



BUILDING BORDER COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE ROLE OF THE GHANA BOUNDARY COMMISSION

Major General Emmanuel Kotia, PhD & David Kwabena Bonsoh

Executive Summary

Ghana remains vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorism due to its proximity to countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, which have seen the rise of ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliates. This risk is particularly pronounced in border communities where issues like weak governance, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities persist. Historical boundary disputes and insufficient border security further exacerbate these vulnerabilities. This paper examines the Ghana Boundary Commission's (GhBC) initiatives aimed at strengthening the resilience of border communities against the threat of violent extremism. The Commission has undertaken several initiatives, including conducting border community needs assessments, promoting education and sensitisation programmes, furthering cross-border cooperation, and facilitating infrastructural development. These efforts have significantly reduced tensions, enhancing overall community stability. However, the Commission continues to face challenges such as land ownership disputes within border communities, mistrust between local residents and government entities, logistical difficulties, and the presence of rugged terrains. This paper recommends the construction of additional roads to connect inaccessible border communities, the formulation and implementation of a regional policy on land ownership across international boundaries, and the promotion of sustained engagements to build trust between local government structures and border residents. Additionally, the paper calls on national and international bodies to share documented historical information on Ghana's international boundaries with the Commission to enhance boundary management.

Introduction

West Africa faces numerous challenges related to peace, security, governance, and development, including money laundering, corruption, the youth bulge and unemployment, poverty, and the trafficking of small arms and drugs.^{1,2} These issues further contribute to insecurity, particularly in border communities.³ In Niger and along the borders of Burkina Faso, militant Islamist groups have repeatedly launched attacks.⁴ Efforts to quell violent extremism have placed security officials in a precarious position, often leading to human rights violations and extrajudicial killings due to the difficulty in distinguishing between perpetrators and innocent civilians.⁵ These actions, in turn, have inadvertently allowed extremist groups to infiltrate local communities and garner support.⁶

Ghana's vulnerability to violent extremism and terrorism is exacerbated by its proximity to countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger which are home to ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliates.⁷ Factors such as unresolved local conflicts, deprived border communities, poverty, unemployment, and porous borders further contribute to this risk.^{8,9} A 2023 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assessment on Vulnerability to Violent Extremism in Northern Ghana reveals widespread mistrust and dissatisfaction with the state's capacity to provide protection and essential public services.¹⁰ To prevent border residents from being drawn to extremist ideologies, community resilience is identified as a sustainable solution. Building community resilience fosters trust, promotes inclusivity and strengthens social bonds.^{11,12}

Although Ghana has not been the target of violent extremist attacks, the country's 2,209km¹³ international boundary is susceptible to extremist group infiltration, underscoring the need for community resilience. Hence, the GhBC remains

pivotal in building border-community resilience against violent extremism, leveraging its strategic capabilities and mandate. Established by Act 795 of the Parliament of Ghana, the Commission is mandated to determine, demarcate, and delimit Ghana's international boundaries within the remit of international law, peace, and security.¹⁴ This offers the Commission a unique advantage to contribute to resolving border-related security issues, including violent extremism, which often exploits porous and poorly managed borders.

The responsibilities, as outlined in the founding Act of the Commission, include negotiations with neighbouring countries to establish land or maritime boundaries with Ghana. Violent extremists often exploit tensions over international boundaries, making the Commission's role in resolving such disputes critical for mitigating risks. In line with its mandate, the Commission facilitates peaceful resolution of boundary disagreements, as seen in July 2021 when the Commission led negotiations between Pusiga in Ghana, and Cinkassé in Togo.¹⁵ The Act further enjoins the Commission to carry out physical demarcation and surveys of land boundaries and the delineation of maritime boundaries. Across Africa, international boundaries are frequently sources of disputes, conflicts, and exploitation by armed or criminal factions due to their unclear definitions.^{16,17} In response to these challenges, the African Union (AU) established the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) to assist member states in demarcating and delineating their boundaries. As part of the initiative, the GhBC collaborates with neighbouring nations

to reaffirm mutual borders, revisiting historical boundary lines set by colonial authorities.¹⁸ These joint efforts not only clarify international borders but also serve as platforms to educate border communities, local administrations, border security forces, and other stakeholders about the significance of boundaries and the need to protect them.

The role of the Commission on boundary management is to establish well-defined and secure borders, thereby reducing the risk of cross-border community conflicts, particularly over shared natural resources, which have been exploited by extremist groups in Burkina Faso¹⁹ and Mali.²⁰ Furthermore, the Commission's efforts to promote cross-border activities among neighbouring communities enhance resilience against violent extremism. Cross-border cooperation is crucial for facilitating the sharing of intelligence and coordinating efforts to address the transnational nature of violent extremism, ensuring a unified response to this growing threat.

Moreover, the role of GhBC extends to border community engagement and education. By involving border communities in boundary management and security initiatives, the Commission empowers the locals, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their security. This is in line with the '*See something, say something*' campaign²¹ launched by the National Security Ministry to encourage the public to report any suspicious activity to security agencies. This initiative underscores the essence of vigilance and active participation of border communities

in preventing violent extremist activities.²² By partnering with local communities, neighbouring countries, and stakeholders, the Commission enhances resilience. These grassroots involvement and collaborations build trust, helping to identify and counter radicalisation efforts, as community members are often the first to notice signs of extremist influence. Building community trust is the bedrock of social cohesion,²³ a vital shield against extremist ideologies that prey on discord and disunity.

Against this backdrop, the paper explores the feasibility of community resilience-building as a sustained response to the threat of violent extremism in Ghana. The discussion focuses on strategies to enhance the resilience of border communities, provides a situational analysis of violent extremism in Ghana, examines the pivotal role of the Ghana Boundary Commission, and addresses the challenges the Commission is confronted with in fostering border community resilience. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at advancing Ghana's approach to resilience-building in this critical area.

Analysis of Border Community Resilience Mechanisms Against Violent Extremism

The role of community resilience mechanisms in preventing violent extremism cannot be underestimated. In most instances, a community's capacity to withstand the encroachments of violent extremism hinges on its ability to

counter ideological factions that seek dominance over individuals and authoritative structures. Importantly, preventing the appeal and influence of violent-extremist ideologies is linked to a community's aptitude for identifying and redressing the legitimate concerns and grievances of its populace in the face of inadequate, ineffective, discriminatory, or exploitative governance.²⁴ However, it is imperative to acknowledge a community's resilience wanes when it becomes more susceptible to violent extremist activities.

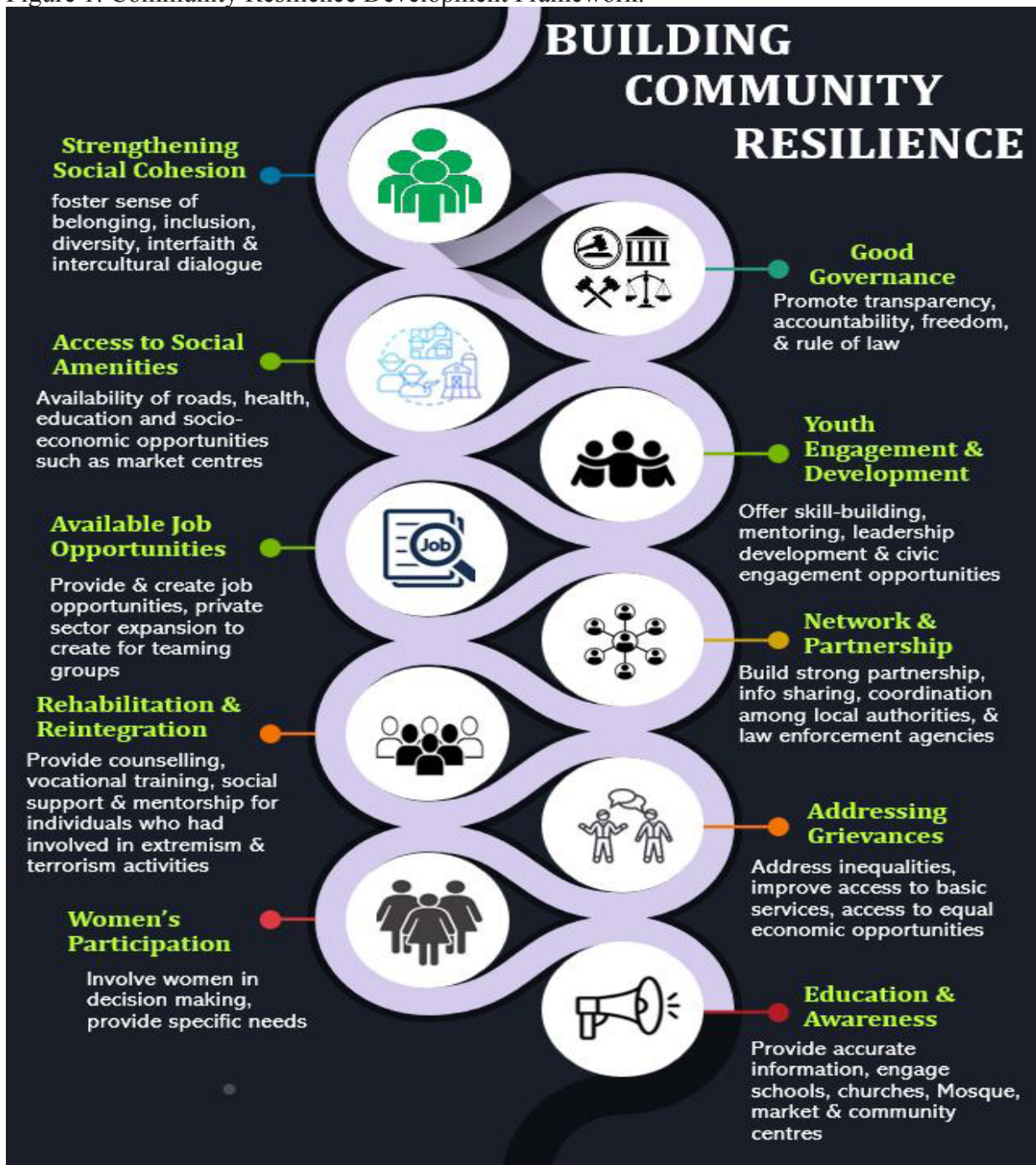
To fortify community resilience, it is crucial that such fortitude exhibits both robustness and flexibility, displaying a capacity for adaptation and evolution. Nevertheless, the adaptability of a community must remain dynamic, responding adeptly to emerging threats and variations in vulnerability levels.²⁵ Given the inherent diversity among communities, a uniform and one-size-fits-all solution would be ineffective, therefore, traditional and other local leaders in border communities must establish a well-defined resilience framework (refer to Figure 1) to counter extremist activities. This framework encompasses the reinforcement of social cohesion, the promotion of sound governance practices, the provision of access to essential social amenities, and active engagement. Equally, youth development, job creation, women participation, and education and awareness are some sustainable mechanisms of building community resilience (see Figure 1).

It is evident (a reference to Figure 1) that fortifying social connections within communities mitigates extremism. The promotion of constructive dialogue among cultures and groups, including youth and women associations; the cultivation

of trust and empathy among community constituents; the advocacy for inclusivity and the celebration of diversity, along with the promotion of a sense of belonging, can efficaciously address the sentiments of marginalisation that stoke radicalisation. Good governance²⁶ (with the implementation of robust and accountable systems), characterised by transparency, accountability, and adherence to the rule of law, remains pivotal to preventing political skirmishes that induce violent extremism. Extremist factions often target younger populations in deprived border communities, underscoring the need to empower such populations through such pre-emptive measures as community engagements, radio programmes, social media, and viable employment opportunities. Moreover, vulnerable groupings such as youth and women groups should be involved in the local governance of border communities.

Besides youth engagement initiatives²⁷, which encompass social cohesion and skill-building, mentorship opportunities, leadership development programmes, and avenues for active civic participation are sustainable mechanisms to prevent extremist infiltration. A social cohesion programme, exemplified by the United Nations World Food Programme's (WFP) *Sahel Social Cohesion* initiative launched in 2018 in local communities in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, is reported to have supported about 2,800 communities, contributing to peace and security.²⁸

Figure 1: Community Resilience Development Framework.



Source: Author's Feld Research, 2024.

These concerted efforts not only empower the youth and other vulnerable groups but also attenuate their susceptibility to extremist propaganda. Promoting education and raising awareness about violent extremism can enable communities to recognise and reject extremist ideologies.²⁹

This can be achieved through information dissemination, workshops, and active engagement with civic educational agencies such as Ghana's National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE).³⁰ As illustrated in Figure 1, addressing the underlying social, economic, and political grievances is key to preventing community radicalisation. A multifaceted approach is required, one that focuses on resolving disparities and ensuring that border community populations have access to equitable economic opportunities. By addressing the sources of frustration, resentment, and grievances that are prevalent in marginalised border communities, the conditions that extremist elements often exploit can be effectively mitigated. Extremist organisations exploit local grievances to establish a foothold in localised conflicts.³¹

The establishment of robust border community networks and partnerships among community organisations, local authorities, law enforcement agencies, and relevant stakeholders prevents the spread of violent extremism in border communities. Similarly, the development of comprehensive programmes, encompassing counselling, skill training, social support mechanisms, and mentorship, tailored to individuals engaged in extremist activities, can facilitate their disengagement and facilitate their successful reintegration into society.³² In conjunction with these initiatives, the implementation of efficient community policing strategies remains pivotal in preventing violent extremism. These strategies are predicated on the principles of trust-building, transparency, and active community engagements. Hence, it is expedient to embrace pragmatic

approaches and engage in substantive dialogues to formulate strategies that fortify security at the local, national, and international levels.³³

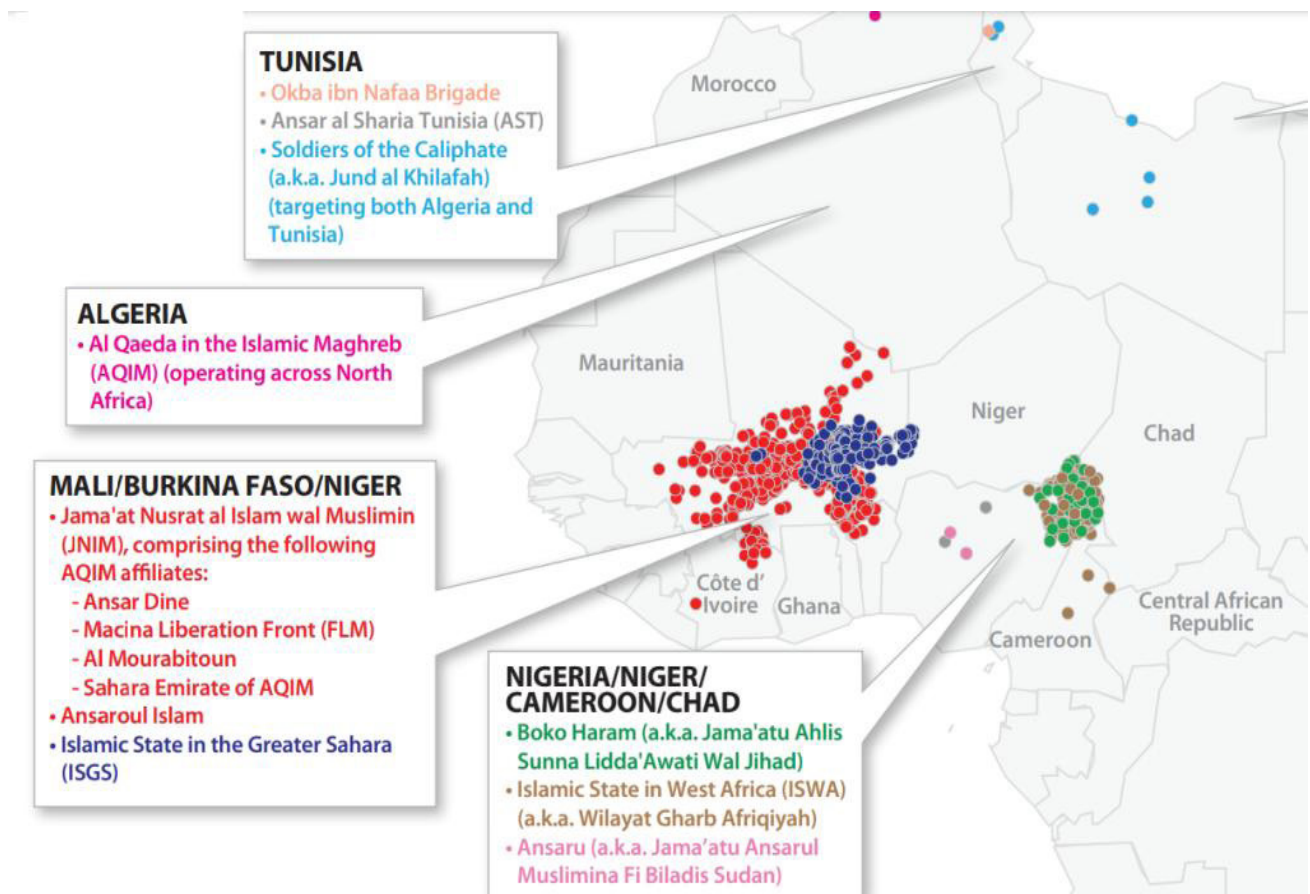
The role of women in building community resilience against violent extremism remains indispensable.³⁴ A community that upholds such values as tolerance and gender inclusivity inherently fortifies itself, becoming more robust and less susceptible to the influence of violent extremism. Women engagement, whether in official capacities or informal roles, solidifies the bedrock of communities. Women possess influential voices in the realm of prevention within their households, educational institutions, and broader communities. As mothers, caregivers, partners, and educators, their contributions are pivotal in nurturing social cohesion, cultivating a sense of belonging, and resisting the allure of violent extremist groups,³⁵ as such, their role in the battle against violent extremism should not be underestimated. Women bring to the table unique perspectives, skills, and experiences that contribute to the development of resilient communities, thereby preventing violent extremism.³⁶

Contextual Analysis of Violent Extremism in Ghana

West Africa has experienced a surge in extremist activities, with violence spilling into coastal nations, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo.³⁷ Such groups as Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansarul Islam, and Ansar Dine³⁸ pose potential threats to Ghana (see Figure 2). These groups have seized control of territories,

expanded their ranks, and launched devastating cross-border attacks. In 2021, 50,000 people were displaced in coastal countries,³⁹ and 1,072⁴⁰ crossed into Ghana. Despite security interventions against violent extremism by neighbouring states, the situation remains dire. For instance, civilian casualties and the frequency of attacks by extremist groups recorded a notable increase. Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, and western Niger emerged as epicentres for extremism and terrorism, with 2,737 fatalities registered in 2022.⁴¹ The geopolitical instability cross-border dynamics, and transnational nature of these threats mean that even such relatively stable countries as Ghana are not immune to violent extremism. Figure 2 below shows spatial distribution of violent extremist activities in West Africa.

Figure 2: Distribution of Militant/Extremist Groups in West Africa.⁴²



Source: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2023.

Ghana's border communities, characterised by their geographical locations (refer to Figure 2), are uniquely vulnerable to the scourge of violent extremism (VE). The vulnerability of Ghana's border regions is a product of several interlinked factors as discussed below.

- **Porous Borders and Transnational Organised Crimes**

Ghana's porous borders not only facilitate the movement of people but also the flow of illicit goods.⁴³ Out of the 109 international boundaries in Africa, only 25% have a certain level of border security and basic road infrastructure while 63% do not have border posts.⁴⁴ Ineffective border control and surveillance systems allows extremist groups to operate with relative impunity, moving arms, funds, and personnel across borders and potentially destabilising the region.^{45,46} As with other West African countries, Ghana is confronted with difficulties in protecting its borders, including the lack of detection equipment at border posts, a lack of comprehensive databases on offenders, and understaffing.⁴⁷ Violent organisations exploit these weaknesses to transport personnel, explosives, and weapons.

Extensive and porous borders of Ghana facilitate transnational organised activities such as smuggling and human trafficking,⁴⁸ which undermine the rule of law and provide a financial lifeline to extremist groups. The revenue generated from these illegal activities, in turn, funds extremist operations and recruitment, further entrenching their presence in border communities. Transnational organised crime networks, such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and illicit trade, are prevalent in ungoverned West Africa.⁴⁹

- **Marginalization and Socio-Economic Deprivation**

Economic marginalisation and social deprivation,

including poverty, high unemployment rates, and limited access to essential services, expose border communities to violent extremism.⁵⁰ The lack of sustainable livelihoods exacerbates populations' feelings of neglect and abandonment by the central government, creating a fertile environment for extremist ideologies. Socio-economic challenges render individuals, particularly the youth, susceptible to radicalisation as they seek better opportunities and livelihoods. Extremist groups exploit these conditions by offering financial incentives or promising a sense of purpose and belonging to disenfranchised individuals. The UNDP reports that "*youth unemployment is the most common driver of vulnerability to violent extremism and radicalisation in the northern regions of Ghana*"⁵¹. Another notable instance of this vulnerability is the repatriation of approximately 100 Ghanaians who were enlisted by the ISIS in Libya.⁵² The concern stems from the potential for ISIS to task the returnees to carry out assaults in Ghana should they face difficulty in entry.⁵³ Furthermore, the threat of violent extremism in border communities is exacerbated by the influx of labour migrants and individuals seeking temporary protection from neighbouring countries. The relative political stability of Ghana attracts migrants, which in turn increases security risks in border communities. Reports indicate that many migrants are engaged in artisanal gold mining, particularly in such border communities as Widnaba, Sapeliga, and Zongoiri Sapeliga in the Upper East Region.⁵⁴ These areas are not only vulnerable to terrorist activities but also pose a potential risk of becoming breeding grounds for extremism.

Aside the lack of economic opportunities, infrastructure such as roads, schools, healthcare facilities, and telecommunication in many of Ghana's border communities remains inadequate and underdeveloped.⁵⁵ This lack of development is not merely a logistical challenge but also symbolise governmental neglect. Poor infrastructure hampers effective governance and law enforcement, making it difficult to monitor and counter extremist activities. Additionally, deep-seated mistrust between local communities and governmental authorities complicates the implementation of counter-extremism measures.⁵⁶ This mistrust often stems from a historical perception of central government's indifference and neglect, leaving border communities feeling isolated and unsupported. Ghana's efforts to counter extremism are further hindered by deeply ingrained socio-economic inequalities, unresolved disputes in border regions, and governance deficiencies. These systemic challenges create conditions conducive to the spread of extremist ideologies and heighten the vulnerabilities within border communities.⁵⁷

- **Cultural, Ethnic, and Religious Tensions**

Cultural and ethnic affiliations often transcend national boundaries in West Africa, creating cross-border kinship ties. Ghana's border regions are home to diverse ethnic groups with deep-rooted cultural ties that often extend across national boundaries.⁵⁸ The arbitrary nature of colonial-era boundary demarcation means many ethnic communities are split between different

countries, complicating governance and loyalty issues. This fragmentation can be exploited by extremist groups to foment discord and recruit individuals based on ethnic or cultural grievances. Furthermore, land ownership disputes, which are prevalent in these areas, add another layer of tension and conflict, making communities more susceptible to extremist influences. While these connections can foster social cohesion, they can also facilitate the spread of extremist ideologies and recruitment across borders, as extremist and terrorist groups manipulate kinship networks to establish and expand their influence.

Border areas in Ghana are particularly susceptible to climate-induced threats such as severe droughts, which compound the existing vulnerabilities of border communities. These environmental challenges contribute to the rise of violent conflicts,^{59,60} including clashes between farmers and herders over access to grazing lands and water.⁶¹

Despite these challenges, Ghana's resilience against violent extremism and terrorism (VET) is commendable. Ghana has implemented several strategies in the face of rising VET in West Africa. The country's democratic institutions, robust security infrastructure, and vibrant civil society serve as bulwarks against extremism. Additionally, the country's religious and ethnic tolerance strengthens its societal fabric.⁶² Recognizing the cross-border nature of the VET threat, Ghana has taken proactive steps to foster regional cooperation through such initiatives as the Accra Initiative,⁶³ which has facilitated a cross-

border security operation referred to as Operation Koudanlgou I, II & III.⁶⁴ These operations were jointly executed by Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Togo to bolster security in border regions. The operations resulted in the arrest of 700 suspected affiliates of criminal and terrorist organisations, and seizure of arms and ammunition.⁶⁵ Ghana further leveraged international and regional cooperation mechanisms, including the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) early warning mechanism, to foster regional coordination of joint actions to prevent possible VET activities⁶⁶.

At the national level, Ghana has developed a counterterrorism framework and conducted several capacity-building programmes and counterterrorism exercises to bolster response to violent extremism. The frameworks, such as the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET), address identified gaps and enhance the country's defence against potential terrorist activities. The Framework mainly "*forms the basis for the production of detailed and comprehensive National, Institutional, Regional, District and Community Action Plans for the prevention and countering of violent extremism and terrorism in Ghana*"⁶⁷. It is built on four pillars, each with clearly-defined objectives for the short, medium, and long term.

- Pillar 1: '**Preventing**' the root causes of terrorism, reducing vulnerabilities, and fostering resilience.
- Pillar 2: '**Pre-empting**', by detecting and deterring potential threats.
- Pillar 3: '**Protecting**' critical infrastructure and public spaces.
- Pillar 4: '**Responding**' and ensuring effective recovery from terrorist incidents⁶⁸.

The pillars strategically reflect Ghana's commitment to maintaining national security and public safety against VET. With the support of international partners,⁶⁹ capacity-building initiatives have been launched to tackle the growing concern of violent extremism in Ghana's northern regions. This effort, known as the *Preventing Electoral Violence and Providing Security to the Northern Border Regions of Ghana*⁷⁰ (NORPREVSEC)¹ initiative, aims to strengthen security measures and promote peace in these vulnerable areas. These VET preventive initiatives strengthen Ghana's law enforcement capabilities and facilitate inter-agency collaboration to preempt and counter extremist threats. As part of preventive activities, in early April 2023, 1,000 Special Forces troops were deployed to the country's northern border on account of violent extremist groups in Burkina Faso attempting to extend their influence and territory.⁷¹ The deployment was in response to an incident where three immigration officers (one dead, two others in critical condition) were shot by unknown gunmen in Bawku, a border town in the Upper East region

1 NORPREVSEC consist of Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Savannah, and Northeast Regions

of Ghana⁷². Besides, community empowerment efforts through alternative livelihoods have been rolled out as strategic tools in combating VET in border communities.⁷³ Civil society organisations, religious and traditional leaders, and the media have been involved in Ghana's efforts in fighting violent extremism through public education and the promotion of transparency.⁷⁴

Role of Ghana Boundary Commission in Building Border Community Resilience

The African Union Border Governance Strategy emphasises the need to prevent and resolve border conflicts while addressing cross-border threats, crime, and insecurity, including violent extremism. The Strategy further highlights engagement with border communities towards the peace, growth, and socio-economic development of borderlands. In this regard, boundary commissions play a critical role in facilitating border community resilience against violent extremism. The GhBC, is mandated to ensure “Ghana’s land, maritime, and air boundaries are effectively secured and managed in accordance with international law, peace and security, and the protocols of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on African and regional integration”. In furtherance of this mandate, the Commission demarcates, delimits, and manages Ghana’s international boundaries, including resolving boundary disputes through the implementation of national legislation as well as regional and international conventions on boundary management and cross-boundary cooperation in Africa.⁷⁵ Since its establishment,

the Commission has undertaken several initiatives to bolster community resilience in Ghana’s border regions. These efforts include:

- **Negotiation and Settlement of Disputes:** The Commission has mitigated conflicts, built trust, addressed root causes of conflicts, fostered social cohesion,⁷⁶ and empowered communities. In 2021, the Commission successfully negotiated, mediated, and resolved several boundary disputes with neighbouring countries. For instance, a collaboration between the GhBC and the Land Boundary Commission of Togo led to the amicable settlement of a dispute over the international boundary line between Ghana (Pulimakom) and Togo (Cinkasse).⁷⁷ Additionally, the Commission effectively addressed other complex land boundary disagreements in border communities, including Sindi (popularly known as Dollar Power)⁷⁸ connecting to Côte d’Ivoire, and areas such as Bellitanga, Bimpela, and Pulimakom adjacent to Burkina Faso.⁷⁹ These efforts have significantly reduced tensions and enhanced the overall stability in these border communities.
- **Education and Sensitisation of Border Communities:** Since 2022, the Commission has collaborated with the Land Boundary Commission of Togo to organise series of extensive education and awareness programmes for communities along the Ghana-Togo international boundary line (in the Ketu

South Municipality through to the Kpetoe and Afadjato South areas). Similar sensitisation activities were organised along the western frontier with Cote d'Ivoire in areas such as Newtown and Elubo in the Jomoro Municipality. Along the northern frontier, the Commission organised sensitisation sessions in Paga and Dakola to build the capacities of border communities in identifying and reporting any activities that compromise Ghana's security and sovereignty. These collaborative initiatives have equipped these communities to take proactive measures to mitigate the likelihood of disputes and potential intrusions by extremist groups.

- **Social Intervention and Infrastructural Provisions:** The GhBC has conducted comprehensive community needs assessments to identify areas requiring intervention. These assessments have led to social interventions, including the rehabilitation schools and health facilities in border communities, such as the Leklebi-Kame Health Centre in the Afadjato South District along the Ghana-Togo boundary. As part of its human security activities, the Commission is constructing a three-unit classroom block in Newtown in the Jomoro Municipality, where Ghana's

land boundary with Cote d'Ivoire ends and the maritime boundary begins. Additionally, the Commission facilitated the construction of a 24km road connecting Dollar Power to Ntereso, a border community near Côte d'Ivoire.⁸⁰ These development initiatives have helped restore the eroded trust of border communities in the government.

- **Partnership and Information Sharing:** The Commission remains committed to fostering meaningful relationships with key stakeholders to exchange ideas on effective border governance and maintaining peace and security among neighbouring countries. In 2024, the Commission hosted heads of boundary commissions from 12 states⁸¹ to analyse and develop strategies aimed at enhancing regional security and strengthening the resilience of border communities. As part of periodic operational assessments along the international boundaries, the Commission shares relevant intelligence information with state security agencies and other state institutions to build the resilience of border communities. Moreover, in 2021, the Commission carried out an operational assessment in the Dollar

Power area where it discovered security breaches along Ghana's international boundary with Cote d'Ivoire. These breaches which are fertile grounds for extremist activities, include illegal mining, illegal operations of foreign nationals, and the absence of state security agencies in the area. The information was shared with relevant state institutions and interventions were taken to build the resilience of these areas against vulnerabilities. Other similar collaborative and information-sharing platforms have empowered stakeholders to safeguard the security along the tri-border areas of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso.

Challenges for Building Border Community Resilience

Despite the Commission's efforts, it faces numerous challenges in securing Ghana's international boundaries, which hampers efforts to prevent possible VET activities in the country. Central to the Commission's operations are archival records, known as legacy documents, which date back to the 1800s and are crucial for delineating international boundaries and resolving disputes. However, accessing these records poses a significant challenge,⁸² undermining the efforts of the Commission to address potential conflicts that VET groups could exploit. Additionally, poor road networks in border communities, with some areas only accessible through neighbouring

countries, further complicate efforts to strengthen community resilience.

Ghana grapples with the legacy of colonial boundaries, where the arbitrary demarcation divided ethnic communities without regard for cultural or social ties, creating a significant challenge for the Commission. These culturally insensitive colonial demarcations have led to land ownership disputes, especially where farmland straddles boundaries, undermining the Commission's efforts to enhance community resilience against VET activities.

Another critical challenge relates to governance. The deep-seated mistrust between local government structures and border residents undermines the Commission's efforts. The mistrust stems from a longstanding perception of central government's indifference toward development initiatives, leaving many border communities feeling neglected. As a result, these communities are often reluctant to collaborate with government institutions, even on community resilience-building programmes. It is, therefore, expedient for the Commission to prioritise building trust, fostering cooperation through transparent communication, and consistent engagement with local leaders.

Finally, resource constraints present an obstacle to the Commission's efforts to implement planned activities. Insufficient funding from the central government forces the Commission to rely on donor support, which may be inadequate or delayed. Moreover, accessing donor funding is challenging and competitive, further hindering efforts to enhance community resilience.

It is therefore essential for governments to allocate dedicated funding and collaborate with stakeholders to provide consistent support for initiatives undertaken by the Commission.

Conclusion

Addressing the challenges faced by border communities in combating violent extremism is vital for national security. This paper highlighted the importance of community resilience as a sustainable, long-term approach to fighting violent extremism in border communities, ultimately contributing to peace, security, and prosperity in Ghana. While short-term security measures are necessary, they are insufficient to address the core causes and enduring impacts of extremism. This paper underscored the critical role of GhBC in building community resilience to mitigate VET activities in border communities. Collaboration among local government authorities, law enforcement, border security agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, and other key stakeholders is essential in preventing the spread of violent extremism in vulnerable border communities. Additionally, targeted initiatives such as skill development programmes, social support systems, and mentorship can help individuals disengage from extremist activities, enabling their effective reintegration into society.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following measures to address the challenges.

- National and international bodies, including libraries with archival information on the international boundaries of Ghana, should collaborate with the GhBC by sharing relevant data to enhance boundary management.
- Development partners and stakeholders should support the effort by Government of Ghana in constructing feeder roads to improve accessibility to deprived border areas such as Dollar Power in the Savannah Region, and Sapelliga in the Upper East Region.
- Regional policy development and implementation are necessary to address land ownership issues that straddles international boundaries.
- There should be a promotion of effective engagement between local government structures and border communities to foster trust and cooperation.

End Notes

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About the Ghana Boundary Commission

The Ghana Boundary Commission (GhBC) is a state agency mandated to determine, demarcate and delimit Ghana’s international land and maritime boundaries in accordance with accepted principles of international law. Accordingly, the Commission is responsible for the settlement of boundary disputes between Ghana and neighbouring countries. The mandate of the Commission, therefore, has a wider implication for safeguarding the territorial sovereignty of Ghana at all times. To this end, the GhBC collaborates with both local, regional and international actors in implementing the mandate.

About the Authors

Major General Emmanuel Kotia, PhD is the first Commissioner General of the Ghana Boundary Commission. His experience spans over 39 years in the Ghana Armed Forces. He has extensive knowledge on issues of international boundaries and an astute lecturer. He has distinguished himself as an International analyst and expert in Defence and Security over the years. He speaks widely on topics related to International/National Security, International Politics and Defence. emmanuel.kotia@ghbc.gov.gh

Mr David Kwabena Bonsoh is a Researcher at the Research Department of the Ghana Boundary Commission. His scholarly interests relate to areas including environmental and boundary management, border security, climate change, border-community resilience, as well as the intricate areas of small arms and ammunition, and improvised explosive devices, all of which critically undermine state security. david.bonsoh@ghbc.gov.gh

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2nd Floor Rhombus Office Building adjacent the Kanda Post Office, Kanda Tel: +233 (0) 302 790 991

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