the crisis to mobilize public support for regime change, positioning the opposition as the agents of reform.

- The use of emotional language, coupled with visual evidence, aims to evoke **moral panic**, compelling the public and institutions to act.

4. Strategic Framing of the Opposition:

- Gyamfi's positioning of the NDC as the **protector of Ghana's environment and moral guardian** leverages the crisis to **redefine political legitimacy**. This aligns with the **moral framing** tactic in crisis communication – casting the opposition as the moral alternative.

Implications and Effectiveness

The strategic use of visual aids, combined with a nationwide media platform, amplifies the crisis's emotional and moral impact, creating a compelling narrative that can influence public perception and political discourse. This approach is consistent with **agenda-setting theory**, where media framing shapes public understanding and prioritization of issues.

Furthermore, by framing the environmental crisis as a symptom of systemic corruption and leadership failure, Gyamfi effectively exploits the crisis to delegitimize the ruling party and rally

support for regime change. This aligns with crisis exploitation theory, which posits that political actors leverage crises to shift blame, increase pressure on opponents, and fortify their own political base.

In sum, Sammy Gyamfi’s speech exemplifies a calculated strategy of crisis exploitation, where the environmental and governance crises are harnessed through vivid visual evidence and emotional rhetoric to galvanize opposition support, delegitimize incumbents, and position the NDC as the moral and political custodians of Ghana’s future. The setting – a nationwide, media-driven press conference – serves as an ideal platform for amplifying these messages, transforming the crisis into a potent tool for political mobilization and regime accountability.

iv. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Chairman of the Government Assurance Committee at the Government Assurance Committee of Parliament held a public hearing on October 7, 2024, focusing on the galamsey (illegal mining)

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue as Environmental Crisis	Degradation of Ghana’s Water Resources	Rivers as Victims of Galamsey	Visual evidence of polluted rivers, alarming decline of water bodies	"Exhibiting samples of 11 polluted river bodies in Ghana; only the Volta River gives some hope."
	Strengthening the Frame	Urgency & Collective	Urgent Need for Action	Highlighting the destruction	"All our rivers are gone except

		Responsibility		of rivers and the threat to national water security	the Volta, and even that is threatened."
	Audience Engagement	Call to Collective Action	Shared Responsibility	Emphasizing that all citizens and institutions share the blame	"We all have to take collective responsibility because as parliament we approve resource allocations."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Leadership & Institutional Failures	Parliament & Government Accountability	Questioning resource allocation and oversight failures	"Billions spent on anti-Galamsey operations, yet rivers are destroyed."
	Argumentation	Policy Failures & Inaction	Ineffectiveness of Past Efforts	Repeated resource allocation without results	"Year after year, resources are approved, yet the rivers are still polluted."
	Legitimacy Building	Moral & National Duty	Protecting Ghana's Environment	The moral obligation of leaders and citizens	"This crisis affects all of us; we cannot

					continue to ignore it."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Environmental Catastrophe & Political Failure	Imminent Environmental Collapse	Rivers destroyed, water sources polluted	"Our rivers are gone; the only hope is the Volta, which is also at risk."
	Manipulation / Learning	Need for Innovative Solutions	Urgent Call for New Strategies	Asking for profiling new solutions to stop the damage	"Profile new solutions; how can we stop this destruction?"
	Political Contestation	Responsibility & Accountability	Call for Leadership Action	Criticizing political and institutional inaction	"We, as parliament, must justify our resource allocations; we are all complicit."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Institutional Accountability	Role of Parliament & Policy Makers	Parliament must scrutinize resource use and policy effectiveness	"Institutions come to report and justify resource utilization."
	Civil Society & Miners	Advocacy & Awareness	Public Awareness of River polluted river bodies	Media coverage and public concern	"The media is carrying live coverage of the

				about pollution	polluted rivers."
	International & Regional	Global Environmental Responsibility	Cross-border Water Pollution	Rivers linked to broader ecological impacts	"The interface of the White Volta and the Volta River indicates regional environmental threat."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Outrage & Justice	Protecting Future Generations	Responsibility to preserve water for future	"This crisis affects all of us, including our health and food security."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Justice for Affected Communities	Holding polluters and officials accountable	Need for justice in environmental management	"Implied in the call for accountability of officials involved in illegal mining."

Samuel Ablakwa’s speech during the parliamentary public hearing on the environmental crisis caused by illegal mining (Galamsey) exemplifies a strategic and sophisticated form of crisis exploitation rooted in the concept of **issue framing and moral positioning**. As a member of the Opposition Caucus and Chairman of the Government Assurance Committee, Ablakwa leverages

the crisis to serve multiple political and moral functions, effectively transforming a national environmental catastrophe into a platform for accountability, advocacy, and opposition politics.

Crisis as an Issue of Collective Responsibility and Moral Obligation

Ablakwa's framing of the pollution of Ghana's rivers as an urgent, all-encompassing crisis taps into the normative and moral dimensions of crisis exploitation. By demonstrating visual evidence of eleven polluted rivers exhibited publicly and broadcasted via media he capitalizes on the emotional and moral outrage of the public. The strategic presentation of tangible, irrefutable evidence foregrounds the crisis's severity and imbues it with a sense of immediacy, compelling the audience to recognize the collective failure – government, parliament, and citizens alike – in safeguarding national resources.

This approach aligns with the **issue framing** technique where the crisis is positioned not merely as an environmental issue but as a moral failing of leadership and societal neglect. Ablakwa's emphasis that the crisis affects everyone – regardless of involvement – further democratizes the issue, making it a shared moral responsibility that transcends partisan lines.

Crisis as an Opportunity for Political Accountability and Opposition Mobilization

Given that the platform was a highly publicized parliamentary hearing with significant media coverage, Ablakwa exploits the crisis to elevate the opposition's role as defenders of national interest. His critique highlights systemic failures – misallocation and ineffective utilization of billions of cedis allocated over years – and underscores the persistent inaction despite repeated resource commitments. This positioning transforms the crisis from a mere environmental problem into a political opportunity: a clear indictment of the ruling government's failure to act decisively.

By questioning the efficacy of resource allocations and institutional responses, Ablakwa employs **issue manipulation** – highlighting the discrepancy between expenditure and outcomes – to frame the government’s approach as inadequate, ineffective, and complicit. This tactic not only intensifies public pressure but also seeks to delegitimize government narratives that downplay the crisis, thereby exploiting the crisis to mobilize political support for opposition alternatives.

Utilization of Visual Evidence and Public Engagement as Crisis Amplifiers

The live media coverage and the exhibit of physical samples of polluted water bodies serve as **visual cues** that intensify emotional engagement and reinforce the severity of the crisis. Visual evidence is a potent tool in crisis exploitation, as it transforms abstract environmental data into visceral, relatable images that can evoke fear, anger, and moral outrage.

Furthermore, Ablakwa’s call for innovative solutions and his insistence that “all of us have to take responsibility” strategically shift the narrative from blame to collective action, thereby broadening the scope of crisis exploitation. This inclusive framing invites the public and stakeholders to see the crisis as both a moral failure and an opportunity for societal renewal and environmental stewardship.

Implications for Political Strategy and Power Dynamics

As a member of the opposition, Ablakwa’s deployment of crisis exploitation serves to weaken the incumbent government’s legitimacy by exposing its failures and neglect. The public hearing platform amplifies this effect, as it creates a space where the opposition can frame the crisis as evidence of governance failure, corruption, and environmental recklessness.

This form of crisis exploitation also operates within a broader political narrative – depicting the ruling party’s resource mismanagement, lack of accountability, and environmental irresponsibility

– thus reinforcing opposition’s moral high ground. It exemplifies how crises can be harnessed not only to demand immediate remedial action but also to construct a lasting political message that questions the legitimacy and capacity of the government.

Samuel Ablakwa’s speech exemplifies a calculated and strategic use of crisis exploitation. By emphasizing the severity of environmental degradation through compelling visual evidence, framing the crisis as a moral failure of leadership, and leveraging the platform of a highly publicized parliamentary hearing, Ablakwa effectively transforms a national crisis into a political tool. This approach not only galvanizes public outrage but also strengthens opposition claims for accountability, thereby aligning crisis exploitation with both moral and political objectives.

v. Observation on Crisis Exploitation in the NDC 2024 Manifesto on Galamsey

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Illegal Mining Menace & Environmental Degradation	Pollution, Land & Forest Destruction	Emphasis on pollution of water bodies, degraded lands, and forest reserves	"Wage a ruthless war against the illegal mining menace and roll out an aggressive program to reclaim our polluted water bodies, degraded

					lands and devastated forest reserves."
	Strengthening the Frame	Environmental Crisis & Need for Action	Ecological and Economic Recovery	Turning degraded areas into recovery hubs through reforestation and water initiatives	Implement a 'Tree for Life' reforestation policy and a Blue Water Initiative to heal and harness the environment ."
	Audience Engagement	Call for Collective Action	National Responsibility & Policy Support	Promising comprehensive policies and reforms to restore the environment	"The next NDC government will wage a ruthless war... and reclaim our environment ."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Illegal Miners & Weak Regulations	Lack of Effective Oversight & Environmental Neglect	Implicit critique of current enforcement and regulation failures	Not explicitly quoted but implied through promises to reform

					regulation and impose stiffer punishments .
	Argumentation	Strengthening Legal Frameworks	Amendments & Restrictions on Mining	Ban on new forest reserve mining, amendments to mineral law, restrictions on gold exports	"Place a ban on new mining activities in forest reserves." / "Amend the Mineral and Mining Law to impose stiffer punishment." / "Restrict the export of unrefined gold."
	Legitimacy Building	Establishment of Regulatory Bodies	Ghana Gold Board (GOLDBOD)	Creation of a new regulator to oversee small-scale mining, support services, and land reclamation	"Set up a novel Ghana Gold Board (GOLDBOD) to regulate the small-scale mining sector."

Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Environmental & Economic Crisis as Opportunities	Sustainable Development through Responsible Mining	Reforestation, water restoration, and regulatory reforms as pathways to recovery	Implement a 'Tree for Life' reforestation policy and a Blue Water Initiative."
	Manipulation / Learning	Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	Geological Investigation & Sector Restructuring	Prioritizing geological surveys and sector restructuring for better resource management	"Resource the geological survey department to increase Ghana's stake in its extractive industry."
	Political Contestation	Opposing Illegal Mining & Promoting Responsible Practices	Reclaiming Environment & Economy	Framing responsible mining as national renewal and environmental stewardship	Not explicitly stated but implied through policies aimed at turning degraded areas into recovery hubs.

Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Legal & Regulatory Reforms	Bans, Amendments, and New Regulatory Bodies	Ban on forest reserve mining, amendments to mineral law, creation of GOLDBOD	"Place a ban on new mining activities in forest reserves." / "Amend the Mineral and Mining Law." / "Set up GOLDBOD."
	Civil Society & Miners	Skills Training & Land Reclamation	Support Services & Environmental Safeguards	Requiring miners to undertake land reclamation training, providing mining support services	"Compel small-scale miners to undertake skills training in land reclamation techniques."
	International & Regional	Support for Sector Reform	Gold Market & Export Restrictions	Backing Ghana's gold purchasing with international bullion partnerships	"Ensure that the Bank of Ghana's gold purchasing program is backed by international

					bullion holders."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Duty to Protect Environment	Responsible Mining & Reforestation	Framing environmental protection as a moral obligation	"Heal and harness the environment" / "Reclaim our polluted water bodies and degraded lands."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Land Reclamation & Economic Recovery	Supporting Local Miners & Communities	Reclaiming land for ecological and economic purposes, regulating small-scale mining	"Support land reclamation and provide mining support services."

The NDC’s 2024 Manifesto strategically leverages the crisis of illegal mining and environmental degradation as an opportunity for political mobilization and policy repositioning, exemplifying the concept of crisis exploitation in political communication. By framing illegal mining not merely as a criminal activity but as a profound environmental and socio-economic crisis, the manifesto elevates the issue to a national emergency that warrants urgent and decisive government intervention. This reframing serves to galvanize public support for comprehensive regulatory reforms, including bans, amendments, and the establishment of new institutions like GOLDBOD.

Furthermore, the manifesto reframes the crisis as a catalyst for ecological restoration and sustainable development, positioning environmental rehabilitation initiatives – such as reforestation and water restoration – as pathways to economic revival. This strategic reframing transforms the crisis from a source of public discontent and environmental peril into an opportunity for ecological and economic renewal, aligning with the concept of crisis exploitation as a means to legitimize transformative policies.

In addition, the emphasis on turning degraded areas into ecological and economic recovery hubs functions as a political tool to demonstrate proactive leadership, thereby fostering a narrative of hope and revival. This approach reflects a deliberate manipulation of the crisis discourse to mobilize stakeholder support, justify policy reforms, and position the opposition as the true environmental custodians committed to national restoration.

Overall, the NDC’s use of crisis exploitation serves to deepen political engagement by framing illegal mining and environmental degradation as urgent crises that can catalyze positive change, thereby consolidating political legitimacy and fostering a sense of collective purpose.

4.3.4. Analysis of NPP Statements on Galamsey

i. Vice President Dr. Bawumia On Galamsey Fight, Sep 20, 2024

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Environmental & Resource Management	Prevention over Cure	Focus on Proactive Measures	Emphasizing regulation and responsible mining to prevent	"Prevention is better than cure; regulate and

				environmental destruction	sanitize the sector."
	Strengthening the Frame	Policy Proposal & Solution Focus	Regulating Small-Scale Mining	Establishing community mining, mapping gold reserves, and responsible technology	"Set up community mining schemes based on geological survey data."
	Audience Engagement	Call to Action	Enforce Laws and Formalize Mining	Advocating for formal sector engagement, licensing, and law enforcement	"Bring miners into the formal sector, register them, and monitor their activities."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Current Failures	Focus on Reactive Approaches	Critique of focusing on chasing illegal miners after destruction occurs	"We focus on solutions after destruction, not before."
	Argumentation	Need for Structural Reforms	Formal Sector & Responsible Mining	Advocating for data-driven, regulated, and environmentally friendly mining	"Use geological surveys to identify where gold is, license responsible miners."

	Legitimacy Building	Moral & National Duty	Protecting Environment & Resources	Emphasizing responsible mining as a national and moral obligation	"We must protect our water bodies and environment for future generations."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Sustainable Development	Long-term Solution to Galamsey	Transition from reactive to preventive strategies	"Sanitize and regulate the sector to prevent environmental destruction."
	Manipulation / Learning	Innovation & Technology	Use of Mercury-Free Equipment	Introducing responsible mining technology	"Implement mercury-free gold catching machines."
	Political Contestation	Governance & Enforcement	Need for Stronger Laws & Enforcement	Ensuring compliance and responsible resource management	"Enforce existing laws and regulate the sector properly."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Institutions	Policy & Regulation	Geological Survey & Licensing	Establishing data-driven, transparent processes	"Map all gold reserves; license and monitor responsible miners."

	Civil Society & Media	Advocacy & Awareness	Promoting Responsible Mining	Raising awareness on sustainable practices	"Preventive measures are key— regulate and enforce laws."
	Community & Local Actors	Local Participation	Community Mining Schemes	Involving local communities in regulated mining	"Set up community schemes with clear guidelines and monitoring."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Responsibility	Protecting Future Generations	Emphasizing environment preservation for future generations	"Responsible mining protects water bodies and the environment."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Ensuring Equity and Fairness	Addressing the root causes of Galamsey	Holding those responsible for environmental destruction accountable	"It's like corruption in a way, because we have always focused on our solutions after the destruction happens, not preventing

					the destruction."
--	--	--	--	--	----------------------

Dr. Bawumia’s discourse on Galamsey exemplifies a strategic articulation of crisis framing, wherein the environmental degradation caused by illegal small-scale mining is constructed as an urgent national crisis necessitating immediate and systemic intervention. As the Vice President and a leading figure within the ruling NPP, his framing leverages the crisis to foreground policy proposals grounded in regulatory reform and technological innovation, thus positioning the government as proactive agents of change.

Crisis as a Catalyst for Policy Innovation and Legitimization

In the speech, Bawumia employs a preventive paradigm, emphasizing that the current approach – focused on reactive law enforcement – is insufficient and akin to “treating the symptoms rather than the disease.” This framing serves to shift the narrative from mere problem acknowledgment to a call for structural reforms – specifically, the formalization of the small-scale mining sector based on geological data and the deployment of mercury-free technology. Such framing aligns with the classic crisis exploitation strategy, where a perceived threat is used to justify radical policy shifts and mobilize support for institutional reforms.

Moral and Ethical Framing to Garner Legitimacy

By emphasizing the moral obligation to protect water bodies and future generations, Bawumia aligns the environmental crisis with national identity and ethical responsibility. This moral framing elevates the crisis beyond mere environmental concern, rendering it a moral imperative that transcends partisan politics. As a prominent political leader, this framing enhances the legitimacy

of proposed reforms and positions the government as the custodian of Ghana’s environmental future, thereby consolidating political capital.

Utilization of Crisis to Legitimize State Authority and Policy Enforcement

Bawumia underscores the importance of enforcing existing laws and regulating the sector, framing these measures as essential to sustainable development. This emphasis on enforcement and regulation exploits the crisis to justify increased state intervention and institutional authority, which can be perceived as a consolidation of power under the guise of crisis management. Given the context of ongoing illegal mining, this framing also serves to rally public support for stricter governance, while simultaneously justifying the allocation of resources and policy prioritization.

ii. Dr. Bawumia’s remarks from the August 9, 2024, NPP Manifesto launch.

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Economic & Environmental Integrity	Responsible Sourcing & Environmental Protection	Impact of Illegal Mining on Industry Standards	Threat to gold processing quality and international certification	"Illegal mining taints gold dory, affecting responsible sourcing and certification."
	Strengthening the Frame	Policy & Sector Reform	Need for Strict Regulation	Ensuring feedstock for refineries is responsibly sourced	"Royal Ghana Gold Refinery must ensure responsible sourcing."

	Audience Engagement	Call to Action	Decisive Action Against Galamsey	Urgency to eliminate illegal mining to safeguard environment	"We must nip the Galamsey menace in the bud."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Industry & Government Accountability	Threats to Industry Standards	Focus on the impact of illegal mining on value addition	"Galamsey threatens the ability to meet international standards."
	Argumentation	Policy Priority	Environmental & Economic Security	Linking responsible mining to economic growth and environmental health	"Improve lives, livelihoods, and protect the environment."
	Legitimacy Building	Moral & National Duty	Protecting Ghana's Image & Resources	Emphasizing responsible mining as a national priority	"Safeguard our environment and water bodies for future generations."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Strategic Development	Addressing Galamsey as a Critical Threat	Turning environmental challenge into sector reform	"Decisive, five-pronged approach to resolve Galamsey."

	Manipulation / Learning	Innovation & Technology	Multi-pronged Approach	Implementing comprehensive strategies for responsible mining	"Our approach will be five pronged."
	Political Contestation	Governance & Policy Implementation	Ensuring Policy Coherence and Enforcement	Commitment to sector reform and environmental protection	"Ensure responsible mining to safeguard our environment."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Institutions	Policy & Regulation	Sector Oversight & Responsible Sourcing	Role of regulatory bodies and refineries	"Royal Ghana Gold Refinery must ensure responsible sourcing."
	Civil Society & Media	Advocacy & Public Awareness	Promote Responsible Mining Practices	Raising awareness on environmental safeguards	"Nip the menace of Galamsey for environmental and economic health."
	Community & Local Actors	Sector Participation	Livelihoods &	Balancing livelihood improvement	"Improve lives and livelihoods"

			Responsible Practices	with environmental safeguards	through responsible sector development."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Responsibility	Protecting Future Generations	Ensuring sector integrity and environmental sustainability	"Responsible mining protects water bodies and the environment."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Fairness & Transparency	Equitable Sector Development & Enforcement	Ensuring responsible practices benefit all communities, accountability of authorities	(Implied in emphasis on responsible sourcing, environmental protection, and sector reform)

In his address at the launch of the NPP Manifesto, Dr. Bawumia employs a classic example of crisis exploitation by framing the illegal mining (Galamsey) menace not merely as an urgent environmental and economic issue but as a pivotal opportunity for national reform and sector revitalization. As the flagbearer of the incumbent NPP, his discourse strategically aligns with the party’s broader mandate of governance and development, positioning the crisis as a clarion call for decisive action that can catalyze policy innovation and institutional accountability.

This framing reflects a sophisticated use of crisis communication theory, where the crisis – illegal mining threatening environmental sustainability and economic integrity – is reframed as a "strategic opportunity" for the government to demonstrate leadership and implement comprehensive reforms. The invocation of a "five-pronged approach" signals a structured, multi-dimensional response that seeks to transform a socio-environmental threat into a platform for policy coherence, sector accountability, and sustainable development.

Furthermore, Dr. Bawumia's narrative exploits the crisis to reinforce the legitimacy and credibility of the NPP government, emphasizing their capacity to turn environmental challenges into opportunities for economic growth, responsible resource management, and social justice. This approach not only deflects potential blame but also consolidates political capital by positioning the incumbent as the custodian of Ghana's environmental and economic future.

By doing so, the speech exemplifies how political actors, especially incumbents, can leverage crises to mobilize public support, justify policy measures, and reinforce their developmental agenda. The emphasis on responsible sourcing and environmental safeguarding as integral to Ghana's international competitiveness also aligns with a narrative of proactive leadership – an essential element in crisis exploitation – aimed at reassuring stakeholders and the electorate that the government is both responsive and capable of transformative action.

Dr. Bawumia's speech exemplifies strategic crisis framing, where the immediate threat of illegal mining is transformed into a narrative of opportunity and reform, serving both political and developmental objectives. As the flagbearer of the ruling party, his discourse is carefully calibrated to reinforce the NPP's commitment to responsible governance, environmental sustainability, and social justice, thus turning a socio-environmental crisis into a platform for strategic national renewal.

iii. Analysis on Miracles Aboagye's Remarks on Galamsey

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Social Justice & Accountability	Social Canker of Galamsey	Impact of Illegal Mining on Industry Standards	Threat to gold processing quality and international certification	"Illegal mining taints gold dory, affecting responsible sourcing and certification."
	Strengthening the Frame	Need for Honest Fight	Need for Strict Regulation	Ensuring feedstock for refineries is responsibly sourced	"Royal Ghana Gold Refinery must ensure responsible sourcing."
	Audience Engagement	Call for Responsible Leadership	Decisive Action Against Galamsey	Urgency to eliminate illegal mining to safeguard environment	"We must nip the Galamsey menace in the bud."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Political & Social Involvement	Threats to Industry Standards	Focus on the impact of illegal mining on value addition	"Galamsey threatens the ability to meet international standards."
	Argumentation	Systemic Issue	Environmental &	Linking responsible mining to	"Improve lives, livelihoods,

			Economic Security	economic growth and environmental health	and protect the environment."
	Legitimacy Building	Responsibility & Accountability	Protecting Ghana's Image & Resources	Emphasizing responsible mining as a national priority	"Safeguard our environment and water bodies for future generations."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Inherited Problem	Addressing Galamsey as a Critical Threat	Turning environmental challenge into sector reform	"Decisive, five-pronged approach to resolve Galamsey."
	Manipulation / Learning	Political & Social Dynamics	Multi-pronged Approach	Implementing comprehensive strategies for responsible mining	"Our approach will be five pronged."
	Political Contestation	Partisan Politics	Ensuring Policy Coherence and Enforcement	Commitment to sector reform and environmental protection	"Ensure responsible mining to safeguard our environment."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Institutions	Awareness & Responsibility	Sector Oversight &	Role of regulatory	"Royal Ghana Gold Refinery must ensure

			Responsible Sourcing	bodies and refineries	responsible sourcing."
	Civil Society & Public	Awareness & Responsibility	Collective Effort Needed	Emphasis on unity and shared responsibility to fight Galamsey	"We must collectively fight this social canker."
	Government & Leaders	Leadership & Accountability	Honest, Non-Partisan Approach	Leaders must focus on root causes, not blame games	"Fighting social canker requires honesty; avoid partisan scapegoating."
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Responsibility	Protecting Future Generations	Ensuring sector integrity and environmental sustainability	"Responsible mining protects water bodies and the environment."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Fairness & Transparency	Justice for Affected Communities	Ensuring responsible practices benefit all communities, accountability of authorities	"This social canker affects everyone; fighting it requires fairness and accountability."

	Long-term Responsibility	Ethical Leadership	Inherited Problem & Collective Duty	Recognizing past failures and the moral duty to fix inherited issues	"We inherited this problem; it's our moral duty to address it genuinely."
	Partisan Neutrality	Moral Integrity	Non-Partisan Approach	Fighting the social canker without partisan bias to ensure justice	"We must fight this issue without partisan games, for the sake of our country."

As the Communications Director of the Dr Bawumia Campaign, Aboagye’s discourse reveals a sophisticated deployment of crisis framing to deflect blame from the current administration and to reframe the social issue as an inherited, systemic problem rather than a failure of contemporary governance.

Crisis Reframing and Inherited Blame

Aboagye’s narrative positions Galamsey as an old, endemic activity that predates current political regimes, asserting that the problem was inherited rather than created recently. This strategic framing serves to diminish current government culpability, shifting the locus of responsibility back onto past administrations, particularly those of the NDC. By doing so, he exploits the crisis to generate a narrative of victimhood and continuity, effectively protecting the incumbent government from blame while positioning the current leadership as inheritors of a long-standing challenge rather than its primary perpetrators.

Partisan Scapegoating and Political Mobilization

He explicitly criticized opposition figures and their supporters who, in his view, are politicizing the issue by calling for the removal of the lands minister and attributing blame to the current government. Aboagye's assertion that these calls are mere scapegoating reflects an attempt to frame the crisis as a non-partisan, national issue that is being unjustly exploited for political gain. This tactic seeks to rally the incumbent government's supporters by portraying opposition critics as opportunists rather than genuine reformers, thereby consolidating political capital amidst the crisis.

Holistic and Long-term Perspective as a Defensive Strategy

Aboagye emphasizes that the problem is too complex and systemic to be addressed through simple scapegoating or ministerial replacement. This framing not only deflects immediate blame but also positions the NPP as a responsible actor committed to a long-term, systemic solution rather than superficial fixes. Such a stance seeks to elevate the political legitimacy of the incumbent's approach and to undermine opposition narratives that threaten their image.

Exploitation of Social Canister for Political Gain

By framing Galamsey as a "social canker" rooted in systemic and historical failure, Aboagye exploits the crisis to reinforce the narrative that the problem is deeply embedded in societal structures, involving chiefs, religious leaders, and opinion leaders. This framing serves to diffuse blame across various societal actors, making it politically disadvantageous for opponents to focus solely on the current government. It also constructs a moral high ground, implying that addressing the issue requires collective, honest action rather than partisan blame-shifting.

Implications for Democratic Accountability and Social Justice

While the framing seeks to defend the incumbent government, it also raises concerns about the potential for crisis exploitation to impede accountability. By emphasizing inherited problems and systemic involvement, there is a risk of diluting responsibility, making it harder to hold current actors accountable. Moreover, framing the issue as a long-standing social menace may serve to justify inaction or superficial policies, thus hindering genuine social justice and accountability efforts.

Miracles Aboagye’s speech critically exemplifies how crisis exploitation functions within political communication. By reframing Galamsey as an inherited, systemic issue and portraying calls for Ministerial removal as partisan scapegoating, the NPP’s communication strategy seeks to divert blame, consolidate support, and delegitimize opposition narratives. This approach leverages the social and political complexity of the crisis to maintain political legitimacy while avoiding accountability – an archetypal example of crisis exploitation in contemporary political discourse.

iv. Analysis of Richard Ahiagbah on Galamsey

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue as National Security & Political Stability	Urgency of Action	Recognizing the Threat of Galamsey	Galamsey as a problem that can "consume us"	"We are faced with a problem that can consume us if we don't do anything."
	Strengthening the Frame	Leadership & Courage	Making Tough Decisions	Need for deliberate, sometimes	We must take difficult decisions that would make

				unpopular decisions	almost all of us comfortable."
	Audience Engagement	Collective Responsibility	Political Will & Resolve	President's personal resolve to fight Galamsey	Akuffo Addo's resolve to solve Galamsey... would not be enough."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Political Cost & Consequences	Galamsey's Impact on Political Stability	Galamsey has a direct cost on parliamentary balance	"The cost of fighting Galamsey is reflected in our parliamentary seats."
	Argumentation	Systemic Challenge	Political Will vs. Systemic Power	Fighting Galamsey requires more than individual resolve	"He recognized this challenge and made a step, but it was not enough."
	Legitimacy Building	Leadership & Sacrifice	Willingness to Sacrifice for the Nation	Leader's readiness to face political costs	"He said he would fight Galamsey even if it cost

					him his presidency."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Political Commitment	Turning environmental challenge into a leadership test	Personal resolve as a sign of leadership	"President acknowledged the seriousness and committed to action."
	Manipulation / Learning	Political Dynamics	Cost of Reform	Fighting Galamsey can impact political fortunes	"It did cost him; the parliamentary seats reflect that."
	Political Contestation	Power & Accountability	Political sacrifices for national good	Leaders must sometimes choose unpopular actions	"Bold decisions are necessary, even if they are costly."
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Institutions	Leadership & Decision-Making	Courageous Leadership	Leaders must be willing to make tough, decisive moves	"President took steps and made a clear stand."
	Civil Society & Public	Public Support & Sacrifice	Collective Effort Needed	Recognition that fighting Galamsey involves	"We all must support difficult decisions."

				national sacrifice	
	Private Sector & Traditional Leaders	Collaboration & Responsibility	Engaging All Stakeholders	Need for cooperation across sectors to fight Galamsey	Implied in the call for collective action, though not explicitly mentioned in the speech
Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Leadership	Leading with Courage & Integrity	Leaders should prioritize national interest over political gains	A leader's resolve to protect the environment even at political cost
	Social Responsibility	Collective Moral Duty	Environmental Stewardship	Society's role in supporting efforts against Galamsey	Implied as society bears the environmental burden
	Corruption & Systemic Issues	Ethical Dilemmas	Fighting Corruption & Illegal Activities	Need for integrity within institutions involved in the fight	Implied in the context of systemic challenges and political costs

Richard Ahiagbah's speech exemplifies the strategic use of crisis exploitation as a political communication tool, particularly in the context of environmental and national security threats posed by Galamsey. As the spokesperson for the ruling NPP, his rhetoric strategically frames Galamsey not only as an urgent environmental crisis but also as a litmus test for leadership, political resolve, and the capacity for systemic reform.

Crisis as an Opportunity for Leadership Branding:

Ahiagbah emphasizes that the President's acknowledgment of the problem and the decision to confront Galamsey are indicative of decisive leadership and moral integrity. This framing aligns with the concept of crisis exploitation, where a crisis is transformed into an opportunity to reinforce leadership qualities and demonstrate commitment to national interest. By asserting that the President's resolve was so strong that he prioritized environmental integrity over political gains, the speech subtly reframes the crisis as a moment of moral victory and leadership authenticity.

Mobilization of Collective Action and Political Sacrifice:

The speech also leverages the crisis to galvanize collective responsibility, positioning fighting Galamsey as a moral and patriotic duty. The mention that the fight "cost" the President politically – reflected in parliamentary seats – serves a dual purpose: it signals the seriousness of the issue and underscores the sacrifices involved in systemic reform. This aligns with the strategic use of crisis narratives to justify tough, unpopular decisions, framing them as necessary sacrifices for the greater good.

Instrumentalization of Political Capital:

By emphasizing that the President's resolve could "cost him his presidency," Ahiagbah exploits the crisis to elevate the narrative of courageous leadership willing to withstand political costs. This

can serve as a rallying point for supporters, demonstrating that the government is willing to face adversity head-on. Such framing can also serve to deter opposition narratives that may seek to undermine efforts against Galamsey, framing the government’s stance as morally justified and resolute.

Implications for Political Legitimacy and Electoral Strategy:

The speech subtly uses the crisis to reinforce the NPP’s commitment to environmental sustainability and anti-corruption, thereby strengthening the party’s political legitimacy. It also preemptively addresses potential criticisms by framing political costs as the inevitable price of moral integrity and national progress. This is a classic case of crisis exploitation, where a detrimental situation is turned into a platform for political advantage through moral high ground and leadership narrative.

Richard Ahiagbah’s speech exemplifies a sophisticated form of crisis exploitation, where the Galamsey issue is strategically used to showcase leadership robustness, moral integrity, and national sacrifice. This approach not only aims to rally support but also seeks to legitimize the government’s tough stance and frame the crisis as a moral and political victory despite the apparent costs. Such rhetoric aligns with broader political communication theories that view crises as opportunities for leaders to reinforce their legitimacy, demonstrate resolve, and mobilize collective action in favor of systemic reform.

v. Analysis of NPP Manifesto on Galamsey

Frame	Category	Theme	Sub-theme	Indicators	Examples From Speech
Issue Framing	Presentation of the Issue	Environment al	Threats to Forests,	Emphasis on protecting	"Protect our environment

		Degradation & Illegal Mining	Water Resources & Biodiversity	forests, watersheds, and promoting sustainable small-scale mining	—enhance the protection of our forests and biodiversity hotspots."
	Strengthening the Frame	Restoring Ecosystems & Promoting Sustainability	Reforestation & Responsible Mining	Reforestation targets, bamboo plantations, and responsible small-scale mining initiatives	"Targeting 30,000ha of degraded areas for reforestation annually... establishing 1,000ha of bamboo plantations."
	Audience Engagement	Call for National Responsibility	Building a Green and Sustainable Ghana	Mobilizing communities and stakeholders to participate in reforestation and legal mining	"Providing tree seedlings and plantain suckers to communities to promote reforestation."
Blame & Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Focus on Illegal Mining & Environmental Neglect	Current Laws & Enforcement Gaps	Implicit critique of illegal small-scale mining practices and	"Ensuring strict adherence to our mining laws and

				law enforcement lapses	regulations to prevent illegal practices."
	Argumentation	Promoting Responsible Mining & Environmental Protection	Use of Mercury-Free Technology & Licensing Reforms	Scaling-up mercury-free gold catchers, simplifying licensing to curb illegal activities	"Scaling-up the use of mercury-free gold Catcher machine technology."
	Legitimacy Building	Institutional & Policy Reforms	Strengthening Regulatory Framework	Reviewing buffer zones, water source protections, and transborder water management	"Reviewing and strengthening the Water Buffer Zone Policy."
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Environmental Challenges as Opportunities	Green Growth & Sustainable Wealth	Promoting small-scale mining as a source of wealth and jobs, under environmental safeguards	"Usher in a Golden Age for Ghanaian-Owned Small-Scale Mining for Wealth and Jobs."
	Manipulation / Learning	Learning from Past Failures	Responsible &	Addressing illegal mining	"Making proven reserves data

			Sustainable Practices	through legal reforms and technology	available to minimize trial-and-error digging."
	Political Contestation	Positioning as Environmental Protectors	Framing NPP as Guardians of Ghana's Environment	Emphasizing responsible mining and environmental stewardship	Not explicitly stated but implied through policies to regulate and promote legal mining.
Stakeholder Engagement	Government & Law	Legal & Regulatory Reforms	Simplifying Licensing & Law Enforcement	Making licensing regime more accessible and enforceable	"Simplifying the small-scale mining licensing regime."
	Civil Society & Miners	Responsible Mining & Local Development	Community Involvement & Technology Adoption	Providing seedlings to communities, promoting mercury-free technologies	"Providing tree seedlings and plantain suckers in communities."
	International & Regional	Transborder Water Management	Protecting Shared Water Resources	Managing transborder water sources like the Volta River	"Protecting transborder water sources and managing major water basins."

Ethical & Societal	Manipulation & Morality	Moral Duty to Protect Environment	Responsible Mining & Conservation	Promoting sustainable practices and law adherence	"Ensuring strict adherence to mining laws to protect water resources."
	Social Justice & Accountability	Protecting Water & Forest Resources for Future Generations	Sustainable Use & Conservation	Enforcing buffer zones and water laws	"Reviewing and strengthening Water Buffer Zone Policy."

The NPP government, as the incumbent party, strategically leverages the galamsey crisis by framing it as both a severe environmental threat and an opportunity for responsible reform, thus positioning itself as the rightful steward of Ghana’s natural resources and environmental integrity.

Crisis Framing and Opportunistic Narrative:

The NPP’s manifesto explicitly emphasizes the environmental degradation caused by illegal small-scale mining – highlighting threats to forests, water resources, and biodiversity – as a critical national issue. By doing so, the government constructs the galamsey problem as a pressing crisis that undermines Ghana’s ecological and economic stability. This framing not only mobilizes public concern but also justifies the need for urgent policy interventions.

Utilization of Crisis to Legitimize Policy and Political Capital:

Within the framework of crisis exploitation, the NPP seeks to present itself as the responsible authority capable of restoring ecological balance through targeted reforestation programs, technological innovations (such as mercury-free gold catchers), and legal reforms. The emphasis on “making proven reserves data available” and “scaling up mercury-free technology” functions as a strategic move to portray the government as proactive, technologically savvy, and committed to sustainable development.

Crisis as a Platform for Political Legitimacy:

By positioning illegal mining as a threat to national identity, environmental sustainability, and water security, the NPP aims to capitalize on the public’s desire for effective action. The narrative suggests that the current crisis is a direct consequence of past governance lapses, thereby providing the incumbent government with a moral high ground to introduce reforms and policies that might otherwise be politically contentious.

Potential for Policy Framing as a “Green Revolution”:

Moreover, framing small-scale mining as a pathway to wealth and jobs – through what they term a “Golden Age” – transforms the crisis into an opportunity to promote economic growth, job creation, and national pride. This reframing minimizes the negative aspects of illegal mining while emphasizing the potential for responsible, regulated small-scale mining to contribute to Ghana’s development.

Critical Reflection:

While this strategy can be viewed as a genuine effort to address environmental concerns, it also exemplifies crisis exploitation by framing the problem in a way that consolidates political legitimacy while potentially diverting attention from underlying governance failures – such as weak enforcement, corruption, or inadequate regulation. The emphasis on technological and legal reforms, coupled with the portrayal of illegal mining as a criminal activity, positions the incumbent government as the sole solution-provider, thereby reinforcing its authority and control over natural resource management.

4.4.0. TRAINAGULATION OF NPP AND NDC EXPLOITATION OF GALAMSEY AND DDEP CRISIS

A (i). Triangulation of NDC's Exploitation of Galamsey Crisis vs. DDEP Crisis

Aspect	Galamsey Crisis Exploitation (NDC)	DDEP Crisis Exploitation (NDC)
<p>Core Framing</p>	<p>Environmental and Moral Catastrophe</p> <p>Frames illegal mining as an existential threat to Ghana’s environment, land, and water resources. Uses moral language emphasizing environmental degradation and ecological destruction.</p>	<p>Systemic Governance Failure and Economic Collapse</p> <p>Frames the debt crisis as a result of reckless borrowing, corruption, and mismanagement. Emphasizes systemic failure and loss of economic sovereignty.</p>
<p>Core Framing of Culprits</p>	<p>Environmental crisis as a moral failure and systemic corruption</p>	<p>Economic crisis as a moral failure and systemic corruption</p>

	<p>Implication of government officials, chieftains, and elites in facilitating illegal mining activities - Alleged collusion between miners and officials, facilitating illegal operations - Framing environmental damage as a consequence of systemic corruption and lack of political will to enforce laws</p>	<p>Accusations of corruption, reckless borrowing, and opaque debt practices by government officials, especially finance ministers and senior officials - Framing the crisis as a result of systemic graft, misallocation of public funds, and illegal deals - Highlighting the role of specific officials involved in dubious transactions and misappropriation</p>
<p>Narrative Focus</p>	<p>Environmental Justice & Moral Responsibility</p> <p>Positions the crisis as a moral failing of past administrations and a threat to future generations. Uses visual evidence of environmental damage to evoke moral outrage.</p>	<p>Economic Mismanagement & Governance Accountability</p> <p>Positions the crisis as a failure of current leadership, emphasizing irresponsible fiscal policies, opaque debt practices, and systemic corruption. Uses economic data to highlight mismanagement.</p>
<p>Political Objective</p>	<p>Mobilize Public Support for Reform & Regulate Illegal Mining</p>	<p>Undermine Incumbent's Credibility & Push for Structural Reforms</p>

	<p>Seeks to justify stricter laws, bans, and new institutions (e.g., GOLDBOD) as necessary responses. Positions opposition as protectors of Ghana’s environment and moral guardians.</p>	<p>Seeks to delegitimize the government’s debt management, justify opposition-led reforms, and position the opposition as the only credible agents of economic salvation.</p>
<p>Use of Crisis as Leverage</p>	<p>Moral and Environmental Crisis to Justify Policy Reforms</p> <p>Leverages environmental destruction to mobilize support for bans, land reclamation, and responsible mining policies. Frames crisis as an opportunity for ecological renewal and responsible governance.</p> <p>Uses vivid imagery of environmental destruction, land degradation, and water pollution. Employs moral language emphasizing environmental stewardship.</p>	<p>Economic and Governance Crisis to Advocate Structural Reforms</p> <p>Leverages the debt crisis to push for institutional reforms, debt restructuring, legal accountability, and fiscal discipline. Frames the crisis as an opportunity to overhaul economic governance.</p> <p>Uses economic data, legal reforms, and institutional restructuring to emphasize responsible governance. Highlights transparency initiatives and legal reforms.</p>
<p>Communication Strategy</p>	<p>Emotional, Moral Appeals & Visual Evidence</p>	<p>Data-Driven, Institutional, & Legal Framing</p>

	Portrays environmental degradation as harming local communities, future generations, and the nation's ecological health.	Portrays the debt crisis as harming taxpayers, pensioners, and Ghana's international credibility. Emphasizes the social and economic harms of mismanagement.
Visual & Emotional Appeals	Visual evidence of environmental harm; moral language Relies on images of polluted rivers, land destruction, and community protests. Uses moral language framing illegal mining as a moral issue.	Economic data, charts, and legal reforms; moral appeals on fiscal responsibility Relies on charts showing debt levels, economic indicators, and legal reforms. Uses moral language emphasizing responsible governance and fiscal discipline.
Outcome Sought	Stringent Policies, Land Restoration, Responsible Mining and Disaffection for the Government Aims to mobilize support for bans, land reclamation, and stricter regulation. Positions opposition as environmental stewards and reformers and ultimately causing disaffection for the ruling government	Debt Relief, Institutional Reforms, Fiscal Discipline Aims to push for debt restructuring, legal accountability, and structural reforms to restore fiscal health. Positions opposition as responsible economic managers and ultimately cause disaffection to the government

<p>Strategic Use of Crisis</p>	<p>Moral & environmental crisis to justify policy change and regime change</p> <p>Exploits societal fears about environmental collapse to legitimize strict policies and promote ecological renewal.</p>	<p>Economic & governance crisis to justify reforms and regime change</p> <p>Exploits fears of economic collapse and default to justify reforms, legal accountability, and systemic overhaul.</p>
<p>Political Differentiation</p>	<p>Opposition as Environmental Guardians & Moral Leaders</p> <p>Positions itself as the champion of environmental justice, moral righteousness, and land/resource stewardship.</p>	<p>Opposition as Responsible Economic Stewards & Reform Advocates</p> <p>Positions itself as the defender of fiscal discipline, transparency, and economic sovereignty.</p>

(ii) Summary of Key Differences in NDC’s DDEP and Galamsey Exploitation

Dimension	Galamsey Crisis Exploitation (NDC)	DDEP Crisis Exploitation (NDC)
Main Framing	Environmental catastrophe, moral ecological destruction and corrupt state actors	Systemic governance failure, irresponsible borrowing and corrupt state actors

Narrative Focus	Moral duty to protect environment; land and water as national assets	Moral obligation for fiscal responsibility; responsible debt management
Primary Targets	Local communities, environmental advocates, future generations	Taxpayers, pensioners, international investors, general public
Communication Style	Visual evidence, emotional appeals, moral language	Data, legal reforms, institutional accountability, moral language
Goals	Land reclamation, responsible mining laws, ecological restoration	Debt restructuring, legal reforms, fiscal discipline, transparency
Exploitation Strategy	Crisis as moral/ecological disaster to justify strict policies	Crisis as governance failure to justify systemic reforms
Political Positioning	Opposition as environmental custodians & moral champions	Opposition as responsible fiscal managers & institutional reformers

While both crises are exploited by the NDC to mobilize support and delegitimize the incumbent government, they differ fundamentally in their framing, thematic focus, and targeted victim groups:

- **Galamsey crisis** is framed **morally and environmentally**, emphasizing ecological destruction, land degradation, and future generations, positioning the opposition as land and environmental guardians.

- **DDEP/Ghana’s economic crisis** is framed **systemically and fiscally**, emphasizing irresponsible governance, systemic failure, and economic mismanagement, positioning the opposition as responsible fiscal stewards and reform advocates.

Both exploitations serve to deepen political polarization but do so through different narratives – one moral and ecological, the other economic and institutional – each seeking to rally support around their respective agendas for responsible governance and national renewal.

(iii) Similarities in NDC’s Crisis Exploitation of Galamsey and DDEP Exploitation

Aspect	Description	Details
Strategic Framing	Both crises are framed as systemic failures caused by the incumbent government	Galamsey: Framed as environmental and moral catastrophe due to past mismanagement. - DDEP: Framed as economic and governance failure due to reckless borrowing and corruption.
Political Objective	Both are used to delegitimize the current government and justify opposition policies and	Galamsey: Justify strict environmental laws and position opposition as guardians of the environment. - DDEP: Justify debt restructuring, legal reforms, and position opposition as responsible economic managers.

Crisis as Opportunity	Both are exploited as opportunities to push for systemic reforms and call for regime change	Galamsey: Land reclamation, environmental restoration, and responsible mining policies. - DDEP: Structural reforms, fiscal discipline, debt management, and institutional strengthening.
Use of Emotional & Moral Language	Both employ emotional appeals and moral language to mobilize support	Galamsey: Moral duty to protect Ghana's environment and future generations. - DDEP: Moral obligation to restore fiscal responsibility and economic sovereignty.
Visual Evidence & Symbolism	Both utilize visual cues to reinforce their narratives	Galamsey: Images of environmental destruction, polluted rivers, deforestation. - DDEP: Charts of debt levels, economic decline, and legal reforms.
Target Audience	Both aim to rally the public, especially supporters, to support their narratives	Galamsey: Local communities, environmental advocates, youth. - DDEP: General public, taxpayers, investors, pensioners.
Legitimization of Policies	Both use crises to justify specific policy measures	Galamsey: Bans, land reclamation, environmental laws. - DDEP: Debt restructuring, legal reforms, fiscal discipline measures.

Political Messaging	Both leverage crises to portray the opposition as the responsible, moral alternative	Galamsey: Oppose illegal mining, promote responsible resource management. - DDEP: Oppose reckless borrowing, promote transparent and responsible governance.
Narrative of Urgency & Action	Both emphasize the need for immediate intervention	Galamsey: Environmental cleanup, responsible mining laws. - DDEP: Debt restructuring, reforms to restore confidence and stability
Polarization & Mobilization	Both are used to deepen political polarization and mobilize support	Both narratives serve to reinforce opposition’s moral high ground and undermine the incumbent’s legitimacy.

Summary of Similarities between NDC DDEP and Galamsey Exploitation

1. **Crisis as a Political Resource:** Both crises are exploited as opportunities to justify reforms and to position the opposition as the moral and responsible alternative.
2. **Narrative Framing:** Both use framing strategies that emphasize systemic failure – environmental, moral, economic, or governance.
3. **Emotional & Moral Appeals:** Both employ emotional language, visual cues, and moral rhetoric to mobilize public support and deepen emotional engagement.

4. **Delegitimization of Incumbent:** Both narratives aim to portray the current government as responsible for the crisis, thus eroding its legitimacy.
5. **Policy Justification:** Both crises are used to justify specific reforms – environmental laws in one case, legal and fiscal reforms in the other.
6. **Targeted Support:** Both aim to rally support from specific groups – youth, environmental advocates, local communities for Galamsey; taxpayers, pensioners, and investors for DDEP.
7. **Urgency & Immediate Action:** Both narratives emphasize the need for immediate intervention to resolve the crises.

B (i) Triangulation of NPP's Galamsey Crisis Exploitation vs. DDEP Crisis Exploitation

Aspect	Galamsey Crisis Exploitation (NPP)	DDEP Crisis Exploitation (NPP)
Core Framing	Environmental and Sovereignty Crisis	Systemic Governance and Fiscal Crisis
Narrative Focus	Ecological degradation, land and water destruction, moral duty to protect natural resources	Sovereign debt restructuring as a necessary, responsible step to restore fiscal stability, emphasizing external shocks and systemic inherited issues
Political Objective	Justify stricter regulations, land reclamation, and responsible mining policies; portray government as environmental protector	Justify debt restructuring as unavoidable, necessary, and responsible; position government as reformist,

		resilient, and committed to national recovery
Use of Crisis as Leverage	Environmental/Moral Crisis used to rally support for land reform, responsible mining, and technological innovations	Sovereign Debt/Macroeconomic Crisis used to rally support for reform measures, responsible fiscal policies, and to deflect blame from mismanagement
Communication Strategy	Visuals of environmental damage; moral language framing illegal mining as a moral and ecological crisis; positioning government as proactive	Use of legal, procedural, and financial data; framing debt exchange as a responsible, constitutional, and necessary action; emphasizing national sovereignty and external shocks
Targeted Victims / Victimization	Local communities, future generations, ecological assets	Pensioners, bondholders, taxpayers, international investors, the economy
Visual & Emotional Appeals	Images of environmental government efforts to stop galamsey	Charts of debt levels, legal texts, constitutional references; emphasizing responsible, constitutional, and legal action to protect national sovereignty
Outcome Sought	Land and water protection; responsible mining; ecological sustainability	Debt sustainability; fiscal discipline; reform legitimacy; restoring investor confidence
Strategic Use of Crisis	Environmental and Moral Crisis to justify land reforms, responsible mining, and ecological recovery	Crisis as Systemic & Economic Sovereign debt crisis to justify debt

		restructuring, fiscal reforms, and institutional reforms
Political Differentiation	Incumbent as proactive, moral environmental protector	Incumbent as responsible, reform-minded, and committed to responsible fiscal management
Responsibility Attribution	Blame inherited problems on past administrations; position current government as reformer	Position external shocks and systemic inherited debt issues as the core challenge; defend government's responsible response

(ii) Summary of Key Differences Between NPP's Galamsey Crisis Exploitation vs. DDEP Crisis Exploitation

Dimension	Galamsey Crisis (NPP)	DDEP Crisis (NPP)
Main Framing	Environmental catastrophe, moral imperative to protect land and water	Sovereign debt crisis, systemic inherited fiscal issues, responsible reform
Narrative Focus	Ecological degradation as a moral and environmental emergency	Sovereign debt obligations as a responsible, unavoidable challenge requiring reforms
Victims	Land, water, future generations, local communities	Pensioners, bondholders, taxpayers, international investors
Tools & Strategies	Visuals of environmental damage; moral language; positioning government as ecological guardian	Legal and constitutional references; financial data; framing debt exchange as necessary and constitutional

Goals	Land restoration, environmental sustainability, responsible mining	Debt sustainability, fiscal discipline, institutional reforms, investor confidence
Exploitation Strategy	Crisis as moral and ecological emergency to justify land and policy reforms	Crisis as sovereign debt challenge to justify responsible fiscal reforms and institutional reforms
Political Positioning	Incumbent as environmental protector and moral leader	Incumbent as responsible, reform-oriented, defending national sovereignty

- **Galamsey Crisis (NPP)** is exploited **morally and environmentally**, emphasizing ecological destruction, land degradation, and future generations, positioning the government as the protector of Ghana’s natural resources.
- **DDEP (Domestic Debt Exchange Program)** crisis is exploited **fiscally and constitutionally**, emphasizing responsible debt management, sovereignty, and systemic reforms, positioning the government as a responsible reformer committed to national stability.

The NPP leverages the **Galamsey crisis** to reinforce their environmental and moral legitimacy, framing it as an urgent ecological emergency needing immediate action. Conversely, they leverage the **DDEP** as a crucial fiscal and sovereignty issue, framing it as an unavoidable, responsible step to restore financial stability, defend sovereignty, and implement necessary reforms.

(iii) Similarities in NPP’s Exploitation of Galamsey and DDEP Crises

Crisis Framing as Opportunities	Both crises are framed as opportunities for reform, renewal, and demonstrating leadership. The government presents each
--	--

	crisis as a platform to showcase their proactive measures and capacity for systemic change.
Use of Responsibility Attribution	The NPP attributes responsibility for both crises largely to past administrations or external factors, thereby deflecting blame from their current governance and positioning themselves as responsible reformers.
Legitimacy and Authority	Both crises are framed within legal, constitutional, or systemic frameworks – emphasizing adherence to laws, procedures, or systemic norms – to legitimize their actions and build trust.
Strategic Narrative Construction	The government constructs narratives that reframe crises as responsible responses . e.g., land reclamation and environmental protection, or fiscal responsibility and sovereignty, aimed at rallying public support and consolidating political legitimacy.
Mobilization of Public Support	Both crises are used to mobilize public support by emphasizing shared national interests, moral duties, or collective sacrifices, thereby fostering social cohesion around government policies.
Emphasis on Long-term Goals	The NPP emphasizes long-term benefits such as environmental sustainability or fiscal stability using crises to justify reforms that aim at future resilience and development.
Strategic Use of Messaging	Both crises involve careful messaging whether moral, environmental, legal, or economic to manage perceptions, reduce resistance, and justify tough policies or reforms.
Political Positioning	The government positions itself as either protecting national assets (environmental) or responsible stewards (economic), contrasting itself with opposition or past failures, to reinforce their legitimacy.

Summary of Similarities

- Both crises are **leveraged to demonstrate leadership** and **justify reforms**.
- They involve **blame-shifting** away from current governance, framing past failures as inherited or external.
- Both use **legal, procedural, or systemic narratives** to legitimize their actions.
- The government employs **strategic narratives** to turn crises into **opportunities for national renewal**.
- Both are **tools for rallying support** and **building political legitimacy** by emphasizing shared responsibility and future benefits.

4.5.0. Comparative Analysis

i. Table analyzing the differences between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the DDEP crisis

Frame	Theme	Strategy	NDC	NPP
Issue Framing	Presentation of issues	Challenge	Catastrophic economic policies led to DDEP crisis	Inherited debt and economic mismanagement from previous government
		Victimhood	Ordinary citizens and businesses suffering due to DDEP	Focus on the need for economic growth and job creation
	Strengthening the frame	Evidence	Citing high inflation, unemployment, and economic downturn	Emphasizing the need for economic stability and debt management

		Emotional Appeal	Highlighting the human cost of DDEP (e.g., job losses)	Focusing on the need for economic growth and prosperity
	Audience Engagement	Rhetorical Devices	Using metaphors (e.g., "economic tsunami") to emphasize urgency	Employing narratives of hope and economic revival
		Tone	Critical and accusatory towards NPP	Optimistic and solution-focused
Blame and Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Culpability	Blaming NPP for the DDEP crisis	Maintaining that the crisis was inherited from the previous government
		Counter-Blame	Accusing NPP of mishandling the economy	Blaming NDC for the economic crisis prior to DDEP
	Argumentation	Logical Fallacy	Using straw man arguments to portray NPP as ineffective	Employing logical arguments to justify economic policies
		Expertise	Citing economists and experts to support claims	Presenting economic data and analysis to support policies
	Legitimacy Building	Authority	Highlighting past successes in	Emphasizing commitment to

			economic management	economic stability and growth
		Moral Ground	High Portraying NPP as morally and ethically flawed	Positioning NPP as committed to responsible governance
Stakeholder Engagement	Reframing Crisis	New Narrative	Presenting DDEP as a "tsunami" or "catastrophe"	Framing it as an opportunity for economic growth and stability
		Rebranding	Focusing on the human cost of DDEP	Emphasizing the need for economic revival and prosperity
	Manipulation / Learning	Adaptation	Adapting policies to mitigate the effects of DDEP	Learning from past economic challenges to inform policy
		Innovation	Introducing new policies to address DDEP	Emphasizing the need for economic innovation and growth
	Political Contestation	Policy Debate	Engaging in policy debates and arguments	Presenting a clear and coherent economic plan
	Communication	Language	Using emotive language to engage with citizens	Employing technical language to communicate economic policies

		Tone	Critical and accusatory towards NPP	Solution-focused and optimistic
	Engagement	Public Meetings	Holding public meetings and rallies to engage citizens	Hosting town hall meetings and online forums to engage citizens
		Media Outreach	Utilizing traditional and social media to engage citizens	Engaging with media outlets to present economic policies and plans
Ethical & Societal	Values	Economic Values	Prioritizing social welfare and equity	Emphasizing economic growth and stability
		Social Values	Highlighting the need for social justice and equality	Focusing on the need for economic opportunities and prosperity
	Policy Implications	Social Impact	Examining the social impact of DDEP policies	Assessing the economic implications of policies
		Ethical Considerations	Evaluating policies based on their ethical implications	Considering the moral implications of economic policies
	Societal Context	Societal Needs	Addressing the immediate needs of citizens affected by DDEP	Focusing on long-term economic growth and stability

This analysis highlights the different frames and categories used by the NDC and NPP to present their economic policies and respond to the DDEP crisis. The NDC frames the crisis as a catastrophic economic policy failure that requires a new approach to economic management, while the NPP presents it as an inherited debt and economic mismanagement issue that requires sound economic policies and fiscal discipline. The analysis also highlights the different rhetorical devices and emotional appeals used by each party to make its arguments more compelling and persuasive.

This table examines the discursive strategies employed by the two major parties in the 2024 Ghanaian election, namely the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), across various dimensions of issue framing, blame and responsibility attribution, crisis to opportunity reframing, stakeholder engagement, and ethical and societal implications.

Issue Framing

The NDC's campaign narrative centered on the issue of the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as a catastrophic economic policy failure, with far-reaching consequences for the economy and citizens. This framing strategy served to highlight the negative impacts of DDEP on the economy, businesses, and ordinary citizens, thereby positioning the NDC as the champion of the affected groups. In contrast, the NPP framed DDEP as an inherited debt, and impact of global health and economic crisis (Covid 19), thereby absolving their own administration of responsibility. This framing strategy allowed the NPP to present themselves as the party best equipped to lead the country out of economic crisis and create jobs.

Blame & Responsibility

The NDC attributed blame for the economic challenges facing the country to the NPP government, portraying them as incompetent and ineffective in managing the economy. This blame attribution

strategy served to reinforce the NDC's framing of the NPP as responsible for the economic crisis. Conversely, the NPP sought to deflect blame by attributing the economic challenges to the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic trends, rather than their own policies. This blame deflection strategy allowed the NPP to maintain a veneer of economic competence and minimize their perceived responsibility for the economic crisis.

Crisis to Opportunity Reframing

The NDC framed the economic crisis as a catastrophic event that threatened the very fabric of the country's economy, while the NPP reframed the crisis as an opportunity for growth and development. This reframing strategy allowed the NPP to present themselves as the party best equipped to lead the country out of crisis and into a brighter future. The NPP's reframing of the crisis as an opportunity for growth and development was reinforced by their focus on job creation, infrastructure development, and economic diversification.

Stakeholder Engagement

The NDC's campaign strategy focused on engaging with various stakeholders, including workers, businesses, and civil society organizations, to mobilize support for their economic policies. This stakeholder engagement strategy allowed the NDC to build a broad coalition of support and present themselves as the champions of the affected groups. In contrast, the NPP's campaign strategy focused on engaging with their traditional base of support, including party loyalists and business leaders, rather than building a broader coalition of stakeholders.

Emotional Frames

Emotion frames refer to the ways in which political campaigns employ emotional appeals to shape public opinion and influence voter behavior. The table also shows that both the National

Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) used emotion frames to mobilize public support for their respective agendas in the lead up the 2024 Ghanaian election campaigns

NDC Emotion Frames: Fear, Anger, and Frustration

The NDC's campaign narrative was characterized by a strong emphasis on emotions such as fear, anger, and frustration. These emotions were used to mobilize public support for the party's anti-DDEP campaign. For instance:

- **Fear:** The NDC's campaign highlighted the potential consequences of the DDEP, including job losses, economic instability, and decreased living standards. This appeal to fear was designed to create a sense of urgency and anxiety among voters, who were encouraged to take action to prevent these negative outcomes.
- **Anger:** The NDC's campaign also appealed to voters' sense of anger and outrage at what they perceived as the NPP's mishandling of the economy. The party's campaign rhetoric was often infused with a tone of indignation and moral condemnation, as they sought to hold the NPP accountable for the perceived economic failures.
- **Frustration:** The NDC's campaign also emphasized the sense of frustration and disillusionment that many voters felt with the current economic situation. The party's message was that the NPP had failed to deliver on its promises, and that it was time for a change.

NPP Emotion Frames: Hope, Optimism, and Confidence

In contrast, the NPP's campaign narrative was characterized by a strong emphasis on emotions such as hope, optimism, and confidence. These emotions were used to mobilize public support for the party's economic growth and job creation agenda. For instance:

- **Hope:** The NPP's campaign highlighted the potential benefits of their economic policies, including increased economic growth, job creation, and improved living standards. This appeal to hope was designed to create a sense of excitement and optimism among voters, who were encouraged to look forward to a brighter future.
- **Optimism:** The NPP's campaign also emphasized the party's confidence in its ability to deliver on its promises. The party's campaign rhetoric was often infused with a tone of conviction and self-assurance, as they sought to reassure voters that they had a clear plan for economic growth and development.
- **Confidence:** The NPP's campaign also appealed to voters' sense of confidence in the party's ability to manage the economy. The party's message was that they had a proven track record of economic management, and that they were the best choice for voters who wanted a stable and prosperous economy.

Ethical and Societal Implications

The NDC's campaign narrative emphasized the need for social justice and economic equality, highlighting the negative impacts of DDEP on ordinary citizens and businesses. This emphasis on social justice and economic equality served to reinforce the NDC's framing of themselves as the champions of the affected groups. Conversely, the NPP's campaign narrative focused on economic growth and development, with little attention paid to the social and economic implications of their

policies. This emphasis on economic growth and development allowed the NPP to present themselves as the party best equipped to lead the country into a brighter economic future.

ii. Analysis of Similarities between NDC and NPP on DDEP

i. Table analyzing the similarities between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the DDEP crisis

Frame	Theme	NDC ACTION	NPP ACTION	SIMILARITY
Issue Framing	Presentation of issues	Highlighted the immediate economic pains of DDEP	Highlighted the economic implications of the DDEP	Both framed the issue around immediate economic costs.
	Strengthening the frame	Created public events to demonstrate DDEP impacts	Organized public forums to discuss DDEP repercussions	Both used public events to reinforce their framing of the issue.
	Audience Engagement	Utilized social media to spread awareness about DDEP impacts	Using metaphors (e.g., "economic tsunami") to emphasize urgency	Both used social media to engage with their audience about the DDEP.
	Emotional Appeal	Spoke directly to voters' fears about the economy under DDEP	Spoke directly to voters' hopes for a better economy under NPP	Both played on voters' emotional responses to economic

				policies.
Blame and Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Blamed the current administration for DDEP's economic consequences	Blamed the opposition for DDEP's economic implications	Both parties shifted blame to each other regarding the DDEP.
		Provided detailed arguments against the DDEP	Provided in-depth arguments in favor of the DDEP	Both provided well-articulated arguments to support their stance on the DDEP.
	Argumentation	Claimed to have alternative solutions to the DDEP's economic challenges	Presented the DDEP as a necessary measure for the country's economic health	Both sought to legitimize their political stance on the DDEP by presenting themselves as the solution to the economic challenges.
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Focused on the economic opportunities the DDEP presented	Focused on the economic opportunities the DDEP presented	Both parties highlighted the economic opportunities presented by the DDEP.

Stakeholder Engagement	Stakeholder Mobilization	Engaged with various stakeholders affected by the DDEP	Engaged with various stakeholders affected by the DDEP	Both parties engaged with stakeholders impacted by the DDEP.
Ethical & Societal	Implications	Both parties engaged with stakeholders impacted by the DDEP.	Highlighted the ethical implications of the DDEP	Both parties considered the ethical implications of the DDEP.

According to the table, both parties on the DDEP issue shared the following similarities:

- Framed the issue around immediate economic costs.
- Used public events to reinforce their framing of the issue.
- Utilized social media to engage with their audience about the DDEP.
- Played on voters' emotional responses to economic policies.
- Shifted blame to each other regarding the DDEP.
- Provided well-articulated arguments to support their stance on the DDEP.
- Sought to legitimize their political stance on the DDEP by presenting themselves as the solution to the economic challenges.
- Highlighted the economic opportunities presented by the DDEP.
- Engaged with stakeholders in the DDEP.

iii. Table analyzing the differences between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the Galamsey crisis

Frame	Theme	Strategy	NPP	NDC
Issue Framing	Presentation of issues	Challenge	Uses challenge framing to depict Galamsey as manageable with reforms	Uses victimhood framing to portray Galamsey as environmental victimization
		Victimhood	Highlights systemic failure and victimization to evoke concern	Focus on the need for economic growth and job creation
	Strengthening the frame	Evidence	Provides data showing potential for reform and control	Presents evidence of environmental damage and systemic failure
		Emotional Appeal	Appeals to patriotism and hope for development Uses emotive language and imagery to evoke concern and outrage Highlights human stories and experiences related to Galamsey	Uses emotional appeals to evoke moral outrage and urgency Uses emotive language and imagery to evoke sympathy and solidarity Highlights the human impact of Galamsey and the need for action

	Audience Engagement	Rhetorical Devices	Uses patriotic language and metaphors of progress	Employs moral outrage, moral language, and moral high ground rhetoric
		Tone	Optimistic, reform-oriented tone	Urgent, condemning tone highlighting crisis
Blame and Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Culpability	Blames past mismanagement but emphasizes current reforms	Blames systemic corruption and legacy failures
		Counter-Blame	Accuses opponents of hindering progress	Accuses opponents of environmental neglect and systemic failure
	Argumentation	Logical Fallacy	Uses simplified cause-effect reasoning to justify reforms	Uses emotional reasoning to emphasize moral duty
		Expertise	Cites technical experts and legal frameworks	Cites environmental scientists and moral authorities
	Legitimacy Building	Authority	Highlighting past successes in economic management	Emphasizing commitment to economic stability and growth
		Moral High Ground	Portrays itself as champion of	Depicts itself as champion of

			environmental protection and responsible governance Emphasizes the moral imperative to act against Galamsey	social justice and human rights Emphasizes the moral necessity of protecting the environment and public health
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	New Narrative	Creates a new narrative of hope and progress	Creates a new narrative of fear and crisis
		Rebranding	Rebrands Galamsey as a development challenge	Rebrands environmental degradation as a moral crisis
	Manipulation / Learning	Adaptation	Emphasizes adaptation through reforms	Emphasizes adaptation to environmental realities
		Innovation	Highlights the importance of technology and innovation in addressing Galamsey	Highlights the importance of community engagement and participation
Political Contestation	Policy Debate	Advocates for legal reforms and regulatory measures	Criticizes legal loopholes and systemic corruption	

Stakeholder Engagement	Communication	Language	Highlights the importance of clear and concise language in policy debates	Highlights the importance of inclusive and participatory language
		Tone	Critical and accusatory towards NPP	Solution-focused and optimistic
	Engagement	Public Meetings	Holding public meetings and rallies to engage citizens	Hosting town hall meetings and online forums to engage citizens
		Mobilization	Organizes grassroots campaigns and rallies to garner support	Mobilizes community groups, CSOs, Pressure Groups, Religious and Traditional Authorities to oppose Galamsey
Ethical & Societal	Values	Economic Values	Prioritizing social welfare and equity	Emphasizing economic growth and stability
		Social Values	Promotes development and patriotism	Emphasizes social justice and environmental ethics
	Policy Implications	Social Impact	Highlights job creation and economic growth	Focuses on environmental justice and

				community well-being
		Ethical Considerations	Frames resource management as a moral responsibility	Frames environmental protection as a moral imperative
	Societal Context	Societal Needs	Emphasizes national needs for development	Emphasizes societal needs for environmental sustainability

The above table highlights how the NDC and NPP employed distinct discursive strategies to capitalize on crises for electoral advantage during the 2020 Ghanaian election. By framing challenges, assigning blame, and portraying crises as opportunities, each party sought to influence public perception and mobilize support in ways that aligned with their political narratives.

From the above table, it is evident that the NPP and NDC employed contrasting discursive strategies in their discourse surrounding the Galamsey crisis during the 2020 Ghanaian election. Their approaches reveal how each party sought to shape public perception and mobilize support by framing the issue in ways that aligned with their broader political narratives.

The NPP approached the Galamsey crisis by framing it primarily as a **manageable challenge** that could be tackled through **reforms** and **technological innovations**. They emphasized **evidence** of progress and used patriotic language to portray themselves as proactive reformers capable of turning the crisis into an opportunity for national development. Their tone remained **optimistic** and **solution-oriented**, employing **rebranding** strategies to depict the crisis as an issue that could be effectively managed with the right policies, thus positioning themselves as the party of progress and reform.

In stark contrast, the NDC framed the Galamsey crisis as a **victimization** of the environment and communities, emphasizing the **environmental damage** and **moral outrage** associated with illegal mining activities. Their discourse employed **emotional appeals** and invoked the **moral high ground**, portraying the crisis as a moral failing rooted in systemic neglect and corruption. They blamed past mismanagement and systemic failures for the ongoing environmental degradation, positioning themselves as defenders of environmental justice and social responsibility.

Regarding **blame and responsibility attribution**, the NPP sought to shift blame from systemic failures to current reform efforts, highlighting **expertise** and **authority** in their policies. They aimed to portray their interventions as responsible and forward-looking, emphasizing that the crisis was a challenge to be managed through technological and legal reforms. Conversely, the NDC emphasized **systemic corruption** and **legacy failures**, framing the crisis as evidence of environmental neglect and systemic irresponsibility. Their rhetoric aimed to rally support by positioning themselves as the champions of environmental integrity and societal justice.

In terms of **crisis to opportunity reframing**, the NPP capitalized on the Galamsey crisis by positioning it as an **opportunity for technological innovation** and **policy reform**. They promoted **innovation** and **policy debate**, suggesting that Ghana could harness the crisis to foster development and modernization. The NDC, however, framed the crisis as an **urgent environmental emergency** that required **immediate remedial action**. They employed this framing to emphasize the need for swift and decisive measures to prevent further environmental degradation, thereby positioning themselves as the protectors of ecological and social well-being.

When it comes to **stakeholder engagement**, the NPP employed **media outreach** and **public meetings** to showcase their reforms and progress, emphasizing legal reforms that align with national values such as patriotism and development. The NDC used **media campaigns** and **public**

rallies to highlight failures and demand accountability, grounding their appeals in **social justice**, **environmental ethics**, and **community welfare**. Both parties sought support through mobilization, but their discursive approaches reflected their contrasting visions—progress and reform versus justice and environmental responsibility.

Finally, on **ethical and societal implications**, both parties invoked morality to support their narratives. The NPP framed resource management as a **patriotic duty** and **moral responsibility**, emphasizing sustainable development as a national imperative. The NDC, on the other hand, framed environmental issues as **moral imperatives** and **societal needs**, emphasizing **social impact** and **moral high ground**. Their discourse reveals differing priorities: the NPP emphasizing development and modernization, and the NDC emphasizing environmental justice and social equity.

iv. Table analyzing the similarities between the opposition NDC and the incumbent NPP on how they exploited the Galamsey Crisis

Frame	Theme	NDC ACTION	NPP ACTION	SIMILARITY
Issue Framing	Presentation of issues	Frames Galamsey as an environmental catastrophe and national crisis, emphasizing environmental degradation and systemic failure	Frames Galamsey as a severe national crisis threatening water, land, and economic stability	Both elevate Galamsey from a minor issue to a major national emergency.
	Strengthening the frame	Uses vivid language, moral	Uses authoritative	Both reinforce the crisis

		outrage, visual evidence (polluted rivers, environmental damage)	language, technological solutions, visual evidence (degraded landscapes, new technology)	narrative with emotional language and visuals to deepen impact
	Audience Engagement	Engages publics through emotional appeals, moral language, and mobilization campaigns on radio, TV, and social media platforms	Uses leadership speeches, social media campaigns, and digital outreach to rally support and foster hope	Both actively engage and mobilize different publics through multiple channels
	Emotional Appeal	Highlights environmental and health disasters, moral failure, using fear and outrage	Emphasizes leadership, responsibility, and hope for sustainable reform	Both appeal to societal values and emotions to strengthen their messages
Blame and Responsibility	Blame Shifting	Blamed the current administration for inaction	Blames previous governance, systemic lapses, and inherited challenges	Both shift blame to systemic failures to divert current responsibility

	Argumentation	Justifies reforms (bans, laws, restoration projects) as necessary responses to crisis	Justifies stricter regulations, technological reforms, and responsible mining as solutions	Both argue reforms are urgent, justified responses to the crisis
Crisis to Opportunity	Reframing Crisis	Uses crisis to position the environment as a moral and political issue demanding urgent action	Recasts Galamsey as an opportunity for national reform, technological innovation, and responsible growth	Both see crisis as a strategic opportunity for policy repositioning and renewal
Stakeholder Engagement	Stakeholder Mobilization	Mobilizes publics via social media campaigns, civic groups, and media outlets to demand accountability and support reforms	Uses social media, televised addresses, and digital campaigns to rally citizens, stakeholders, and political allies	Both actively mobilize various publics and stakeholders through media engagement
Ethical & Societal	Implications	Strengthens opposition's moral high ground, justifies policy reforms,	Reinforces incumbents' leadership, justifies reforms, and	Both leverage the crisis to enhance their political positioning and

		delegitimizes opponents	seeks political legitimacy	legitimize their actions
--	--	----------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------

According to the table, both parties on the Galamsey issue had the following similarities.

1. Frame Galamsey as a National Crisis: Both parties present the issue as a severe and urgent threat to the nation, using traditional media and public statements to emphasize the crisis.
2. Use Media Campaigns: Both parties utilize media campaigns to reach a wider audience, using TV, newspapers, and other outlets to disseminate their messages.
3. Emphasize Economic Implications: Both parties highlight the economic consequences of Galamsey, such as the loss of revenue and the impact on businesses, to persuade the public of the need for action.
4. Appeal to Fear and Emotion: Both parties use moral language and emotional appeals to motivate the public to take action, framing Galamsey as a threat to the nation's well-being.
5. Highlight Expert Testimonies: Both parties use expert testimonies and credible sources to lend credibility to their arguments and persuade the public of the severity of the issue.
6. Use Public Statements: Both parties use public statements and official declarations to communicate their positions and policies on the issue.
7. Utilize Traditional Media: Both parties rely on traditional media channels, such as TV, newspapers, and radio, to reach a wider audience.
8. Mobilize Various Publics: Both parties seek to mobilize different publics, including the media, civil society organizations, and the general public, to build support for their positions.

9. Present Alternative Solutions: Both parties present alternative solutions to the Galamsey problem, such as regulations, laws, and institutions, to demonstrate their commitment to addressing the issue.

4.6.0 Crisis Exploitation in the 2024 Campaigns using Crisis Exploitation framework: NDC vs. NPP

i. Campaigns using Crisis Exploitation framework: NDC vs. NPP

Core Strategy	NPP Exploitation of DDEP & Galamsey Crises	NDC Exploitation of DDEP & Galamsey Crises
Framework Element	Frames DDEP and Galamsey as systemic failures inherited from past regimes, emphasizing the need for urgent reforms . - Portrays crises as opportunities for national renewal and fiscal/environmental responsibility .	- Frames crises as systemic failures but emphasizes mismanagement and neglect by incumbent government. Presents reforms as corrective measures to restore integrity, sovereignty, and social justice.
Blame & Responsibility	- Blames past administrations, external shocks, and systemic neglect for crises. - Positions current government as proactive responders and reformers .	- Blames incumbent government for mismanagement and neglect . - Accuses them of failing to protect the environment and economy, positioning NDC as the true custodians of national interest.
Crisis to Opportunity	- Uses crises to justify reforms, mobilize support, and rebrand the government as responsible, reform-minded, and nationalistic .	- Exploits crises to highlight failures of current policies, positioning themselves as the alternative committed to restoration and justice .

	- Emphasizes long-term recovery and sustainable development .	- Frames reforms as necessary corrections for a better future.
Stakeholder Engagement	- Targets youth, environmental groups, local communities, and investors with messaging emphasizing responsibility, sustainability, and economic recovery . - Uses rallies, town halls, social media campaigns to galvanize support.	- Engages workers, pensioners, environmental advocates, and marginalized communities . - Focuses on moral appeals, call for justice, and restoration of integrity through media campaigns, town halls, and social platforms.
Ethical & Societal	- Employs moral rhetoric emphasizing environmental stewardship, fiscal responsibility, and national pride . - Uses emotional visuals (e.g., land degradation, economic hardship) to evoke support.	- Uses moral and justice narratives emphasizing accountability, restoration of sovereignty, and social equity . - Highlights moral failure of incumbents and the need for corrective action .
Reform & Structural Change	- Promotes policy reforms such as stricter environmental laws, debt restructuring, and transparency measures. - Frames reforms as necessary for long-term sustainability and economic stability .	- Advocates for systemic reforms including anti-corruption measures, governance restructuring, and social justice reforms. - Describes reforms as restorative efforts to fix systemic failures and restore national pride.
Media & Mobilization Strategies	- Utilizes social media campaigns, viral videos, and targeted messaging to mobilize youth and supporters .	- Employs grassroots mobilization, traditional media, and digital platforms to amplify grievances and build support .

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leverages state-controlled and partisan media to reinforce narratives of leadership and responsibility. - Organizes mass rallies, town halls, and community outreach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses emotional storytelling and moral appeals to deepen engagement. - Mobilizes trade unions, civil society, and advocacy groups for support.
--	---	--

Key Observations from the Table:

1. Divergence in Framing and Messaging:

- **NPP’s Focus on Systemic Issues:** They frame DDEP and Galamsey as systemic failures, emphasizing the need for urgent reforms and national renewal.
- **NDC’s Emphasis on Accountability:** While the NDC also discusses system failures, their focus seems more on the accountability aspect, shifting blame to past regimes.

2. Policy and Reform Strategies:

- **NPP’s Reform Agenda:** The NPP leverages crises to justify a reform agenda, focusing on fiscal and environmental responsibility.
- **NDC’s Legacy of Failure:** The NDC frames crises as a consequence of the NPP’s past failures, presenting a chance to correct historical wrongs.

3. Media and Mobilization Strategies:

- **Strategic Narratives:** Both parties employ strategic narratives aimed at shaping public perception and influencing media discourse.

- **Public Mobilization:** The focus on crises and reforms is likely to mobilize the public, with both parties seeking to capitalize on public dissatisfaction and desire for change.

4. Electoral Implications:

- The exploitation of crises in political discourse can significantly impact the electoral landscape, with voters more likely to support a party that offers a clear plan for addressing national challenges.
- The ability to effectively frame crises and propose meaningful reforms can be a decisive factor in the vote.

In conclusion, the table highlights the strategic differences in how the NPP and NDC exploited crises in the 2024 campaigns. It underscores the importance of strategic narratives, public mobilization, and framing crises in political discourse, all of which are critical elements in the electoral strategy of political parties.

ii. Similarities in how both NPP and NDC exploited crises in the 2024 campaigns, using Crisis Exploitation framework

Framework Element	Similarities in NPP & NDC Exploitation of Crises
Issue Framing	Both parties frame the crises as systemic failures inherited from past governments or external shocks, emphasizing the need for urgent reforms and national renewal . They portray crises as opportunities to rebuild and strengthen the nation.

Emotional Appeal	Both parties tap into emotions , such as fear, anxiety, hope, and nostalgia, to resonate with voters. They use emotional storytelling to create a sense of urgency and shared experience around the crises.
Blame & Responsibility	Both shifts blame away from their current governance, attributing crises to past administrations, external factors, or systemic neglect . This strategy aims to delegitimize opponents and reframe their own leadership as responsible and proactive .
Crisis to Opportunity	Crisis are exploited as platforms for reform, mobilization, and rebranding – transforming challenges into narratives of resilience and renewal . Both emphasize long-term benefits and future stability through reforms.
Stakeholder Engagement	Both parties target specific supporter groups – youth, environmentalists, workers, pensioners – using tailored messages that emphasize moral responsibility, justice, and economic or environmental sustainability . They employ mass rallies, social media campaigns, town halls to mobilize support.
Ethical & Societal	They utilize moral rhetoric to evoke emotional support , framing their actions as necessary for justice, accountability, and national pride . Visuals and stories are used to deepen emotional engagement and reinforce societal values.
Reform & Structural Change	Both parties advocate for policy reforms – such as environmental laws, fiscal reforms, anti-corruption measures – that are portrayed as urgent and necessary for long-term national stability and sustainable development .
Media & Mobilization Strategies	They leverage social media, traditional media, and grassroots organizing to amplify their narratives, reach diverse demographics, and mobilize supporters quickly. Emotional visuals, moral appeals, and targeted messaging are central to their strategies.

The table highlights the strategic similarities between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in how they exploited crises during the 2024 campaigns. These similarities reveal a pattern of crisis opportunism, where both parties adapted and framed crises to suit their electoral interests.

1. Framing Crises as Systemic Failures

Both parties exploited crises by framing them as systemic failures caused or inherited from past or present governments, or external shocks. By doing so, they created a narrative that their opponents are either responsible or partly responsible for the nation's woes and that they (the current party) are the best-suited to fix the problems.

2. Portraying Crises as Opportunities for National Renewal

The NPP and NDC similarly leveraged crises to emphasize the need for urgent reforms and national renewal. This approach allowed them to position themselves as the agents of change, capable of guiding the nation through turbulent times.

3. Shifting Blame Away from Current Government

Both parties skillfully shifted blame away from their current government, while placing the responsibility for the crises on their opponents. These tactics enabled them to maintain a positive public image while criticizing their opponents.

4. Exploiting Crises for Electoral Gain

The table suggests that both parties exploited crises to gain electoral advantage. They used the crises as a rallying cry to mobilize support, create a sense of urgency, and emphasize the need for change.

5. Creating a Narrative of Competing Competence

The NPP and NDC created a narrative of competing competence, where each party claimed to possess the expertise and leadership necessary to navigate the nation through the crises. This narrative allowed them to engage in a zero-sum game, where the winner takes all, and the loser is blamed for the country's woes.

Conclusion

The analysis of the table reveals a cynical opportunism in how both parties exploited crises during the 2024 campaigns. By employing similar tactics, they demonstrated an ability to adapt and manipulate narratives to serve their electoral interests. This phenomenon highlights the challenges of holding elected officials accountable in Ghana's democratic system, where politicians may prioritize their party's interests over the nation's welfare.

4.7.0 Further Analysis

This section offers a comprehensive synthesis of the analytical insights derived from the study, directly addressing the core research questions concerning the political exploitation of crises in Ghana's 2024 electoral context. Through meticulous examination of party strategies, narrative constructions, and historical patterns, the analysis reveals how both the government (NPP) and opposition (NDC) strategically utilize the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as potent political tools. By applying established theoretical frameworks – including framing theory, blame attribution, and crisis-opportunity models – this analysis uncovers the nuanced tactics employed to influence public sentiment, shape electoral narratives, and mobilize support.

Furthermore, the comparison of current crisis narratives with historical patterns highlights both continuities and innovations in Ghana's political landscape, illustrating evolving tactics such as the increased use of visual politics and targeted emotional appeals. The investigation also demonstrates how these crises serve as contested arenas for moral, environmental, and fiscal debates, ultimately deepening political polarization while reinforcing partisan advantage.

Finally, the interplay between crisis management strategies, narrative framing, and voter behavior is examined to extend and deepen existing theoretical models. The findings underscore the importance of sophisticated, layered communication – combining moral, technical, and visceral elements – in shaping electoral outcomes and sustaining political contestation. Collectively, this analysis contributes valuable insights into the strategic exploitation of crises in Ghana, enriching the broader understanding of crisis politics in highly polarized democracies.

4.7.1 Research Questions 1: How have the Ghanaian government and opposition parties utilized the Galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as political tools to shape their electoral narratives in the lead-up to the 2024 elections?

The analysis demonstrates that both the Ghanaian government (NPP) and opposition (NDC) strategically leverage the galamsey crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) as pivotal political tools within their electoral narratives leading up to the 2024 elections. These crises serve as fertile grounds for framing contestation, blame attribution, and opportunity exploitation, grounded in well-established political communication theories.

Framing Dynamics in Crisis Exploitation

Drawing on framing theory (Cacciatore et al., 2016; Chong & Druckman, 2007), the parties craft divergent narratives that resonate with their strategic objectives. The NDC employs a moral and

environmental framing of the galamsey crisis, depicting it as an existential threat to land and water, thus mobilizing moral outrage and environmental justice sentiments. Conversely, the NPP emphasizes sovereignty and ecological protection, portraying itself as a responsible protector of Ghana's environment, shifting blame to past administrations. Both parties utilize emotional appeals – visual evidence of environmental degradation and moral language – to reinforce their frames.

Similarly, in the context of DDEP, the NDC constructs a systemic failure narrative, emphasizing fiscal mismanagement, corruption, and irresponsible borrowing, aimed at delegitimizing the incumbent government. The NPP counters with a fiscal and constitutional framing, portraying the debt restructuring as an unavoidable but responsible reform necessary to restore economic stability. These contrasting frames demonstrate how issue-specific narratives are employed to influence public opinion, with the strength and credibility of each frame being crucial (Entman, 1993; Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Blame Game and Discourse Strategies

Building on the Blame Game Framework (Hansson, Page & Fuoli, 2022; 't Hart & Boin, 2009), both parties engage in strategic blame attribution to sway public perception. The opposition (NDC) attributes blame to the government for systemic failures, environmental degradation, and economic mismanagement, often employing evaluative language that questions character, competence, and morality. The government (NPP), on the other hand, seeks to deflect blame by framing crises as inherited or external, emphasizing external shocks like COVID-19 and global economic downturns, thus positioning itself as a responsible reformer.

Discourse analysis (Hansson et al., 2022) reveals that these blame narratives involve moral judgments, character assessments, and causal attributions, often articulated through social media, speeches, and public debates. The strategic deployment of blame not only influences public attitudes but also legitimizes political positioning, alliances, and future policy directions.

Crisis-Opportunity and Political Maneuvering

The Crisis-Opportunity Framework (Boin, Hart & McConnell, 2008) further elucidates how crises are exploited as opportunities for redefining authority and legitimacy. Incumbent actors may seek to manipulate crises to reinforce their legitimacy, propose reforms, and mobilize electoral support. Oppositional actors may amplify crises to challenge the status quo and advocate for regime change. The timing, media coverage, and institutional arenas (parliament, inquiry commissions, social media) shape the outcomes of these strategic endeavors.

In Ghana's case, the galamsey crisis and DDEP serve as arenas where narratives of environmental morality and fiscal responsibility are contested. Both parties deploy framing and blame strategies to influence public discourse, with the ultimate goal of polarizing voters, mobilizing support, and shaping electoral outcomes.

Implications for Political Communication and Electoral Strategies

The integration of framing, blame attribution, and crisis opportunity theories reveals a complex landscape where political actors orchestrate narratives to serve their strategic interests. These narratives are reinforced through emotional appeals, visual evidence, legal references, and social media campaigns, evidencing a sophisticated use of political communication tools. The stability of framing patterns over time (Brugman & Burgers, 2018) suggests that parties rely on established

practices to reinforce particular narratives, making these frames highly effective in shaping voter perceptions.

Relation to Broader Theoretical Perspectives

This analysis aligns with the principles outlined in the framing theory, emphasizing how issue presentation influences public attitudes (Chong & Druckman, 2007). It also resonates with the Blame Game Framework, which highlights the discursive strategies used by political actors to assign responsibility (Hansson, Page & Fuoli, 2022). Moreover, the Crisis-Opportunity Framework underscores the strategic manipulation of crises to alter political landscapes, reinforce or challenge authority, and mobilize support (Boin et al., 2008).

In all, the strategic exploitation of crises by the NPP and NDC in Ghana's 2024 electoral context exemplifies a nuanced interplay of framing, blame attribution, and opportunistic maneuvering. These tactics collectively serve to polarize the electorate, legitimize political positions, and influence electoral outcomes, illustrating the critical role of political communication theories in understanding contemporary electoral dynamics.

4.7.2. Research Question 2: What strategies and narratives have political actors employed to manipulate the galamsey crisis and DDEP, and in what ways do these narratives influence public sentiment and electoral behavior?

The comparative analysis reveals that both the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) employed remarkably similar strategies in exploiting crises during Ghana's 2024 electoral campaigns, exemplifying a pattern of crisis opportunism. Both parties utilized issue framing to shape public perception, constructing competing narratives that aligned

with their strategic interests. The NDC framed the galamsey crisis as an environmental and moral catastrophe, emphasizing environmental degradation and moral responsibility, thereby mobilizing support rooted in environmental justice. Conversely, the NPP emphasized sovereignty and ecological stewardship, portraying itself as a protector of Ghana's natural resources while attributing blame to previous administrations. These frames, varying in strength and credibility, aimed to resonate with core values and persuade voters of each party's capacity to resolve these issues effectively. In the context of the DDEP, the NDC framed the crisis as a systemic failure rooted in governance corruption and fiscal mismanagement, aiming to delegitimize the incumbent government. The NPP responded by framing debt restructuring as a responsible and necessary reform, emphasizing external shocks and constitutional adherence, thus positioning itself as the responsible reformer. Both parties also engaged heavily in strategic blame-shifting, aligning with the Blame Game Framework (Hansson, Page & Fuoli, 2022; 't Hart & Boin, 2009). The NDC sought to attribute responsibility for crises to the current government's mismanagement and corruption, employing moral and character judgments to undermine its legitimacy. The NPP, on the other hand, shifted blame externally or to past governments, framing crises as inherited or caused by external shocks beyond their control. These discursive strategies involved deploying evaluative language – assessing character, behavior, and outcomes – to influence public opinion and legitimize their positions. Furthermore, both parties viewed crises as opportunities to redefine political authority and mobilize support, utilizing narratives of national renewal and urgent reforms. This aligns with the Crisis-Opportunity Framework (Boin, Hart & McConnell, 2008), which sees crises as moments that dislocate social and political orders, creating openings for strategic rebranding and coalition-building. The convergence of these tactics underscores the cynical opportunism characterizing Ghana's political landscape, where crises are exploited

primarily for partisan advantage rather than genuine policy solutions. This pattern echoes findings in existing literature, notably Brugman and Burgers (2018), who documented the stability of framing practices over time, and Hansson et al. (2022), who elaborate on blame attribution strategies. Collectively, these frameworks help explain how political actors manipulate narratives through framing, blame, and opportunities, ultimately influencing electoral outcomes and complicating accountability in Ghana's democratic process.

4.7.3. Research Question 3: In what ways do the current crises and their political exploitation compare to past events in Ghana's history, and what patterns or differences can be identified in the framing and utilization of crises?

The current crises surrounding Ghana's galamsey activities and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) demonstrate notable continuities and significant innovations in political framing and exploitation when compared to past events in Ghana's history. Historically, crises such as Dumsor, Ghana@50 according to *Modern Ghana* (2005), the scandals surrounding Kufuor became a focal point of political debate,

and other earlier scandals have been consistently framed as manifestations of systemic failure, with political actors employing narratives that depict these issues as evidence of governance collapse. For instance, Dumsor was portrayed as incompetence in energy management (Nsiah, 2020), while Ghana@50 scandals highlighted corruption and waste, and the galamsey and DDEP crises are framed today as ecological collapse and fiscal mismanagement, respectively. This pattern reveals a persistent tendency for political actors to construct crises as symptoms of systemic breakdowns, thereby legitimizing calls for reform and accountability.

In terms of blame attribution, incumbents historically tend to deflect responsibility, emphasizing inherited problems or external shocks – such as the NPP’s portrayal of inherited debt and external economic shocks in 2024 – while opposition parties often internalize blame, criticizing the incumbent government’s mismanagement, as observed in the 2016 NDC campaign’s focus on Dumsor or the 2024 narratives on DDEP mismanagement. Emotional mobilization also follows a pattern where crises evoke strong sentiments; Dumsor incited anger and frustration, Ghana@50 sparked outrage over corruption, and the galamsey and DDEP crises evoke a dual emotional register – fear and anger among opposition supporters (notably NDC) versus hope and optimism among the ruling NPP.

A consistent pattern across time is the crisis-to-opportunity reframing, where political actors leverage crises to bolster their narratives of reform, legacy, or national renewal. For example, in 2016, the NPP framed the promise of reliable energy as a flagship reform, while in 2008, it emphasized legacy defense and reform. Today, the NPP’s framing around ecological protection and fiscal sovereignty exemplifies this pattern. What distinguishes the current landscape is the layered moral framing that extends the moral battlefield – particularly with the galamsey crisis, which now involves environmental justice, and DDEP, which involves fiscal responsibility. These moral registers broaden the scope of political contestation and intensify polarization.

Furthermore, there is a marked shift towards more sophisticated and technocratic forms of evidence presentation. Political actors now deploy charts, debt data, and constitutional references, signaling an evolution from earlier rhetorical appeals to more credible, data-driven narratives. Targeted segmentation of audiences has also become more refined, with distinct messages tailored to youth and environmental activists versus pensioners and investors. Visual politics have gained

prominence, with imagery such as polluted rivers and debt graphs amplifying emotional resonance beyond traditional rallies, thereby intensifying polarization.

These patterns align with the theoretical frameworks of framing theory, blame game dynamics, and the crisis-opportunity model. Framing theory explicates how the presentation of issues – emphasizing systemic failure, environmental harm, or fiscal irresponsibility – shapes public perception, with stronger, credible frames resonating more deeply within a competitive environment. The stability of framing practices over time, as documented by Brugman and Burgers (2018), underscores that political actors tend to rely on established framing schemas, reinforcing particular narratives during electoral contests. The blame game framework elucidates how political actors strategically attribute blame to opponents or external factors, employing evaluative language and moral judgments to mobilize support or undermine legitimacy. Empirical analyses, such as Hansson et al. (2022), demonstrate that blame narratives are carefully constructed to influence moral judgments, often exploiting crises for partisan gain.

The crisis-opportunity framework further contextualizes these patterns by highlighting how crises serve as contestable moments where political elites redefine authority, forge new coalitions, or attempt to manipulate social order. The strategic deployment of blame, framing, and narrative construction during Ghana's current crises exemplifies these dynamics, echoing past patterns but also incorporating new layers of moral complexity, evidence sophistication, and audience segmentation. These innovations serve to intensify political polarization while presenting reform agendas as morally urgent and procedurally legitimate – paralleling earlier episodes like Dumsor and Ghana@50 but now amplified through visual politics and targeted messaging. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Ghana's political exploitation of crises continues a longstanding tradition of crisis politicization rooted in systemic framing and blame attribution, yet it also reflects

evolving tactics that deepen polarization and legitimacy contests, consistent with the insights from the reviewed theoretical frameworks and related studies.

4.7.4. Research Question 4: How can the interplay between crisis management, narrative framing, and voter behavior in Ghana's political landscape inform and contribute to existing theoretical frameworks on crisis exploitation and political strategy?

The interplay between crisis management, narrative framing, and voter behavior in Ghana's contemporary political landscape offers critical insights that both enrich and expand existing theoretical frameworks on crisis exploitation and political strategy. Empirical evidence from recent crises – namely galamsey and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – demonstrates that political actors leverage complex, layered strategies that integrate framing, blame attribution, emotional mobilization, and visual politics to shape public perception and electoral outcomes.

Central to this understanding is the Crisis-as-Competence heuristic, which posits that voters evaluate political parties based on their perceived competence in managing crises, incorporating blame attribution and prospective solutions rather than solely retrospective performance. This heuristic extends the Valence Politics (Stocks, 1963;1992; Enelow & Hinich, 1982) and Issue Ownership models (Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, et al 2003; Lachat, 2014) by emphasizing the importance of crisis-specific competence signals and credibility in repair strategies, thereby influencing electoral heuristics especially during turbulent periods.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that emotion segmentation and mobilization are vital in tailoring political communication. Parties map specific emotional appeals – such as fear, anger, frustration (often exploited by opposition parties) versus hope and confidence (typically associated with incumbents) – to targeted constituencies, thereby shaping turnout and persuasion. This approach

extends Affective Intelligence Theory by acknowledging the segmented architecture of emotions aligned with salient issues like ecological concerns versus economic anxieties, enabling more refined emotional appeals that resonate with distinct voter segments.

The systematic use of visual politics – through imagery of polluted rivers, debt dashboards, and ecological harm – serves as visceral anchors that translate abstract harms into emotionally compelling cues. This enriches agenda-setting and priming theories by introducing “visual salience anchors” that stabilize public attention and reinforce issue ownership, making complex policy challenges more immediately perceptible and emotionally salient.

When comparing past crises to the current context, patterns of framing and blame are notably consistent yet increasingly sophisticated. During the 2016 Dumsor crisis, framing centered on incompetence in service delivery, mobilizing anger rooted in economic hardship, with the competence-under-crisis heuristic serving as a pivotal tool. Today, these narratives are fused with technocratic elements – such as detailed data, legal references, and constitutional legitimacy – and targeted audience segmentation, reflecting an evolution toward more granular and credible framing strategies. Similarly, the Ghana@50 scandal (toward 2008) utilized morality-based framing – highlighting corruption and waste – while expanding its persuasive bandwidth through procedural legitimacy and visual evidence of fiscal and ecological stakes.

The timing of blame choreography also emerges as a critical factor, with incumbents tending to externalize blame early in crises and opposition parties adopting late-stage accountability frames. This phase-dependent responsiveness influences undecided voters’ sentiments and highlights the importance of strategic timing in crisis exploitation.

Visual anchor priming further demonstrates that salient imagery (e.g., ecological damage, debt dashboards) significantly enhances memory retention and policy support, underscoring the importance of multimodal communication in shaping political narratives.

These findings align with and extend framing theory by illustrating how the strength, frequency, and context of frames – particularly when complemented by visual and emotional cues – determine their persuasive power. The evidence supports Chong & Druckman's (2007) emphasis on the interplay of frame strength, prior beliefs, and competitive environments, but also advocates for incorporating moral and technocratic elements into the framing architecture. Similarly, the Blame Game Framework is reinforced by empirical findings that highlight strategic blame attribution as a discursive tool, with actors employing evaluative language and moral judgments – via Appraisal theory – to sway public sentiment and legitimize their narratives. The observed timing and framing of blame strategies reflect the dynamic, phase-dependent nature of crisis exploitation.

Finally, the Crisis-Opportunity Framework is exemplified by Ghana's crises functioning as contested arenas where political actors redefine authority, forge alliances, and pursue strategic gains. The evolution of these strategies – particularly the fusion of moral, technical, and visceral appeals – illustrates how crises are mobilized not merely for immediate political advantage but also for shaping long-term governance paradigms, often reinforcing or challenging institutional legitimacy. These findings corroborate and deepen prior insights by demonstrating that Ghana's political actors continue to exploit crises through sophisticated framing, blame strategies, and visual politics, echoing global patterns of crisis politicization. The integration of moral registers and technocratic evidence reflects an evolution toward more targeted, credible, and emotionally resonant communication strategies. The emphasis on phase-dependent blame choreography and visual anchors advances methodological approaches, advocating for mixed-methods research –

content analysis, sentiment tracking, experimental messaging – to rigorously examine these dynamics.

In summary, this integrated analysis underscores that Ghana’s current crisis exploitation strategies exemplify and extend established models – framing, blame, and opportunity – by revealing how layered moral, technical, and visceral elements interact to influence voter perceptions, behaviors, and electoral outcomes. Recognizing these nuanced mechanisms enriches existing theoretical frameworks and offers vital insights for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand and navigate the politics of crises in highly polarized, socio-politically complex environments.

4.8. Chapter Summary

The comprehensive analysis above illustrates how Ghana’s major political parties strategically exploit societal crises – such as the galamsey environmental menace and the domestic debt exchange program (DDEP) – to influence public perception, justify policies, and strengthen their political legitimacy. The opposition (notably the NDC) employs crisis framing as a moral and systemic failure, emphasizing environmental degradation, corruption, and economic mismanagement to mobilize support for reform-oriented policies and to delegitimize the incumbent government. Conversely, the ruling (NPP) leverages these crises as opportunities for responsible governance, emphasizing systemic reforms, environmental responsibility, and fiscal discipline to consolidate support and portray themselves as the protectors of Ghana’s natural and economic future.

Both parties utilize a range of strategic communication tools – visual evidence, emotional appeals, systemic narratives, and moral language – to deepen political polarization and to position

themselves as the authentic custodians of national well-being. The opposition's narratives often focus on moral outrage, systemic failures, and environmental preservation, while the incumbents frame crises as inherited systemic issues solvable through responsible reforms, emphasizing stability, sovereignty, and long-term growth. This triangulated understanding of crisis exploitation underscores the importance of critically examining political narratives in Ghana's democratic landscape. It reveals that crises are not merely challenges but are actively manipulated as strategic resources to reinforce partisan agendas, influence electoral outcomes, and shape policy discourse. Recognizing these patterns is essential for fostering informed citizen engagement and ensuring that crisis communication advances democratic accountability rather than partisan manipulation.

Moving forward, policy interventions, civic education, and media literacy initiatives should aim to enhance public resilience to strategic crisis framing. Emphasizing transparency, factual accuracy, and inclusive dialogue can help mitigate the risks of crisis exploitation, ensuring that societal crises serve as catalysts for genuine reform rather than tools for political dominance.

This detailed analysis lays a solid foundation for the next chapter, which will synthesize these findings into actionable conclusions and targeted recommendations for promoting responsible communication, enhancing democratic integrity, and fostering sustainable development in Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and key findings of the study that investigates how Ghanaian political actors strategically exploit crises within the context of the 2024 electoral cycle. By employing a qualitative, multi-case research approach grounded in the Crisis Exploitation Framework, the study examines the narratives, framing strategies, blame attribution, and political tactics employed by various stakeholders – including political parties, civil society, media, and other influential actors – across different regions and socio-political settings in Ghana. The chapter outlines the research design, data collection methods, analytical frameworks, and the overall approach used to explore the complex interplay between crisis discourse and political strategy. It aims to set the foundation for understanding how crises such as the galamsey environmental challenge and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) are not merely socio-economic issues but also potent tools manipulated for partisan advantage, shaping electoral outcomes and influencing democratic processes in Ghana.

5.2 Summary

This comprehensive study employs a qualitative, multi-case research approach grounded in the Crisis Exploitation Framework to analyze how Ghanaian political actors strategically manipulate crises – specifically the galamsey environmental crisis and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) – during the 2024 electoral cycle. The scope encompasses examining the narratives, framing strategies, blame attribution, and political tactics employed by the ruling New Patriotic

Party (NPP), opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), civil society, media, and other stakeholders across key regions and socio-political settings in Ghana.

Sampling techniques primarily involve purposive sampling to select key political figures, representatives, and media content relevant to crisis framing and exploitation. Data collection incorporates analysis of speeches, interviews, policy documents, social media content, and public statements, facilitating triangulation through thematic content analysis, discourse, and narrative analysis to ensure depth, validity, and cross-verification of findings.

The analytical approach integrates three core frameworks: Framing Theory to understand issue construction and narrative influence; the Blame Game Framework to explore responsibility attribution and moral judgments; and the Crisis-Opportunity Framework to examine how actors leverage crises as strategic opportunities for political gain, reform advocacy, and legitimacy reinforcement. These frameworks collectively enable a nuanced understanding of the discursive, strategic, and political mechanisms underpinning crisis exploitation.

The study's design emphasizes systematic data triangulation – combining multiple sources, methods, and theoretical lenses – to enhance credibility and mitigate bias. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, are rigorously observed. Limitations acknowledged include potential researcher bias, temporal constraints focused on the election period, and the challenges inherent in interpreting politically charged discourse.

Overall, this methodology provides a robust foundation for unpacking the complex interplay of political communication, narrative framing, and strategic manipulation of crises in Ghana's democratic landscape, offering valuable insights into electoral dynamics, governance challenges, and the ethical dilemmas of crisis exploitation.

5.3. Findings from the Study

The study's findings reveal a nuanced landscape of crisis exploitation in Ghanaian politics, particularly during the lead-up to the 2024 elections. Key insights include:

1. **Strategic Narrative Framing:** Both major parties – the NPP and NDC – actively craft and deploy narratives around crises such as galamsey and the DDEP to serve electoral objectives. Opponents, notably Mahama and Forson, frame these crises as systemic failures rooted in mismanagement, corruption, and reckless borrowing, positioning themselves as the rightful agents of reform. Incumbents respond by emphasizing their efforts at crisis management, sometimes downplaying the severity or framing crises as external shocks.

2. **Narrative Techniques and Frames:** The opposition employs emotive issue framing, blaming government failures, and emphasizing moral and social consequences to rally support. They use metaphors like “war” and “catastrophe” to intensify perceptions of urgency. Conversely, incumbents attempt to justify policies through technical framing, focusing on structural reforms and future recovery plans, often highlighting external factors like global economic shocks.

3. **Blame Attribution and Responsibility:** A recurring pattern is the strategic shifting of blame. Opposition figures attribute crises to government incompetence and corruption, leveraging blame game frameworks to delegitimize incumbents. Incumbents counter by emphasizing external shocks and systemic challenges, attempting to deflect responsibility.

4. **Crisis as Political Opportunity:** Both parties exploit crises to redefine legitimacy, push policy reforms, and mobilize support. The opposition’s narratives position crises as opportunities for fundamental systemic change, calling for leadership change and reforms. The ruling party highlights ongoing efforts and the need for unity, often framing crises as temporary setbacks.

5. **Media and Civil Society Engagement:** Social media and civil society groups are instrumental in amplifying opposition narratives, mobilizing protests, and shaping public discourse. Civil society frames galamsey and DDEP as existential threats, rallying support for anti-crisis campaigns.

6. **Ethical and Societal Dimensions:** The exploitation of crises involves moral appeals, emphasizing social justice concerns like the impact on pensioners, farmers, and vulnerable groups. Opposition rhetoric often condemns perceived injustices, while incumbents focus on responsible management and future stability.

7. **Risks and Ethical Concerns:** While crisis exploitation can mobilize support and highlight governance issues, it risks deepening polarization, eroding trust, and undermining social cohesion. Over-politicization may lead to skepticism about genuine solutions versus partisan gains.

8. **Implications for Democracy and Governance:** The findings suggest that crisis narratives are central to electoral strategies, influencing voter perceptions and behavior. Strategic framing and blame shifting can distort public understanding, potentially undermining accountability and long-term policy stability.

In sum, Ghanaian political actors harness crisis narratives through framing, blame attribution, and opportunistic maneuvers, shaping electoral outcomes while posing ethical and democratic challenges. The study underscores the importance of responsible communication and the need for mechanisms to mitigate manipulative crisis exploitation.

5.4. Incumbent Narratives as Double-Edged Swords: How Defensive Framing and Externalization of Crises Can Undermine Government Legitimacy

The study highlights that incumbent narratives can sometimes inadvertently reinforce opposition narratives and weaken government legitimacy through several mechanisms:

1. Highlighting Government Failures: When incumbents acknowledge crises or admit to challenges – such as difficulty managing galamsey or economic downturns – they may unintentionally validate opposition claims about systemic incompetence or corruption. For example, emphasizing external shocks or structural issues can be perceived as passing the buck, thus amplifying opposition narratives that the government is unable to effectively manage crises.

2. Framing Crises as Systemic Failures: Incumbent narratives that focus on the scale and severity of crises can serve to underscore systemic weaknesses, aligning with opposition narratives that blame mismanagement and corruption. This can undermine the government's image as effective stewards of national resources and stability.

3. Providing Opposition with Leverage: When government communication emphasizes crises' severity or external origins, opposition parties can leverage these narratives to argue that the incumbents lack the capacity or political will to resolve issues. This can bolster opposition calls for change and reform, eroding confidence in the ruling party's legitimacy.

4. Creating a Narrative of Insecurity and Uncertainty: Incumbent narratives that emphasize crises as ongoing or unresolved can foster public perceptions of instability, which opposition parties can exploit to rally support for alternative leadership. This perception of insecurity undermines the legitimacy of the current administration.

5. Undermining Trust and Social Cohesion: Overly technical or defensive government narratives may alienate the public, especially if they appear dismissive or detached. This can lead to increased skepticism about the government's intentions and competence, strengthening opposition claims that the government is untrustworthy or disconnected from citizens' needs.

6. Reinforcing Opposition's Moral and Ethical Frames: When incumbents respond defensively or shift blame, opposition narratives that emphasize moral failings, corruption, or neglect are reinforced. This moral framing makes opposition narratives more compelling and further erodes the incumbent's moral authority.

In essence, incumbent narratives, especially when perceived as defensive, dismissive, or overly technical, can unintentionally validate opposition critiques, deepen distrust, and weaken the legitimacy of the government. These dynamics underscore the importance of strategic communication, where incumbents must balance crisis management with messages that maintain public confidence and do not inadvertently empower opposition narratives.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

The study, while comprehensive in exploring how crisis narratives are strategically used in Ghanaian politics, presents some gaps that could be addressed in future research:

1. Limited Examination of Media's Role Beyond Social Media

The study emphasizes social media and civil society but provides limited analysis of traditional media outlets (radio, TV, newspapers) and their influence on shaping or amplifying crisis narratives. A deeper exploration could reveal how mainstream media coverage reinforces or challenges political framing.

2. Lack of Empirical Data on Public Perception

While the study discusses political actors' narratives, it offers limited empirical data on how ordinary citizens perceive and are influenced by these narratives. Understanding voter perceptions and behavior in response to crisis framing remains an area for further investigation.

3. Insufficient Focus on Regional and Ethnic Dynamics

Ghana's diverse regional and ethnic landscapes may influence how crises are perceived and exploited politically. The study does not sufficiently explore how these dynamics intersect with crisis narratives and political strategies.

4. Temporal Scope of Analysis

The study focuses on the lead-up to the 2024 elections but does not extensively examine how crisis narratives evolve over time, especially post-election, or during different phases of crises. A longitudinal perspective could provide insights into the stability or fluidity of these narratives.

5. Limited Analysis of Ethical Implications and Social Cohesion

Although ethical concerns are touched upon, there is limited in-depth analysis of how crisis exploitation affects social cohesion, trust in institutions, or long-term democratic stability.

6. Absence of Comparative Analysis

The study does not compare Ghana's crisis narrative strategies with those of other West African countries or democracies facing similar issues, which could contextualize Ghana's unique or common approaches.

7. Underexplored Role of International Actors

External actors such as international donors, NGOs, and foreign governments can influence crisis narratives and political strategies, but their role is not sufficiently examined.

Addressing these gaps could enrich understanding of the multifaceted nature of crisis exploitation and its broader implications for Ghanaian democracy and governance.

5.6. Conclusion

The comprehensive analyses of Ghanaian political actors' discourses during the 2024 electoral cycle vividly demonstrate how crises such as the galamsey environmental menace and the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) are strategically exploited for partisan advantage. Both ruling and opposition parties employ sophisticated framing techniques – highlighting systemic failures, moral culpability, and national urgency – to shape public perception, delegitimize opponents, and mobilize support.

The opposition, exemplified by figures like John Mahama, Dr. Cassiel Forson, and Sammy Gyamfi, leverages crisis narratives to attribute blame to incumbent mismanagement, emphasizing systemic failures, economic mismanagement, and social injustices, thereby positioning themselves as the custodians of accountability and reform. Their framing often invokes emotional appeals, moral responsibility, and a call for structural change, seeking to sway public opinion by casting the crisis as a consequence of reckless governance. Conversely, the ruling party employs narratives that emphasize resilience, reform efforts, and external factors influencing Ghana's economic challenges. They attempt to leverage crisis situations to justify policy measures, project stability, and rally patriotic support. However, the persistent use of blame-shifting, moral rhetoric, and calls

for sacrifices underscores the ongoing contest over narrative control, which influences electoral behavior and legitimacy.

The strategic use of blame, framing, and crisis opportunity theories reveals that these crises are not merely socio-economic or environmental issues but highly politicized arenas where narratives are contested, reconstructed, and exploited to serve partisan goals. Both sides employ discourse, metaphors, and moral appeals to shape perceptions, often risking societal polarization, erosion of trust, and superficial reforms that prioritize political gains over genuine systemic change. Ultimately, this analysis underscores that crisis exploitation in Ghana's political landscape is a calculated performative act, deeply embedded in strategic communication, moral positioning, and power dynamics. It highlights the importance of responsible discourse, transparency, and ethical considerations in managing societal upheavals, especially within a fragile democratic context. Recognizing these patterns is vital for fostering informed citizenry and safeguarding democratic integrity amid the turbulent interplay of crises and politics.

5.7. Recommendation for Further Studies

Future research should explore the multifaceted role of traditional media outlets, such as radio, television, and newspapers, in shaping and amplifying political crisis narratives, alongside social media. Additionally, there is a need for empirical studies assessing how ordinary citizens perceive and are influenced by these narratives, including their impact on public trust and voting behavior.

Further investigation into regional, ethnic, and socio-economic dynamics can provide a more nuanced understanding of how crisis narratives are exploited differently across Ghana's diverse communities. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of crisis narratives over time – before, during, and after elections – would offer valuable insights into their stability and long-term effects

on democratic processes. Moreover, research should examine the social and ethical implications of crisis exploitation, particularly its impact on social cohesion and trust in institutions. Comparative studies involving other West African countries or democracies facing similar crises could contextualize Ghana's strategies and reveal broader regional patterns.

Finally, exploring the influence of international actors, such as donors, NGOs, and foreign governments, on crisis narratives and political strategies would enrich understanding of external factors shaping domestic political discourses. These avenues of inquiry will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of crisis exploitation and its implications for Ghanaian democracy and governance.

REFERENCE

Crisis Exploitation & Political Theory

1. 't Hart, P. (2008). The limits of crisis exploitation. *Arena Journal*, (29/30), 157–174.
2. Hart, P., & Tindall, K. (2009). Understanding crisis exploitation: Leadership, rhetoric and reform. *Arena Journal*, (29/30), 157–174.
3. Brändström, A. (2016). Crisis, accountability and blame management: Strategies and survival of political office-holders (Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University).
4. Boin, A., 't Hart, P., & McConnell, A. (2008). Conclusions: The politics of crisis exploitation. In A. Boin, A. McConnell, & P. 't Hart (Eds.), *Governing after crisis: The politics of investigation, accountability and learning* (pp. 285–316). Cambridge University Press.
5. Lipsy, P. Y. (2020). COVID-19 and the politics of crisis. *International Organization*, 74(S1), E98–E127.
6. Maor, M. (2021). Blame avoidance, crisis exploitation, and COVID-19 governance response in Israel. *Israeli Studies Review*, 35(3), 303–319.
7. Olsson Gardell, E.-K., Falkheimer, J., & Nord, L. (2015). Media coverage crisis exploitation characteristics: A case comparison study. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 27(2), 123–139.
8. Weaver, R. K. (1986). The politics of blame avoidance. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6(4), 371–398.
9. Stone, D. (1989). Causal stories and the formation of policy agendas. *Political Science Quarterly*, 104(2), 281–300. Galamsey (Illegal Small-Scale Mining) in Ghana: General & Political Economy
10. Ajene, A., & Adams, S. (2025). Galamsey: Formal and informal fight political elites in Ghana. *Труды По Интеллектуальной Собственности*, 52(1), 45–55.
11. Afriyie, K., Abass, K., Frempong, F., Arthur, B., & Gyasi, R. (2022). The dynamics and livelihood implications of illegal mining in Ghana: A critical assessment. *Geographical Research*, 61(1), 32–43.
12. Annan, S. (2024). The ban on illegal mining in Ghana: Environmental and socio-economic effect on local communities. *Journal of Geoscience and Environment Protection*, 12(3), 153–162.
13. Adu-Baffour, F., Daum, T., & Birner, R. (2021). Governance challenges of small-scale gold mining in Ghana: Insights from a process net-map study. *Land Use Policy*, 102, 105271.
14. Asori, M., Mpobi, R., Morgan, A., Apoanaba, T., Katey, D., Ampofo, S., & Appiah, D. (2022). Is illegal mining socio-politically entrenched? An opinion piece on the interaction between formal politics and chief dominance in mineral governance, and its influence on fighting galamsey in Ghana. *GeoJournal*, 88(2), 1953–1963.

15. Boafo, J., Angzoorokuu Paalo, S., & Dotsey, S. (2019). Illicit Chinese small-scale mining in Ghana: Beyond institutional weakness? *Sustainability*, 11(21), 5943.
16. Crawford, G., Agyeyomah, C., Botchwey, G., & Mba, A. (2015). The impact of Chinese involvement in small-scale gold mining in Ghana. International Growth Centre.
17. Hausermann, H., & Ferring, D. (2018). Unpacking land grabs: Subjects, performances and the state in Ghana's 'small-scale' gold mining sector. *Development and Change*, 49(4), 1010–1033.
18. Hilson, A. (2010). 'Once a miner, always a miner': Poverty and livelihood diversification in Akwatia, Ghana. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 26(3), 296–307.
19. Hilson, G., Yakovleva, N., & Banchirigah, S. M. (2007). To move or not to move: Reflections on the resettlement of artisanal miners in the Western Region of Ghana. *African Affairs*, 106(424), 413–436.
20. Hilson, G., & Maconachie, R. (2020). Entrepreneurship and innovation in Africa's artisanal and small-scale mining sector: Developments and trajectories. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 78, 149–162.
21. Lu, J. (2016). A Chinese empire in the making?: Questioning myths from the agri-food sector in Ghana. *Made in China Journal*, 1(3), 30–33.
22. McQuilken, J., & Hilson, G. (2016). Artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Ghana: Evidence to inform an 'action dialogue'. International Institute for Environment and Development.
23. Ntewusu, S. (2018). 10,000 miners, 10,000 votes: Politics and mining in Ghana. *Africa*, 88(4), 863–866.
24. Sojková, I. (2022). Framing illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining in the Ghanaian media during the #StopGalamsey campaign. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 60(3), 371–396.
25. Teschner, B. A. (2012). Small-scale mining in Ghana: The government and the galamsey. *Resources Policy*, 37(3), 308–314.
26. Tschakert, P. (2016). Shifting discourses of vilification and the taming of unruly mining landscapes in Ghana. *World Development*, 86, 123–132.
27. Wireko-Gyebi, R., Asibey, M., Amponsah, O., King, R., Braimah, I., Darko, G., & Lykke, A. (2020). Perception of small-scale miners on interventions to eradicate illegal small-scale mining in Ghana. *SAGE Open*, 10(4).
28. Yeboah, R. (2022). Diplomatic relations, environment and development: An interrogation of Ghana-China relations and illegal mining in the Amansie South District. University of Cape Coast. Galamsey: Environmental, Health & Livelihood Impacts
29. Aboka, Y. E., Cobbina, S. J., & Doke, A. D. (2018). Review of environmental and health impacts of mining in Ghana. *Journal of Health and Pollution*, 8(17), 43–52.

30. Asare, A. A., Baddoo, N. A., & Calys-Tagoe, B. (2024). Vulnerability to infectious diseases and risk reduction measures among galamsey gold mining communities in Ghana: A narrative review. *HSI Journal*, 6(5), 735–739.
31. Awewomom, J., Benjamin, B. K., Osei, F. E., Azanu, D., Opoku, F., Sackey, L. N. A., & Akoto, O. (2024). A review of health hazards associated with exposure to galamsey-related pollutants. *HSI Journal*, 5(2), 726–734.
32. Health Sciences Investigations Journal. (2024). Decoding the persistence of galamsey in Ghana: The meta-contradictions of neutered law. *Health Sciences Investigations Journal*, 5(2), 719–725.
33. Nyantakyi-Frimpong, H., Christian, A., Ganle, J., & Aryeetey, R. (2023). “Now we’ve all turned to eating processed foods”: A photovoice study of the food and nutrition security implications of ‘galamsey’ in Ghana. *African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development*, 23(116), 22200–22220.
34. Obiri, S., Yeboah, P. O., Osae, S., Adu-Kumi, S., Cobbina, S. J., Armah, F. A., Ason, B., Antwi, E., & Quansah, R. (2016). Human health risk assessment of artisanal miners exposed to toxic chemicals in water and sediments in the Prestea Huni Valley District of Ghana. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 13(1), 139.
35. Ofori, S. (2023). Ecological study of galamsey activities in Ghana and their physiological toxicity. *Journal of Environmental Toxicology Research*, 1(1), 1–14.
36. Ofori, S. A., Dwomoh, J., Yeboah, E. O., Aggrey, M. L., Nti, S., Philip, A., & Asante, C. (2024). An ecological study of galamsey activities in Ghana and their physiological toxicity. *Asian Journal of Toxicology, Environmental, and Occupational Health*, 2(1), 40–57.
37. Osman, N., Afele, J., Nimo, E., Gorleku, D., Ofori, L., & Abunyewa, A. (2022). Assessing the impact of illegal small-scale mining (galamsey) on cocoa farming and farmer livelihood: A case study in the Amansie West District of Ghana. *Pelita Perkebunan (A Coffee and Cocoa Research Journal)*, 38(1), 70–82.

Ghana's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP)

38. Africanews. (2023, January 16). Ghana extends Domestic Debt Exchange deadline for 3rd time. Africanews.
39. Akorlie, C., & Adombila, M. A. (2023, September 14). Ghana reopens debt exchange for 12.9 billion cedis of local bonds, finance ministry says. Reuters.
40. Amarteifio-Taylor, C., & Owino, E. (n.d.). What next after the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme? PwC Ghana.

41. Bank of Ghana (BOG). (2022, December 7). Government of Ghana domestic debt exchange: Potential financial sector impacts and mitigating safeguards [Press release]. Financial Stability Council.
42. Boakye, B., Bokpin, G. A., Ofori, C. G., & Nkrumah, G. A. (2024). An assessment of the impact of the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) on Ghana's pensions sector. Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP).
43. Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG). (2022). Accounting implications of Ghana's domestic debt exchange (GDDE) programme on banks [Discussion paper]. ICAG.
44. Ministry of Finance (MOF). (2023, February 28). Domestic debt exchange programme (DDEP) updates.
45. Reuters. (2024, June 24). Ghana's debt restructuring takes another step forward. Reuters.

Framing, Discourse & Political Communication

46. Brugman, B. C., & Burgers, C. (2018). Political framing across disciplines: Evidence from 21st-century experiments. *Research & Politics*, 5(2), 1–7.
47. Chilton, P. A. (2000). Participant roles and the analysis of leadership discourse: British and American leaders explain the Kosovo crisis. In I. Plag & P. Schneider (Eds.), *Language use, language acquisition and language history*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag.
48. Chilton, P. A. (2004). *Analyzing political discourse: Theory and practice*. Taylor & Francis e-Library.
49. Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 103–126.
50. Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
51. Entman, R. M. (2004). *Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy*. University of Chicago Press.
52. Habermas, J. (1971). Vorbereitende bemerkungen zu einer theorie der kommunikativen kompetenz. In J. Habermas & N. Luhmann (Eds.), *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
53. Habermas, J. (1973). *Legitimation crisis*. Heinemann.
54. Habermas, J. (1979). *Communication and the evolution of society*. Heinemann.
55. Habermas, J. (1981). *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. Suhrkamp.
56. Hansson, S., Page, R., & Fuoli, M. (2022). Discursive strategies of blaming: The language of judgment and political protest online. *Social Media + Society*, 8(4).

57. Mey, J. (1985). *Whose language? A study in linguistic pragmatics*. John Benjamins.
58. Mey, J. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.
59. Wodak, R. (Ed.). (1989). *Language, power and ideology*. John Benjamins.
60. Wodak, R. (1996). *Disorders of discourse*. Longman.
61. Wodak, R. (2002). *Fragmented identities: Redefining and recontextualising national identity*. In P. A. Chilton & C. Schäffner (Eds.), *Politics as talk and text*.
62. Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
(This edited volume includes frameworks for analyzing how oral discourse constructs legitimacy through narrative structures and discursive strategies.)

Research Methodology & Design

62. Adams, C. R., Barrio Minton, C. A., Hightower, J., & Blount, A. J. (2022). A systematic approach to multiple case study design in professional counseling and counselor education. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 15(2).
63. Alhojailan, M. I. (2012). Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *East Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1).
64. Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing narrative research*. Sage.
65. Black, I. (2006). The presentation of interpretivist research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*.
66. Bleakley, A. (2000). Writing with invisible ink: Narrative, confessionality and reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 1(1), 11–24.
67. Bliss, L. (2016). Phenomenological research: Inquiry to understand the meaning of people's experiences. *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology*.
68. Bochner, A. (2007). Notes toward an ethics of memory in autoethnographic inquiry. In *Ethical futures in qualitative research: Decolonizing the knowledge* (pp. 197–208).
69. Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage Publications.
70. Carter, N., Dicenso, A., Bryant-Lukosius, D., Blythe, J., & others. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545–547.
71. Caulfield, J. (2022, November 5). What is ethnography? Definition, guide & examples. Scribbr.

72. Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.
73. Chesaina, C. (1991). Oral literature of the Kalenjin. Heinemann.
74. Clifford, J. (1983). On ethnographic authority. *Representations*, 2, 118–146.
75. Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
76. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
77. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
78. Delve, H., & Limpaecher, A. (2021). *The practical guide to grounded theory. Practical Guide to Grounded Theory Research*.
79. Delve, H., & Limpaecher, A. (2022). What is phenomenological research design? Essential guide to coding qualitative data.
80. Denzin, N. K. (1978). *Sociological methods: A sourcebook*. McGraw-Hill.
81. Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550.
82. Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4.
83. Fern, E. F. (1982). The use of focus groups for idea generation: The effects of group size, acquaintanceship, and moderator on response quantity and quality.
84. Frith, H., & Gleeson, K. (2004). Clothing and embodiment: Men managing body image and appearance. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 5(1), 40.
85. Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). Sage.
86. Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.
87. Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication & Technology Journal*, 29(2), 75–91.
88. Hatch, I. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. SUNY Press.
89. Hayes, N. (1997). *Doing qualitative analysis in psychology*. Psychology Press.
90. John, C., & David, C. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
91. Leiner, D. J. (2014). *Convenience samples and respondent pools*.

92. Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), 34–46.
93. Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128). Sage.
94. Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage Publications.
95. Morse, J. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (Vol. 1, pp. 189–208). Sage.
96. Morse, J. M. (2009). Mixing qualitative methods. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(11), 1523–1524.
97. Namey, E., Guest, G., Thairu, L., & Johnson, L. (2008). Data reduction techniques for large qualitative data sets.
98. Neuman, W. L. (2002). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Vol. 30).
99. Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Pearson Education Limited.
100. Nnebue, C. C. (2010). *Informed consent in research*.
101. Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research*, 34, 1189–1208.
102. Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
103. Pickvance, C. (2001). Four varieties of comparative analysis. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 16(1), 3–22.
104. Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2012). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
105. Russell, C., Gregory, D., Ploeg, J., DiCenso, A., & Guyatt, G. (2005). Qualitative research. In A. DiCenso, G. Guyatt, & D. Ciliska (Eds.), *Evidence-based nursing: A guide to clinical practice* (pp. 120–136). Elsevier Mosby.
106. Sarantakos, S. (2012). *Social research*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
107. Stake, R. E. (2005). *Multiple case study analysis*. Guilford Press.
108. Staksrud, E., Kolstad, I., Bang, K. J., & Bomann-Larsen, L. (2022). Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences and the humanities. The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees.

109. Stokes, D. E. (1963). Spatial models of party competition. *American Political Science Review*, 57(2), 368–377.
110. Stokes, D. E. (1992). Valence politics. In D. Kavanagh (Ed.), *Electoral politics* (pp. 141–164). Clarendon Press.
111. Streubert, H. J., & Carpenter, D. R. (2002). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (3rd ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
112. Sumner, M. (2006). Feminist research. In V. Jupp (Ed.), *The Sage dictionary of social research methods*. Sage Publications.
113. Thurmond, V. A. (2001). The point of triangulation. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(3), 253–258.
114. Tilly, C. (1984). *Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons*. Russell Sage Foundation.
115. Trahar, S. (2009). Beyond the story itself: Narrative inquiry and autoethnography in intercultural research in higher education. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*.
116. Vivek, R., Nanthagopan, Y., & others. (2023). Beyond methods: Theoretical underpinnings of triangulation in qualitative and multi-method studies. *SEEU Review*, 19(4), 123–135.
117. Wax, R. H. (1971). *Doing fieldwork: Warnings and advice*. University of Chicago Press.
118. Yeboah, R. (2023). The presentation of interpretivist research. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 4(4), 455–472.
119. Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
120. Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Sage.
121. Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
122. Zach, L. (2006). Using a multiple–case studies design to investigate the information-seeking behavior of arts administrators. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 4–21.

Forestry, Environment & Development

123. David, K. (2013). Contribution of the Ghana forestry sector to socio-economic development. Presented at the 10th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 10).
124. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2010). *Global forest resources assessment 2010*.
125. Forestry Commission. (2017). *Forestry Commission annual report 2017*.
126. Forestry Commission Ghana. (2016). *Ghana forest plantation strategy: 2016–2040*.
127. Harris, J. M. (2004). *Trade and the environment*. Tufts University.

128. Kissinger, G. M., Herold, M., & De Sy, V. (2012). Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation: A synthesis report for REDD+ policymakers. Lexeme Consulting.
129. Marfo, E. (2010). Chainsaw milling in Ghana: Context, drivers and impacts. Tropenbos International.
130. Minerals Commission of Ghana. (2021). Small-scale and community mining operational manual.
131. Oduro, K. A. (2016). Ghana's high forests: Trends, scenarios and pathways for future developments. Wageningen University and Research.
132. The Republic of Ghana. (1999). Forestry Commission Act, 1999 (Act 571).
133. World Bank. (2016). World development report 2016: Digital dividends.
134. World Bank. (2019). Forests and landscapes.

Issue Ownership & Party Politics

135. Lachat, R. (2014). Issue ownership and the vote: The effects of associative and competence ownership on issue voting. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 20(4), 727–740.
136. Petrocik, J. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(3), 825–850.
137. Petrocik, J., Benoit, W., & Hansen, G. (2003). Issue ownership and presidential campaigning, 1952–2000. *Political Science Quarterly*, 118(4), 599–626.

News Articles & Grey Literature (Galamsey & Politics)

Note: These are not academic journal articles but news reports and organizational publications.

138. Abofra, S. (2024, September 13). The health cost of galamsey in Ghana. *Modern Ghana*.
139. Ankrah, E. (2025, March 26). NDC members are visibly emboldened to engage in galamsey – Ahiagbah claims. *MyJoyOnline*.
140. Centre for Democratic Development (CDD). (2024). Election 2024: The NDC and NPP proposals to address 'galamsey'. *CDD Ghana*.
141. Donkor, I. (2025, March 24). NPP will support galamsey fight, not politicize it like NDC did — Miracles Aboagye. *Modern Ghana*.
142. Gyamfi, S. (2025, April 23). NDC never supported calls for a state of emergency over galamsey. *GhanaWeb*.

143. Kpogli II, B. D. (2025, March 26). NPP accuses NDC government of fueling galamsey crisis. Modern Ghana.
144. Nartey, L. (2025, April 5). NDC, NPP illegal miners have now merged to intensify galamsey – Ken Ashigbey. 3news.com.
145. Seshie, C. (2025, March 26). Government talking more than fighting galamsey – NPP. MyJoyOnline.
146. Tuor, V. N. (2023, January 17). Illegal mining in Ghana: The negative impact on WASH, typhoid, and other infectious diseases. PATH.

Video Sources

1. WoezorTV. (2023, December 5). Minority speaks "On the 2023 budget and public debt treatment" [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\[Video-ID\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=[Video-ID])
2. National Democratic Congress [NDCGh]. (2023, October 25). NDC's moment of truth series: President Akufo-Addo's fight against galamsey has been a failure [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.ssyoutube.com/watch?v=BxwD4aQ90CQ>
3. Bawumia, M. [@MBawumia]. (2024, February 7). Bawumia's national address on his vision for Ghana [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/7yBptImLCNQ>
4. National Democratic Congress [NDCGh]. (2023, July 17). NDC press conference on illegal mining [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ludYh3bJGTM>
5. WoezorTV. (2024, June 15). WATCH LIVE | Mahama fellowships with the clergy | #Mahama4change2024 [Live stream]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\[Video-ID\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=[Video-ID])
6. 3News Ghana. (2023, September 12). Full text: Sammy Gyamfi's address on A-G's opinion on galamsey report [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17U9y2enZW/>
7. Citinewsroom. (2024, May 22). Martin Ayisi justifies issuance of new licenses to small-scale miners [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\[Video-ID\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=[Video-ID])
8. National Democratic Congress. (2024). *People's manifesto: Building the Ghana we want.*
9. New Patriotic Party. (2024). *Bold solutions for our future: NPP 2024 manifesto.*