UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS IN GHANA

POLICY BRIEF

APRIL 2022

1. COUNTRY CONTEXT

Across the West African sub-region, Ghana is referenced as an oasis of peace. The 2021 Global Peace Index (GPI) ranked Ghana as the 2nd most peaceful country in Sub-Saharan Africa.[1] This atmosphere of peace has emerged and persisted, despite the history of sub-regional instability, due to the presence and persistence of an overall national infrastructure for peace, which has proven effective in strengthening the country's resilience to shocks and vulnerabilities while promoting inter-party, inter-religious, inter-ethnic and intergenerational social cohesion.

The national peace architecture in Ghana is built on legal and institutional mechanisms. At the apex of the legal system is the Constitution of Ghana. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana ensures peace and conflict prevention, management and resolution in Ghana. Key constitutional provisions such as the independence of the Judiciary, oversight of Parliament and relevant institutions such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) promote peace and security. In addition, the country has put in place legal mechanisms which underpin the establishment

and formalisation of a National Peace Council, a National Commission for Small Arms, and a national security architecture necessary for improving peace and security. The national mechanisms are complemented by campaigns organised by civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana who have remained vibrant and have the necessary space to play their role and engage in local development as well as in advocacy. CSOs undertake periodic educational campaigns on peace, especially during general elections, aimed at making them participatory and free of violence. Ghana's peace infrastructure is further reinforced by its contributions to the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaties of 1993 and 1999.[2]

Despite the historical resilience of Ghana's architecture for peace and security, there has been evidence of insecurity and pockets of conflicts in some parts of the country. Northern Ghana has been particularly vulnerable to conflict, as it has lagged in socio-economic development by comparison to the rest of the country.[3] This is partly due to the legacy of lopsided development policy from the colonial era and weak

[1] https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GPI-2021-web.pdf

[2] https://legal.un.org/avl/documents/scans/GhanaTreatyManual2009.pdf?teil=II&j

[3] https://www.gh.undp.org/content/dam/ghana/docs/Doc/Demgov/UNDP_GH_DEMGOV_Consolidating%20Peace.pdf

policies of post-independence regimes to address historical social and spatial inequalities. That said, the region has a well-documented history of isolated conflicts, including inter-ethnic disputes over power and control[4], intra-ethnic disputes over chieftaincy succession, and land-disputes, often spurred by illicit proliferation, excessive accumulation and misuse of arms and ammunition[5] on one hand, porous and inadequate border infrastructure on the other. Vitally, election-related tensions (resulting from increasing polarization of party politics along ethnic, religious and geographical lines), coupled with the increasing activities of political vigilantes, have continued to emerge in northern Ghana throughout the post-independence era. These and many more dents on the peace of the country seemed to have contributed to the deterioration of -1.2 on security & safety and a significant deterioration of -5.4 on overall scores on security and safety respectively on the 2020 Mo Ibrahim Index on Governance (IIAG) over the past decade.

2. DRIVERS OF CONFLICT IN GHANA

There are several drivers of conflict in Ghana. These drivers operate at three different but distinct levels: the national, sub-national and sub-regional levels.

National level drivers of conflict

- *Accelerated growth, deepening inequality and rising frustration with the state*

While successive governments have introduced economic policies to produce accelerated growth and improve the standard of living, the economic benefits of growth policies are not evenly distributed. Ghana's effort at maintaining its middle-income status with growth in many sectors have come with some negative indicators: widening gap between the rich and the poor, high rate of unemployment, especially among the youth, among others.[6] The situation in the North in particular does not demonstrate inclusive development leading to perceived marginalisation of the area.[7] Available evidence indicates that economic growth has produced strains on communities in Northern Ghana leading to North-South disparities. The widening inequality gap leaves more people behind resulting in not only economic but social, political and

cultural exclusion. The government(s)' attempt to steer through the dilemma between the adoption of pro-growth policies, austerity and neo-liberal recipes introduced several policies to alleviate poverty. However, poor implementation of policies to reduce inequalities not only fails at improving people's quality of life but also negatively affects social and political stability putting strains on social cohesion.[8]

- *Youth unemployment and local vigilantism*

Youth unemployment, as acknowledged by the National Security Strategy, is also a threat to peace and security, the teaming unemployed youth can be exploited to join extremist groups, piracy, illegal mining, armed robbery due to the absence of sustainable jobs. High youth unemployment has been a major talking point in almost all the regions of Ghana, creating a sense of frustration, hopelessness, exclusion and irresponsibility which affects meaningful citizenship.[9] Both uneducated and more educated youth seek economic opportunities in urban areas of Ghana, the latter segment seeking a better return on their investment in education. Because of urbanisation, social structures have changed, and people come into cities, where they may not find jobs. There is also a gendered dimension to youth unemployment as well as limited skills training opportunities and hence the propensity to vigilantism. A perception abounds that the youth are disinterested in skills training, though some are concerned about how to obtain financial support for an apprenticeship which is more pronounced among the females. Frustration among the youth leads to open critiques of chiefs with a noticeable disrespectful behaviour towards elders.

A positive correlation was found between youth, local forms of vigilantism and a context-specific ingrained culture of violence and aggression. The actual or perceived threat of the use of violence has become a function of both politics and economics: violence has become a currency, that, in the political space is negotiated, agreed upon and utilised to serve particular ends.[10] Though political party vigilantism has always been a characteristic of the Ghanaian political landscape, it has taken on a more violent, much more dangerous and unpredictable hue. As a result, vigilante crime and impunity must be understood within the context of (a) the functional utility of violence in political processes; and (b) what incentives or disincentives can be developed to dissuade groups and

[4] https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jacaps/vol3/iss1/2 p.g 3
[5] https://www.adomonline.com/six-arrested-for-stockpiling-arms-at-kandiga/
[6] https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/ghanas-challenges-widening-regional-inequality-and-natural-resource-depreciation
[7] https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/ghanas-challenges-widening-regional-inequality-and-natural-resource-depreciation

[8] African Development Bank (2020). *African Economic Outlook 2020: Developing Africa's workforce for the*
future. Abidjan, African Development Bank.
[9] UNDP (2017). Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and Tipping Points for Recruitment, NY:
Regional Bureau for Africa, www.journey-to-extremism.undp.org
[10] *White Paper on the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Ayawaso West Wuogon Event,"* (13th September 2019) para 5.3 (b)\

individuals from joining such groups. Though there are critical processes that seek to bring vigilantism under control, these seem so far to have a very limited impact on controlling the recruitment, funding, and activities of these groups.[11]

- *Weak and incoherent security governance architecture*

Ghana has multiple security and intelligence services that collectively provide a protective shield for the people and the state. These include the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) which comprises the army, navy and air force, the Ghana Police Service (GPS), the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS), and the Customs, Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS). There are intelligence organisations such as the National Investigation Bureau (BNI), Defence Intelligence (DI), and the Research Department (RD) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. There is also an existence of a Penal system comprising the Prisons Service and Judiciary. All these institutions come together to form the National Security Architecture (NSA). This NSA is replicated under existing law in the form of different security councils that function at the Regional, Metropolitan, Municipal and District levels under the Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 1996 (Act 526).[12] Despite this elaborate security system, Ghana's security sector is beset by challenges and weaknesses. These include the absence of operational independence of the statutory security forces from political interferences which undermines their operational and professional independence; intensifying dominance of party interests over security sector institutions resulting in the uncertainty and unwillingness of security sector actors to take actions against politically important individuals, inadequate resource allocation for the performance of identified duties and functions which affects the quality and diversity of logistical resources available, politicised recruitment processes which creates disciplinary problems in the chain of command.[13]

Sub-national dimensions of conflict

- *Ruptures in social cohesion, resource management and climate change.*

Natural resource (mis)management has become the fulcrum around which several conflicts revolve. In some instances, these have also been compounded by changing climatic impacts, leading to increasingly scarce arable land for farming and grazing. A case in point is the farmer/herder conflicts that afflict all parts of Ghana and strain inter-communal relations. The issue about land does not only border on scarcity but also on tenure system. Ghana has a land tenure system that is a fusion of customary rules and recent statutory overlays, hence ownership and acquisition processes are regulated by both customary practices and statutes which enhance the power of chiefs, Earth priests (Tindanas), clan and family heads. However, as competition for multiple land use becomes more intense due to landlessness, trespassing and climate vulnerabilities, the intensity of conflict and clashes over natural resources has intensified, especially in Savanah and transitional zones of the country.[14] Importantly, suspicions and lack of evidentiary proof of ownership in the acquisition of lands for public projects easily degenerates into conflict.

Related to the land ownership issues is the growing importance of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) in Ghana. Small-scale mining is a natural resource-extractive activity whose management is creating tensions and violence between communities and the miners, between small-scale miners and industrial companies.[15] Activities of ASM have led to the degradation of land and water bodies across Ghana, and there are concerns arising around the destruction of farmlands, the diversion of streams and rivers for mining purposes, as well as surface and groundwater pollution through the usage of hazardous chemicals. Farmland has been extensively destroyed affecting both food crop production and cash crops (such as cocoa) and resulting in adverse effects for both food security and foreign currency earning.[16]

- *Chieftaincy and sub-national power dynamics*

Chieftaincy in Ghana is an age-old revered institution that is found in all regions of the country. While in the Northern sector, Chiefs occupy Skins and use a

[11] *A Report on the Engagements with Political Parties and other Stakeholders on the menace of political party Vigilantism*. Accra: NCCE.

[12] Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 1996 (Act 526)

[13] https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/politics/153159/Absence-of-comprehensive-security-sector-policyhampering-Parliamentary-oversight-Kunbuor

[14] Hilson, G. and Hilson, A. (2015). Entrepreneurship, poverty and sustainability Critical reflections on the formalisation of small-scale mining in Ghana. Working Paper, International Growth Centre

[15] Crawford, G. and G. Botchwey 2017 "Conflict, Collusion and Corruption in Small-Scale Gold Mining: Chinese Miners and the State in Ghana", Commonwealth & Comparative Politics, https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2017.12834

[16] Crawford, G. and G. Botchwey 2017 "Conflict, Collusion and Corruption in Small-Scale Gold Mining: Chinese Miners and the State in Ghana", Commonwealth & Comparative Politics, https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2017.12834

rotational 'gate system', in the South occupation is on Stools. Though chieftaincy is widespread in Ghana, not all ethnic groups have chieftaincy as part of their traditional governance structure. This dichotomy between chiefly and non-chiefly groups, and the governance arrangements that were made to regulate relations among such groups have often times led to misunderstandings. There are also several facets about chieftaincy that generate confusion, tensions, and in some instances violence. Among the most critical issues that cause chieftaincy-related conflicts are: (a) Struggles for paramountcy and autonomy[17]; (b) Overlap of traditional chiefly authority and local government institutions; (c) Ownership and control of land; (d) Expression of power and supremacy and the rejection of that power by minority ethnic groups regarded as powerless; (e) Struggles for recognition of ethnic identities and respect, and perception of discrimination and marginalisation by some ethnic groups leading to rivalries, in which chiefs hold bargaining power, for and on behalf of their groups; (f) Selective use and interpretation of past historical events to justify decisions and actions.

- *Limited presence of the state, and weak decentralization systems*

While state capacity exists in northern Ghana, the extent and form of this presence remain varied. To a large extent, the requirement for effective deployment of the infrastructural power of the state in all corners of the northern territory of the country is not working as intended. The limited presence of the state and institutions, especially in the northern part of the country has led to a sub-culture of indiscipline and impunity. Several examples exist in the reports of the Audit Service to the Public Account Committee which illustrates the weakness of state regulatory systems in the northern part of the country. Some of these include increased activities in the areas of illegal mining, smuggling of fertilizers into the neighbouring countries, and smuggling of fuel along the borders which have often gone unpunished.[18]

Though decentralisation was introduced as an important part of taking governance to and including people at the grassroots level, so far, for the people of the Northern regions, the promise and optimism of the decentralisation process have not yielded much positive dividends. There are limited measures to ensure accountability and create opportunities for communities to participate in their governance.[19]

People also perceive the whole process as rather inhibiting popular participation as those without political connections do not adequately participate in the decentralised political processes.[20] Besides, skewing of development projects to local political party strongholds often promotes feelings of exclusion and unfairness. Importantly, the constant intertwining of politics and ethnic dynamics with local state security structures undermines not only confidence in the state but promotes feelings of insecurity among minority groups.

Sub-regional, Cross-border and Global dimensions

- *Threat of violent extremism*

The threat of violent extremism (VE) remains a major driver of conflict in Ghana. This threat emanates from two main sources: external penetration, mostly from the Sahel region, and domestic recruitment. In respect of the former, several studies indicate that the intensification of intra-religious battles within Islam, contribute to a dramatic rise in tensions. In the North of Ghana, concerns have been expressed that preaching sometimes inflames passions, and tensions occur between moderate imams and those who received theological education in MENA.[21] The latter relates to the external penetration, mostly from the Sahel region.

Ghana's point of vulnerability is its open borders with the neighbours which have succumbed to VE. Border communities act as conduits for VE penetration even without being radicalised themselves, through the exploitation of ethnic grievances and ruptures in social cohesion.[22] For example, an apprehension has arisen that herdsmen from neighbouring countries could be used for hit-and-run attacks, given that they are constantly on the move. Thus, VE cannot be combatted by security measures alone, a focus on border communities and social awareness are needed.

- *Cross-Border Insecurities*

The extreme north (régions des savanes) is fragile and worrisome in many aspects, particularly the areas where the three countries of Ghana, Togo and Benin share common borders with Burkina Faso and where there are growing threats from armed groups which operate cross-border. Ghana's inability to ensure effective border controls, a limited database for migration management, as well as corruption account

[17] Brobbey, S. A. (2008). The law of chieftaincy in Ghana: incorporating customary arbitration, contempt of court, judicial review. Advanced Legal Publications: Accra, Ghana
[18] Conducting a Conflict-Related Development Analysis (CDA)
[19] Conducting a Conflict-Related Development Analysis (CDA)
[20] Conducting a Conflict-Related Development Analysis (CDA)

[21]Islamic Polarisation and the Politics of Exclusion in Ghana: Tijaniyya and Salafist Struggles over Muslim Orthodoxy.
[22] UNDP (2017). Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and Tipping Points for Recruitment, NY: Regional Bureau for Africa, www.journey-to-extremism.undp.org

for the borders remaining porous. Northern border areas are often extremely isolated, with a harsh climate, lack of basic services, potable water, and schools, and suffer from state neglect.[23] Communities find themselves excluded from development gains that are present in the South but benefit from cross-border smuggling, which forms the basis of many livelihoods, such as accompanying smugglers to help them to avoid taxes for a fee. In the Upper East region, for instance, up to 80% of livelihoods in Kulungungu are said to be based on smuggling.[24] Border issues are complicated by a lack of clarity on citizenship because possession of passports is not universal and multiple forms of identity exist. Individuals seek to maximise the opportunities on either side of the border.

- *Proliferation of small arms and light weapons*

The country is affected by the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) and has the capacity to manufacture weapons, which can be acquired by random civilians, with the intention to commit a crime.[25] Large quantities of weapons have been entering Ghana, e.g., SALW trafficked mixed with legitimate goods. The 2004 initial baseline survey on small arms in circulation in Ghana reported about 240,000 small arms in circulation. However, the 2014 baseline survey of small arms circulation in Ghana reported about 2,300,000 which represent an increase of over 850% small arms in circulation in Ghana within 10 years. Across the country, weapon possession is noticeable, chieftaincy conflicts, land contestations among others witness a ready use of firearms, and a marked increase in violent crime committed with weapons has been reported.[26] The culture of weapons possession is widespread in the rural areas, where it is a symbol of power, identity and readiness to protect one's family, while the state's interventions to curb proliferation have not been successful. The government's weapons collection programme in 2010 offered over-the-market rates for surrendered guns which stimulated acquisition on the black market to re-apt the rewards from the state. Coordination between the Ghana National Commission on SALW that monitors the situation and the Ministry of Interior, which issues permits, is also deficient.

3. OPPORTUNITIES AND ENTRY POINTS

To improve Ghana's progress towards the achievement of peace priorities and targets in maintaining the existing peace architecture while preventing conflict, the following entry points and opportunities exist:

- The launch of the National Security Strategy in July 2021 and the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET) provide critical platforms for coordinating the total national response effort to protect and safeguard the nation from threats, risks, challenges to its security and stability from both the domestic and international environments.

- The signing of a Memorandum of Agreement by the security agencies on integrated security in 2019 provides a firm framework from which to address the existing border security challenges.

- Opportunities are also presented by the National Border Security Fusion Center, whose focus is to increase collaboration and sharing of information among the agencies. National and regional Border Security Committee also provide a platform for information sharing and collaborative work.

- The Peace Fund provides a viable avenue for resourcing the National Peace Council (NPC) to take proactive measures to prevent violence and conflicts. Operationalizing the fund will go a long way to enable a proactive and preventative approach to dealing with threats of peace and security.

- The Affirmative Action Bill is an opportunity to improve the participation and inclusion of women and other minority groups in preserving the peace architecture of the country. In addition, the effective implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 (GHANAP II) will ensure that women, particularly young women, take their place in the peace and security landscape of the country. The development of a National Action Plan on the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security is also important to fully engage the youth to contribute to promoting peace and security.

[23]https://www.kaiptc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/New%20folder/Sosuh-M.M.-2011-BORDER-SECURITY-IN-GHANA-CHALLENGES-AND-PROSPECTS-1.pdf
[24]https://www.kaiptc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/New%20folder/Sosuh-M.M.-2011-BORDER-SECURITY-IN-GHANA-CHALLENGES-AND-PROSPECTS-1.pdf

[25]Margaret Mansa Akakpo, (2017) 'Beyond Enlightened Legislation: The Political Economy of SALW Manufacture in Ghana,' Policy Brief 3, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
[26]Margaret Mansa Akakpo, (2017) 'Beyond Enlightened Legislation: The Political Economy of SALW Manufacture in Ghana,' Policy Brief 3, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance Interventions

1. State capacity and responsiveness: Strengthen state and local governance capacities, especially in the Northern regions and other deprived parts of the country and improve their professional and managerial skills. Listen to grievances and address ethnic tensions arising from boundary disputes among other development gaps before they mutate into violence.

2. Employment: Accelerate employment interventions targeting both educated and less skilled youth who are finding it difficult to get jobs leading to frustration and the possibility of engaging in violence.

Security Sector Reform

3. Work towards ensuring that law enforcement officers are protected from political interference in the performance of their duties to prevent a sub-culture of impunity and indiscipline

4. Institutionalize collaborative joint security operations to maintain constant presence along the borders, control smuggling activities, assure border communities of protection and signal capacity to deal with insecurity.

5. The review of the Arms and Ammunition Act and the Arms and Ammunition Regulation of Ghana, incorporating new and emerging issues on arms and ammunition.

Northern Ghana interventions

6. Maintain a robust security presence along the Northern borders of the country; engage in joint security operations and patrols (among domestic security services) with contiguous states.

7. Ensure the engagement of Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) mechanisms to identify and reinforce connectors among communities that integrate democratic decision-making and planning with traditional values and natural resource management systems to generate economic and livelihood benefits for smallholder farmers and forest users, especially the youth.

8. Strengthen the peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity capacities of peace guarantors: traditional authorities, religious leaders; regional peace councils; youth and women's groups and CSOs.

9. Partner with CSOs to design, implement and sustain programmes that improve the capacities of the grassroots communities to use non-violent mechanisms for dealing with conflicts and promote peace messaging.

5. REFERENCES

African Development Bank (2020). *African Economic Outlook 2020: Developing Africa's workforce for the future*. Abidjan, African Development Bank.

Akakpo, Margaret Mansa (2017). Beyond Enlightened Legislation: The Political Economy of SALW Manufacture in Ghana, Policy Brief 3, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

Brobbey, S. A. (2008). The law of chieftaincy in Ghana: incorporating customary arbitration, contempt of court, judicial review. Advanced Legal Publications: Accra, Ghana

Crawford, G. and Botchwey G. (2017) "Conflict, Collusion and Corruption in Small-Scale Gold Mining: Chinese Miners and the State in Ghana", Commonwealth & Comparative Politics, https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2017.12834

Hilson, G. and Hilson, A. (2015). Entrepreneurship, poverty and sustainability Critical reflections on the formalisation of small-scale mining in Ghana. Working Paper, International Growth Centre.

Dumbe, Y. (2019). Islamic Polarisation and the Politics of Exclusion in Ghana: Tijaniyya and Salafist Struggles over Muslim Orthodoxy.

Mateeva, A., Anning, K. and Osei-Kuffuour, P. (2020). Conducting a Conflict-Related Development Analysis (CDA)

NCCE (2019) A Report on the Engagements with Political Parties and other Stakeholders on the menace of political party Vigilantism. Accra: NCCE.

Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 1996 (Act 526)

UNDP (2017). Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and Tipping Points for Recruitment, NY: Regional Bureau for Africa, www.journey-to-extremism.undp.org

White Paper on the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Ayawaso West Wuogon Event," (13th September 2019) para 5.3 (b)

Websites

https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/ghanas-challenges-widening-regional-inequality-and-natural-resource-depreciation
https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/politics/153159/Absence-of-comprehensive-security-sector-policyhampering-Parliamentary-oversight-Kunbuor
https://www.kaiptc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/New%20folder/Sosuh-M.M.-2011-border-security-in-ghana-challenges-and-prospects-1.pdf