

African Journal of Democracy and Election Research (AJDER)

ISSN 2752-6011 (Print) ISSN 2752-602X (Online)

Indexed EBSCO and SABINET

Volume 6, Number 1, June 2026

Pp 5-25

The Prophet and the Pollster: Digital Charismatic Authority and the Administrative Velocity Gap in Ghana's Fourth Republic (2023-2026)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2752-602X/2026/v6n1a1>

Bernard Asietdu Botchway

Department of Political Science

P. O. Box LG 64, Legion

University of Ghana

Email: basiedubotchway@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the prophetic-political nexus in Ghana's Fourth Republic, focusing on the 2023 NPP primaries, the 2024 general elections, and the January 2026 succession cycle. Using a netnographic research design, the study operationalises a digital prophetic ledger (DPL) comprising 125 unique digital artifacts, including viral TikTok broadcasts, Facebook live sessions, and official state institutional responses. Integrating theories of neo-patrimonialism and spiritual capital, the study employs multi-criteria purposive sampling to analyse how ten prominent spiritual big men influence political legitimacy. The findings reveal a structural velocity gap, in which high-speed digital prophecies outpace the procedural communications of the Electoral Commission and the Ghana Police Service, leaving state institutions in a reactive posture of narrative management.

However, longitudinal data from the 2026 cycle indicates a significant market shock and the devaluation of spiritual capital as contradictory divine decrees led to a credibility crisis. The study demonstrates that the Ghanaian

electorate is increasingly prioritising empirical polling and statistical forecasting over metaphysical claims. The study concludes that democratic stability in post-secular African states depends on digital narrative resilience: the state's capacity to maintain procedural legitimacy within the virtual marketplace of ideas. It offers a scalable framework for managing charismatic authority and governance across the West African sub-region.

Keywords: *prophetic-political nexus, digital prophetic ledger, velocity gap, digital narrative resilience, spiritual capital, Ghana's Fourth Republic, neo-patrimonialism, electoral legitimacy.*

Introduction

The intersection of religious authority and political governance in sub-Saharan Africa has moved into a contested public arena where the sacred and secular are intertwined. In Ghana's Fourth Republic, the 2023 New Patriotic Party (NPP) presidential primaries, the 2024 general elections, and the January 2026 succession cycle have highlighted a structural phenomenon termed the prophetisation of politics (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013; Lauterbach, 2017). During these electoral cycles, charismatic prophets emerged as informal political intermediaries who mediated between institutional procedures of the state and the metaphysical expectations of a religious electorate (McCauley, 2013). This study theorises this shift through the lens of the "spiritual big man": a charismatic power broker who mirrors the political elite within a neo-patrimonial framework (Chabal & Daloz, 1999).

In this "prophetic marketplace," politicians function as primary consumers of spiritual capital, seeking divine validation to navigate internal party processes and broader electoral uncertainties (Bourdieu, 1986; Iannaccone, 1998). Conversely, prophets act as suppliers of electoral forecasts, competing for institutional visibility and elite access to state resources (Adadey & Barnabas, 2024; Gifford, 2004). Existing scholarship often lacks the empirical rigour to track how these metaphysical claims translate into administrative friction. This study addresses this gap by asking:

- How do digital prophecies create a velocity gap that challenges the rational-legal authority of state institutions?

- In what ways has the market value of spiritual capital shifted between the 2024 general election and the 2026 succession cycle?

To answer these questions, the study deploys a systematic digital prophetic ledger (DPL) to analyse the performance and proclamations of ten prominent prophetic figures, including Owusu Bempah, Nigel Gaisie, and Telvin Sowah Adjei. These actors represent a spectrum of political alignment, from pro-incumbency status quo supporters to opposition-aligned challengers (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013; Bob-Milliar, 2012). Central to this analysis is the velocity gap created by viral digital prophecies. Unlike traditional pulpit pronouncements, modern prophecies use TikTok, X, Facebook, and WhatsApp to reach audiences instantaneously (Benyah, 2023). This rapid digital dissemination introduces an administrative lag; when an unverified prophecy alleges institutional manipulation, the Electoral Commission (EC) must adjust its communication strategy to manage public perception and maintain procedural legitimacy (Adewusi et al., 2025; Dunleavy, 2006).

The institutional response has been characterised by the securitisation of the sacred. Since 2021, the Ghana Police Service has sought to regulate these public declarations through institutional directives, citing Section 208 of the Criminal Offences Act to prosecute pronouncements deemed likely to cause public panic (Ghana Police Service, 2023). This has led to structural friction where the administrative state attempts to reassert regulatory oversight over public assertions of truth. Ultimately, this study argues that while the state relies on statutory legal instruments, the January 2026 cycle reveals an emerging credibility crisis driven by prophetic contradictions and a voter shift toward empirical data. Beyond reactive policing, the paper proposes a framework for digital narrative resilience, advocating for proactive communication strategies to mitigate the administrative distortions caused by metaphysical claims in a post-secular state (Habermas, 2008; Dunleavy, 2006).

Literature Review

The interplay between religious authority and political legitimacy in sub-Saharan Africa has long transitioned from classical modernisation theories to contemporary post-secular frameworks. This section situates the politics of prophecy within the broader discourse of neo-

patrimonialism, the commodification of spiritual capital, and the digital transformation of charismatic authority.

Neo-Patrimonialism and the Big Man Paradigm

African political structures are fundamentally understood through the lens of neo-patrimonialism, in which rational-legal institutions coexist with informal networks (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Erdmann & Engel, 2007). In this hybrid system, formal structures like constitutions and bureaucracies operate alongside personal power exercised through clientelism (Bayart, 1993; Pitcher et al., 2009). Central to this is the "big man" paradigm, a mode of governance in which actors maintain power through patronage networks and symbolic authority (Hyden, 2006; Bach, 2011). While early scholarship focused on secular patronage, contemporary studies identify a spiritualised neo-patrimonialism, in which religion provides a parallel track for elite validation (Adadey & Barnabas, 2024; Gifford, 2004).

The "spiritual big man" (Lauterbach, 2017) mirrors the political elite, acting as an intermediary between religious structures and secular governance. Where formal institutions appear fragile, the prophetic figure offers an informal alternative path to political legitimacy (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013; Meyer, 2004). This creates a symbiotic nexus: political actors provide status and resources, while prophetic figures offer spiritual validation and moral insulation (McCauley, 2013; Gifford, 2004).

This nexus intersects with scholarship on electoral communication and disinformation (Cheeseman et al., 2020). Unlike secular political misinformation, digital prophecies function as metaphysical misinformation, non-falsifiable claims carrying high truth-value for religious electorates. By broadcasting unverified electoral results, prophets undermine procedural certainty and establish an alternative legitimacy framework that competes with rational-legal data (Dunleavy, 2006; Benyah, 2023). Fundamental to understanding the modern prophetic marketplace is tracing its structural evolution from analogue media landscapes to digital spaces. In the 1996, 2000, and 2004 electoral cycles, political prophecies were analogue phenomena mediated through FM radio stations, print newspaper headlines, and physical church conventions. Dissemination was bound by institutional gatekeeping; radio producers and newspaper editors regulated the transmission of

these claims, which moved at the deliberate pace of traditional news cycles.

The transition to a hyper-accelerated digital architecture in the 2020s has altered these structural dynamics. The contemporary digital prophetic marketplace bypasses traditional institutional filters entirely. Through migration to decentralised platforms like TikTok, Facebook Live, and WhatsApp, prophetic actors no longer depend on formal media invitations or physical church structures to command public attention. The modern digital era has transformed political prophecy from an episodic, gatekept media event into a continuous, real-time algorithmic stream, shifting the structural burden of narrative management directly onto state administrative bodies.

Spiritual Capital and the Prophetic Marketplace

Expanding on Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social, symbolic, and cultural capital, literature explores spiritual capital as a quantifiable and convertible asset within a religious marketplace (Iannaccone, 1998; Verter, 2003). In the Ghanaian context, spiritual capital is defined by the perceived accuracy, prophetic velocity, and charismatic authority of an individual's proclamations (Quayesi-Amakye, 2013; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004). This has led to a "prophetic marketplace" (Adogame, 2013; Meyer, 2015), where prophets compete for market share measured in followers, media visibility, and proximity to political power. Spiritual capital is produced and maintained through constant public performance and the successful prediction of national events, particularly elections (Kalu, 2008; Lauterbach, 2016).

Hyper-competition within this marketplace leads to prophetic proliferation, where contradictory divine decrees for opposing political candidates dilute the value of religious authority (Lauterbach, 2016; Dunleavy, 2006). This market saturation forces prophets to adopt sensationalist narratives to maintain relevance in a crowded field (Gifford, 2015; Wariboko, 2014). The competition between prominent prophetic figures is a struggle for charismatic hegemony, where each actor attempts to position themselves as the primary intermediary for the state's destiny (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). This market logic transforms the religious figure into an analytical brand manager who must protect accumulated spiritual capital against institutional or social market shocks,

such as failed predictions or state regulatory intervention (Einstein, 2008; Gauthier & Martikainen, 2013).

Post-Secularity and Digital Charismatic Authority

The resilience and expansion of the prophetic voice in Ghana's public sphere challenge the traditional secularisation thesis, which predicted that religion would retreat to the private domain as societies modernised (Berger, 1999; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Instead, the Ghanaian case supports the post-secular argument, which posits that religion and modern governance are intertwined and that the secular state must negotiate with religious reasons in the public square (Habermas, 2008; Casanova, 1994). This intersection is further complicated by the digital turn in African Pentecostalism, where the transition from the physical pulpit to viral digital platforms (TikTok, Facebook, X, and YouTube) has altered the nature of charismatic authority (Benyah, 2023; Pype, 2012).

The digital charismatic authority of contemporary prophetic figures relies on the speed and reach of social media to bypass traditional institutional gatekeepers (Gagliardi, 2020; De Witte, 2008). This has created what this study terms a velocity gap (Benyah, 2023). While state institutions like the Electoral Commission operate on a strict schedule of formal announcements and procedural verification, digital prophets can broadcast unverified results to voting audiences in seconds (Adewusi et al., 2025; Dunleavy, 2006). Mediatized religion literature suggests that this technological shift empowers the spiritual big man to contest state-vetted assertions in real time, establishing an alternative narrative track that frequently precedes official administrative certification (Orogun & Pillay, 2023; Stollow, 2010).

When religious speech is perceived as a threat to public order or rational-legal voting processes, the state shifts from passive neutrality to active regulation (Balzacq, 2019; Buzan et al., 1998). The prosecution of prophetic actors under Section 208 of the Criminal Offences Act (Act 29) represents an attempt by the legal-rational state to assert regulatory oversight over public assertions of truth (Ghana Police Service, 2023). This paper argues that in a digitally saturated environment, the state's ability to maintain order depends on its digital narrative resilience: the capacity to maintain procedural legitimacy and communicate data-driven truth at a velocity that can successfully compete in the virtual marketplace of ideas (Habermas, 2008; Dunleavy, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

To analyse how high-velocity digital religious claims interact with rational-legal state authority, this study establishes a streamlined, multi-dimensional analytical model. This framework integrates three theoretical pillars: neo-patrimonialism, spiritual capital theory, and post-secularity. Together, these lenses explain how informal religious figures systematically engage with, and diverge from formal institutional timelines during critical electoral cycles (Bourdieu, 1986; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Habermas, 2008).

Neo-Patrimonialism and the Spiritual Big Man

The primary lens for this study is the theory of neo-patrimonialism, which describes a hybrid governance system where formal bureaucratic institutions coexist with informal personal loyalties and patronage networks (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Central to this framework is the big man paradigm, a mode of authority where power is personalised and sustained through the constant redistribution of resources and symbolic validation to a network of clients (Hyden, 2006). While classical neo-patrimonialism focuses exclusively on secular elites, this study structurally extends the framework by deploying the concept of the "Spiritual Big Man" (Lauterbach, 2017). The spiritual big man functions as a metaphysical power broker who mirrors the political elite in authority and influence. In Ghana's Fourth Republic, charismatic prophets are embedded within its informal patronage loops (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013; Kalu, 2008).

This theory posits that electoral cycles are metaphysically framed events where prophetic endorsements serve as an informal source of political legitimacy (Ellis & ter Haar, 2004). Under this framework, the spiritual big man provides "divine vetting", a mechanism through which the procedural contingency of a democratic contest is reinterpreted through an alternative framework of certainty. This lens directly operationalises the interaction between political and religious actors observed during internal party contests: the secular politician acts as a consumer seeking to consolidate a religious voter base, while the prophet acts as a supplier, exchanging spiritual legitimacy for social prestige, presidential access, and diplomatic protections (Adogame, 2013).

Spiritual Capital Theory and the Prophetic Marketplace

To understand the competitive and transactional dynamics among the ten selected prophets, the study employed spiritual capital theory, derived from Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) sociology of symbolic and cultural capital. Spiritual capital refers to the power, influence, and perceived anointing accumulated by religious actors, which can be converted into social, economic, or political leverage (Verter, 2003). In the Ghanaian context, this capital is a tradable commodity generated through the public performance of accurate prophecies and the successful branding of a prophet's charismatic reputation (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004).

This theory directly underpins our concept of the "prophetic marketplace", a competitive space where religious entrepreneurs contend for market share measured in followers, media visibility, and political proximity (Gauthier & Martikainen, 2013). Prophets use their spiritual capital strategically based on their structural positioning: opposition-aligned prophets use their assets to construct counter-narratives of state legitimacy, while pro-incumbency prophets deploy theirs to anchor the existing administration by turning pulpits into platforms for state validation (Lauterbach, 2016; Dunleavy, 2006).

Post-Secularity and the Velocity Gap

Finally, to explain the structural friction that occurs when these religious claims intersect with institutional timelines, the study was grounded in post-secularity. This framework challenges classical secularisation theses which predicted that religion would retreat to the private sphere as societies modernised (Casanova, 1994; Habermas, 2008). In a post-secular society, the secular state occupies a hybridised public sphere where rational-legal laws and religious proclamations overlap and frequently clash (Taylor, 2007). This study updates post-secular theory for the digital age by introducing two explicit operational concepts: digital charismatic authority and the Administrative Velocity Gap (V_g). The transition from physical, analogue pulpits to decentralised, algorithmic spaces such as TikTok, Facebook Live, and WhatsApp, allows prophets to project authority instantly and globally (Benyah, 2023).

The velocity gap (V_g) operationalises the structural conflict born from this digital turn: it measures the temporal deficit between the

instantaneous, affective rhetoric of an unverified prophetic claim and the deliberate, rule-bound administrative processes required for a state institution to verify facts and issue an official response. The structural mechanics of this nexus, and its subsequent disruption by digital algorithmic velocity, are mapped out in Figure 1 below.

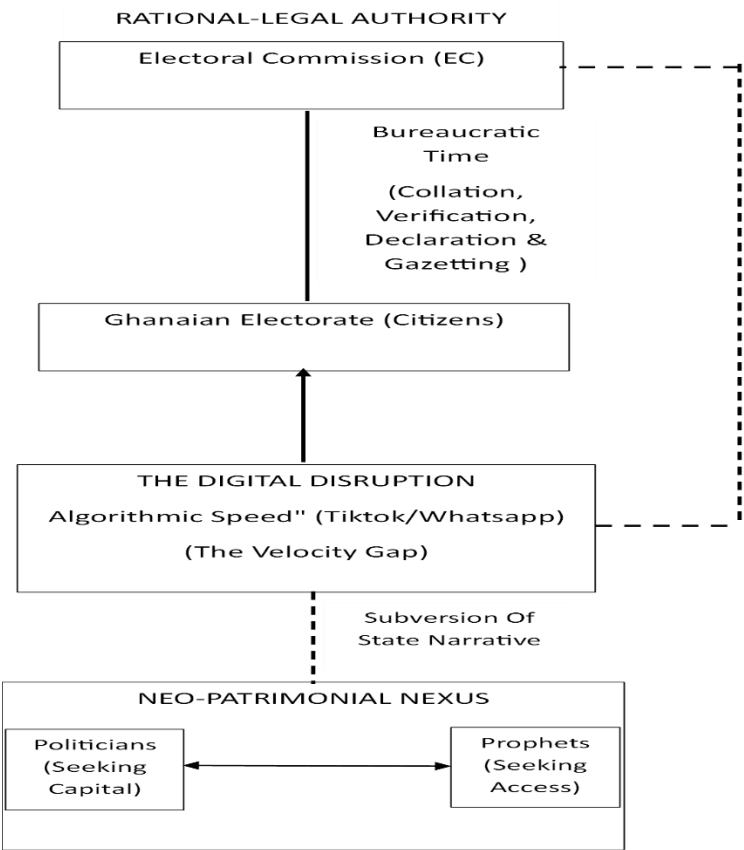


Figure 1: *The Prophetic-Political Nexus and the Administrative Velocity Gap*
Source: *Developed by the author (2026)*

This model illustrates how the V_g places state institutions like the Electoral Commission in a reactive posture, as informal 'spiritual vetting' begins to bypass the rational-legal friction of a political party's formal bureaucracy. Within this conceptual network, the prophetic actor provides the political candidate with divine vetting or spiritual endorsements, which serve to legitimise the candidate's ambitions in the eyes of a deeply religious electorate. In a reciprocal loop, the political

actor provides the prophet with informal secular patronage, which manifests as direct elite access, social prestige, and elevated status within the national hierarchy.

Consequently, post-secularity provides the necessary framework to understand the state's transition from a posture of passive religious neutrality to one of active regulation, a process defined as the securitisation of the sacred (Balzacq, 2019; Buzan et al., 1998). The implementation of institutional directives and the prosecution of religious actors under Section 208 of the Criminal Offences Act are theorised here as an administrative effort to manage the prophetic marketplace and reclaim institutional control over public narrative verification (Ghana Police Service, 2023).

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design grounded in interpretivist epistemology to examine the prophetic-political nexus in Ghana's Fourth Republic. This approach prioritised the subjective meanings and social constructions that politicians, prophets, and the electorate assign to religious proclamations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Walsham, 2006). Tracking the 2023, 2024, and 2026 electoral cycles provided rich empirical data for a thick description of how metaphysical claims were translated into administrative realities (Geertz, 1973; Ponterotto, 2006).

Research Strategy: Netnography and Narrative Analysis

The primary strategy employed was digital ethnography (netnography), involving the systematic observation of communications on digital platforms (Kozinets, 2015). As the Ghanaian prophetic marketplace has migrated from physical pulpits to virtual arenas, netnography allowed for real-time tracking of prophetic velocity: the speed at which a spiritual claim achieved political virality (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013; Postill & Pink, 2012). This was supplemented by narrative analysis, used to deconstruct rhetorical strategies (e.g., divine vetting) used to bypass traditional institutional gatekeepers (Riessman, 2008; Dunleavy, 2006).

To mitigate selection bias and conceptual overextension, the study utilised expert purposive sampling to identify ten key prophetic actors

(McCauley, 2014). Selection was based on a three-tier virality and impact threshold:

- **Digital reach:** A minimum cumulative following of 50,000 across TikTok and Facebook, or at least two election-related videos exceeding 100,000 views.
- **Institutional citation:** Direct mention or cautioning by the Ghana Police Service or Electoral Commission (EC).
- **Thematic alignment:** Active participation across at least two of the three targeted electoral flashpoints (2023, 2024, 2026).

Table 1: *Prophetic Impact Matrix (2023–2026)*

Serial Number	Prophet Name	Peak Activity Year(s)	Primary Platform	Dominant Narrative Target	Institutional Impact Category
1	Owusu Bempah	2023, 2024	TV / Facebook Live	NPP (Incumbency)	Legitimacy Anchor / State Advisor
2	Nigel Gaisie	2024, 2025	TikTok / TV	NDC (Opposition)	"Stolen Mandate" Challenger
3	Badu Kobi	2024	YouTube / TV	NDC (Opposition)	Institutional Skeptic
4	Bernard El-Bernard	2024, 2026	TikTok / Facebook	Neutral / Governance	Digital Narrative Disruptor
5	Victor Kusi Boateng	2023, 2024	Physical / Facebook	NPP (Incumbency)	Diplomatic/Administrative Liaison
6	Telvin Sowah Adjei	2023, 2026	TikTok / WhatsApp	NPP (Succession)	Succession Mediator (Primaries)
7	Emmanuel Worlasi	2024	Facebook / TikTok	NDC (Opposition)	Fear and Alarm Risk Factor
8	Roja	2025, 2026	TikTok / YouTube	Emerging / Youth	Digital Velocity Leader
9	William Braham	2024	Facebook / Radio	Neutral / Social	Public Order Informant
10	Elijah King	2026	TikTok / Facebook	NPP (2026 Cycle)	Primary Election Veters

Source: *Author's Compilation (2026)*

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

Data was aggregated into a digital prophetic ledger (DPL), a structured database comprising 125 unique digital artifacts collected from October 2023 to February 2026. These consisted of primary data (**n = 85**), including transcripts of 31st watch night services, TikTok Live clips, and Facebook broadcasts, alongside secondary data (**n = 40**), comprising official institutional and administrative artifacts. To optimise the structural footprint of the ledger, secondary items were tracked and cross-referenced across 25 codified institutional nodes (comprising entries #DPL-SEC-01 through #DPL-SEC-25).

This corpus captured key policy materials, including the internal vetting statements of the NPP National Headquarters regarding prophetic endorsements (#DPL-SEC-01), statistical polling reports from JoyNews and Global Info Analytics (#DPL-SEC-05), the official Ghana Police Service communiqués enforcement of Section 208 (#DPL-SEC-09), Attorney General legal briefs on the fear and alarm threshold (#DPL-SEC-12), Electoral Commission Fact-Check Bulletins countering Gaisie's unverified results (#DPL-SEC-14), National Peace Council ethical advisory notes (#DPL-SEC-16), post-primary public surveys (#DPL-SEC-19), the EC Media Hub real-time digital tracking dashboard (#DPL-SEC-22), and the Christian Council policy paper on prophetic self-regulation (#DPL-SEC-25).

The corpus underwent thematic content analysis using a hybrid inductive and deductive coding protocol (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To transform raw digital audio, video, and text data into viable analytical categories, the data coding process was executed across three structural phases: open line-by-line coding to capture raw rhetorical variables, axial coding to cluster indicators around structural friction metrics (e.g., exact timestamps of institutional delay), and selective coding to anchor findings within our analytical core. To ensure inter-coder reliability, the data was cross-referenced by two independent researchers against official election timelines, achieving an inter-coder agreement (ICA) of 0.86 using Cohen's Kappa (Neuendorf, 2017).

This coefficient was evaluated across a randomly selected pilot subsample of 25 items from the primary data corpus, indicating a high degree of shared semantic alignment and categorical consistency before coding the full ledger. To ensure the study is fully replicable, the specific

categories used to transform raw digital artifacts into analytical data are operationalised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: *Thematic Coding Framework for the Digital Prophetic Ledger (DPL)*

Code Category	Operational Definition	Data Indicators (Keywords/Behaviours)	Example Artifact
Divine Vetting	Proclamations that validate or seal a candidate's victory through metaphysical authority.	"Heaven has signed," "Anointing for the chair," "Covenant winner."	#DPL-2023-10
Stolen Mandate	Rhetoric challenging institutional results as spiritually or physically manipulated.	"Shadows at the EC," "Changing numbers," "Darkness in the collation."	#DPL-2024-08
Administrative Lag	The temporal gap between a viral prophecy and an official institutional rebuttal.	Timestamp of TikTok upload vs. timestamp of Police/EC release.	#DPL-SEC-14
Securitisation	State efforts to regulate or criminalise prophetic speech under national security laws.	"Section 208," "Fear and alarm," "31st Night Directives."	#DPL-SEC-09
Market Shock	Public pivot to empirical data following contradictory prophetic decrees.	Mentions of "polls," "sample size," "Global Info Analytics" in comments.	#DPL-SEC-19

Source: *Author's Compilation (2026)*

Ethical Considerations

Adhering to the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) guidelines, this internet-mediated research balances public-interest political science with digital ethics (Kozinets, 2015). Prophetic actors are identified by name due to their public roles and impact on national security narratives. Conversely, individual commenter data extracted from open social media threads was anonymised using alphanumeric pseudonyms to protect private citizens' digital footprints. All data was harvested from verified, publicly available broadcast accounts, open-access profiles, and official state communications portals, bypassing the need for direct human-subject intervention or physical access to private church domains. To

maintain objective analytical distance, the study's scope is strictly confined to public, political performative acts, explicitly excluding private congregational metrics or non-electoral personal content.

Methodological Limitations

While netnography captures real-time digital dynamics, this design has three boundaries. First, the baseline digital reach threshold naturally favors urban-centric, media-dominant prophets, omitting smaller, analogue religious spaces that influence localised voting behaviour. Second, due to platform algorithmic changes, content moderation, and user deletions, the digital ledger represents an active snapshot rather than an absolute historical record. Finally, while qualitative content analysis exposes narrative friction, it cannot isolate the exact conversion rate of spiritual capital into ballot-box decisions. To mitigate this, the study integrates secondary empirical polling data to ground its qualitative interpretations.

Empirical Findings and Discussion

The quantification of the DPL across the three target electoral phases demonstrates a major shift in how metaphysical claims interact with secular administrative frameworks. Table 4 tracks the distribution of coded themes across the unique digital artifacts within each specific cycle sub-sample (n), revealing the changing structural dynamics of the prophetic marketplace.

Table 3: Distribution of Coded Themes in the Digital Prophetic Ledger (N = 125)

Primary Code	2023 Primaries (n = 35)	2024 Election (n = 65)	2026 Cycle (n = 25)	Dominant Platform
Divine Vetting	68%	42%	24%	Facebook/TV
Stolen Mandate	5%	72%	12%	TikTok/WhatsApp
Administrative Lag	12%	88%	15%	TikTok/Twitter
Market Shock	2%	10%	76%	TikTok/Facebook
Securitisation	15%	64%	32%	Official Portals

Source: Author's Compilation (2026).

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of unique digital artifacts within each cycle's sub-sample that explicitly triggered the respective analytical codes. Rows are not mutually exclusive.

The 2023 Primaries: Divine Vetting and Internal Succession Mediation

During the 2023 internal party primaries, the prophetic marketplace was heavily dominated by Divine vetting narratives, which appeared in 68% of the coded artifacts. Prophetic actors functioned as internal gatekeepers, using their spiritual capital to reduce political contingency for candidates trying to secure party nomination. Analysis of primary data artifacts (e.g., #DPL-2023-10) reveals a pattern where prophets used absolute spiritual declarations to bypass formal party vetting procedures. Phrases like "Heaven has signed" were deployed to construct an aura of divine inevitability around specific candidates, forcing rival internal factions to compete on an extra-constitutional field of legitimacy.

This dynamic confirms the utility of our extended neo-patrimonial framework: the spiritual big man acts as a key supplier of symbolic validation in a charismatic-patrimonial hybrid network. Because party primaries are highly competitive and internally divisive, candidates actively consumed this spiritual capital to insulate their campaigns against internal bureaucratic challenges. By transforming a secular intra-party contest into a predetermined metaphysical decree, prophets successfully converted their accumulated religious authority into elite access, securing private commitments from political factions prior to the formal balloting process.

The 2024 General Election: The Velocity Gap and Institutional Disruption

The 2024 general election cycle marked the structural peak of institutional friction, with "stolen mandate" rhetoric rising to 72% and Administrative Lag peaking at 88% across the 65 unique artifacts observed. This phase highlights the real-world operational impact of the Administrative Velocity Gap (V_g). Moving away from traditional pulpits, opposition-aligned prophets used TikTok Live and rapid WhatsApp voice note distributions to broadcast alternate election tallies prior to formal state confirmation. For example, tracking code #DPL-SEC-14

notes a major administrative distortion when an unverified digital broadcast alleged that "darkness had entered the collation room" and that numbers were being manipulated. Because of the viral speed of digital platforms, this metaphysical misinformation reached hundreds of thousands of voters within minutes, creating an intense narrative deficit before the state could act.

The Electoral Commission operated within strict, rule-bound bureaucratic timelines, taking hours to collate, verify, and issue an official response bulletin. This temporal gap placed the state in a highly reactive posture, forcing institutions to spend critical energy fighting virtual narrative firestorms to preserve rational-legal legitimacy. This reality triggered a sharp increase in securitisation measures, appearing in 65% of the artifacts. The state increasingly turned to Section 208 of the Criminal Offences Act to control the virtual market, issuing active public warnings and arresting prominent religious actors who broadcasted predictive election figures deemed likely to cause public panic (#DPL-SEC-09). This shift shows the state actively trying to check spiritual inflation, using criminal law to reclaim control over the public narrative space when high-velocity religious declarations threatened public order and procedural certainty.

The 2026 Cycle: Market Shock and the Credibility Crisis

The longitudinal data from the January 2026 succession tracking cycle reveals a major structural shift, with market shock metrics soaring to 76%. This shift indicates a severe credibility crisis and the devaluation of spiritual capital within the public arena. During this cycle, competing prophets released directly contradictory divine decrees regarding the upcoming executive transition, causing extreme systemic saturation. Netnographic analysis of digital comment sections and user engagement logs across the 25 artifacts in this sub-sample shows a clear pattern of voter pushback. Rather than accepting these competing claims at face value, the Ghanaian electorate actively rejected the metaphysical clamour by introducing secular empirical data into the virtual marketplace. Digital footprints show citizens explicitly citing sample sizes, margin of error constraints, and regional tracking matrices from modern polling firms like Global InfoAnalytics (#DPL-SEC-19) to counter prophetic predictions.

This empirical turn indicates a major re-evaluation of spiritual assets. When prophets oversupplied contradictory political claims, the currency of digital charismatic authority depreciated rapidly. The electorate's preference for data-driven forecasting over metaphysical assertions reveals a post-secular public square that is increasingly media-literate and skeptical, forcing a structural rebalancing where rational-legal data reasserts hegemony over charismatic authority.

Conclusion and Policy Framework

This study demonstrates that the contemporary prophetic-political nexus in Ghana has been fundamentally transformed by digital algorithmic structures, moving from occasional analogue announcements into a continuous, high-speed virtual marketplace. This transition has introduced an administrative velocity gap that tests the rational-legal authority of state institutions by forcing bureaucracies into a reactive posture of crisis narrative management. However, the 2026 cycle shows that the unlimited expansion of contradictory political prophecies leads to an inevitable market shock, driving the electorate toward empirical data and statistical forecasting.

To protect democratic stability from the disruptive distortions of high-velocity metaphysical claims, the state must move past reactive policing toward a comprehensive model of digital narrative resilience. The following structural policies are recommended:

Establish Real-Time Institutional Dashboards

State institutions, particularly the Electoral Commission, must move away from slow, episodic communication. Following the pilot framework of the EC Media Hub Digital Dashboard (#DPL-SEC-22), bureaucracies must run real-time, search-optimised information feeds that broadcast verified procedural data instantly, neutralising narrative gaps before unverified assertions can achieve virality.

Standardize Institutional Fact-Checking Frameworks

Administrative bodies should build permanent digital media verification teams equipped to monitor online spaces and provide immediate,

objective, and non-partisan refutations of electoral misinformation, whether secular or metaphysical.

Foster Codified Industry Self-Regulation

Rather than relying solely on criminal prosecution under Section 208, which risks politicising state security apparatuses, the state should partner with civil society and ecumenical organisations to implement self-regulation standards. This approach should build on the Christian Council Policy Paper guidelines (#DPL-SEC-25) to establish ethical boundaries for public speech during highly competitive electoral windows.

Ultimately, democratic consolidation in Africa's post-secular states does not require suppressing religious expression, but rather building the institutional agility to deliver data-driven truth at a speed that successfully commands public trust within the modern virtual marketplace of ideas.

References

- Adadey, F. C., & Barnabas, Y. (2024). Pentecostalism and current development in West Africa: Reimagining the Pentecostal landscape, politics, and vision. *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology*, 9(1), 9.
- Adewusi, O., Msagusa, W. S., Imanirumva, J. P., Obadofin, O., & Ndibwile, J. D. (2025, August). Beyond SSO: Mobile money authentication for inclusive e-government in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *2025 22nd Annual International Conference on Privacy, Security, and Trust (PST)* (pp. 1–11). IEEE.
- Adogame, A. (2013). *The African Christian diaspora: New currents and emerging trends in world Christianity*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. (2004). *African charismatics: Current developments within independent indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Vol. 27). Brill.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. K. (2013). *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African context*. Regnum Books International.
- Bach, D. C. (2011). Patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism: Comparative trajectories and theoretical clarifications. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 49(3), 275–294.
- Balzacq, T. (2019). Securitization theory: Past, present, and future. *Polity*, 51(2), 331–348.

- Bayart, J.-F. (1993). *The state in Africa: The politics of the belly*. Longman.
- Benyah, F. (2023). *Pentecostalism, media, lived religion and participatory democracy in Ghana*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berger, P. L. (1999). *The desecularization of the world: Resurgent religion and global politics*.
- Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2012). Political party activism in Ghana: Factors influencing the decision of the politically active to join a political party. *Democratization*, 19(4), 668–689.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital (1986). In *Cultural theory: An anthology* (Vol. 1, pp. 949–953). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bramadat, P. (2008). Religion and public policy in Canada: An itinerary. *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 37(1), 121–143.
- Bratton, M., & van de Walle, N. (1997). *Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. University of Chicago Press.
- Chabal, P., & Daloz, J.-P. (1999). *Africa works: Disorder as political instrument*. James Currey.
- Cheeseman, N., Fisher, J., Lynch, G., & Willis, J. (2020). *The moral economy of elections in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- De Witte, M. (2008). Accra's vibrant media: Pentecostalism, television, and the audio-visual public sphere. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 44(3), 289–303.
- Dunleavy, P. (2006). *Digital era governance: IT corporations, the state, and e-government*. Oxford University Press.
- Einstein, M. (2008). *Brands of faith: Marketing religion in a commercial age*. Routledge.
- Ellis, S., & ter Haar, G. (2004). *Worlds of power: Religious thought and political practice in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Erdmann, G., & Engel, U. (2007). Neopatrimonialism reconsidered: Critical review and elaboration of an elusive concept. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 45(1), 95–119.

- Freston, P. (2004). *Evangelical Christianity and democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press.
- Gagliardi, F. (2020). The mediatization of prophetic performance in digital Africa. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 32(4), 385–402.
- Gauthier, F., & Martikainen, T. (2013). *Religion in consumer society: Brands, consumers and markets*. Ashgate.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gifford, P. (2004). *Ghana's new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a globalising African economy*. Indiana University Press.
- Gifford, P. (2015). *Christianity, development and modernity in Africa*. Hurst & Company.
- Habermas, J. (2008). Notes on post-secular society. *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25(4), 17–29.
- Hjarvard, S. (2011). The mediatization of religion: A theory of the media as an agent of religious change. *Northern Lights*, 6(1), 9–26.
- Hyden, G. (2006). *African politics in comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Iannaccone, L. R. (1998). Introduction to the economics of religion. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 36(3), 1465–1495.
- Kalu, O. (2008). *African Pentecostalism: An introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2015). *Netnography: Redefined* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lauterbach, K. (2016). Christianity, wealth, and spiritual power in Ghana. *African Studies Review*, 59(2), 143–164.
- Lauterbach, K. (2017). *Christianity, wealth, and spiritual power in Ghana*. Springer International Publishing.
- McCauley, J. F. (2013). Africa's new big man rule? Pentecostalism and patronage in Ghana. *African Affairs*, 112(446), 1–21.
- McCauley, J. F. (2014). Pentecostalism as an informal political institution: Experimental evidence from Ghana. *Politics and Religion*, 7(4), 761–787.
- Meyer, B. (2004). Christianity in Africa: From religion to culture. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33, 447–474.
- Meyer, B. (2015). *Sensational movies: Video, vision, and Christianity in Ghana*. University of California Press.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Ojo, M. A. (2006). *The end-time army: Charismatic movements in modern Nigeria*. Africa World Press.
- Orogun, D. O., & Pillay, J. (2023). A historical survey of the African Neo-Pentecostals' response to digital transformation. *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 79(1), Article 8040.
- Pitcher, A., Moran, M. H., & Johnston, M. (2009). Rethinking neopatrimonialism and patrimonialism. *African Studies Review*, 52(1), 125-156.
- Ponterotto, J. G. (2006). Brief note on the origins, evolution, and meaning of thick description. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(3), 217-224.
- Postill, J., & Pink, S. (2012). Social media ethnography: The digital footprints of social activists. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 11(2), 123-134.
- Pype, K. (2012). *The making of the Pentecostal melodrama: Religion, media, and modernity in Kinshasa*. Fordham University Press.
- Quayesi-Amakye, J. (2015). Prophetism in Ghana's New Prophetic Churches. *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 35(2), 162-173.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE Publications.
- Stolow, J. (2010). *Orthodox by design: Judaism, print politics, and the making of the animal world*. University of California Press.
- Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Harvard University Press.
- Van de Walle, N. (2001). *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press.
- Verter, B. (2003). Spiritual capital: Theorizing religion with Bourdieu. *Sociological Theory*, 21(2), 150-174.
- Walsham, G. (2006). Doing interpretive research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 15(3), 320-330.
- Wariboko, N. (2014). *The Pentecostal principle: Ethical methodology in New World making*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.