



## Politics, Chieftaincy and Violent Extremism: Case of Chereponi-Wenchiki in Ghana-Togo Border

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined three issues, namely politics, violent extremism, and chieftaincy issues, in the Ghana-Togo border communities to determine which variable(s) influenced the other. This paper examines the relationship between violent extremism, politics, and chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana's North East region. It attempts to see if there is any linkage or connection between or among the three variables in the context of conflict and security along the two West African countries' borders (Ghana and Togo). Edward Azar's (1990) Protracted Conflict Theory (PCT), later emphasized by Bat-Tal (2000), guided the study. This study posits that politics and chieftaincy conflicts are the primary causes of violent extremism. In this regard, the study seeks the opinions, views, and experiences of the people in the Chereponi district, especially the communities along the Ghana-Togo borders. The study adopted an exploratory research design with a blend of experts' and non-experts' perspectives in the North East Region of Ghana and a few communities in Togo. The experts are spread across five regions of Northern Ghana, whereas the non-experts are concentrated in the Chereponi district. Twenty (20) respondents were interviewed face-to-face. The study found that the two major political parties (NPP and NDC) in Ghana were more involved in promoting the interests of some chiefs for political expediency. It found no link between politics and chieftaincy, leading to violent extremism. The study concludes that there is a clear link between politics and the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, but it also establishes that the Ghana-Togo border is free of extremist activities. It recommends a strong collaboration between Ghana and Togo in the fight against insecurity and possible acts of violent extremism along their borders.*

**Keywords:** Chieftaincy, Ghana, Politics, Togo, Violent Extremism

### I. INTRODUCTION

Violent extremism is a global menace to human existence and an unparalleled security risk for societies. Coleman et al. (2021) claim that violent extremism not only places a tremendous deal of strain on a country's security forces but also seriously violates human rights all around the world and undermines human dignity. Security and military theories have analyzed the devastating effects of violent extremism since the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 (Price, 2014). According to Wickham (2002) and Boyle (2008), the United States government alone spent around 1.78 trillion dollars on the fight against terrorism between 2001 and 2017. From 5.7 million euros in 2002 to 93.5 million euros in 2009, the European Union spent more money combating violent extremism (International Crisis Group, 2021). Governments are gradually realizing that increasing funding to bolster security measures against extremism would not be sufficient to shield every one of their populations from violent extremist attacks as a result of globalization (Thrall & Goepner, 2017). The intricate interplay of internal and external factors, along with highly motivated socio-cultural and economic conditions, is the breeding ground for violent extremism. Although some extremist organizations have embraced inventive methods to recruit new members and broaden their support base, it appears that countering violent extremism has not changed in approach (Kometer, 2004; Yaro & Tseer, 2019; Kipo-Sunyezhzi et al., 2024).

The violent extremist groups operating in the West African sub-region have been more active in recent times. The region's numerous chieftaincy conflicts and challenges to national security have provided many extremist groups, including the Islamic State's West Africa Province, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' in parts of West Africa and

the Maghreb, Ansarul Islam in Burkina Faso and Mali, and Boko Haram in Nigeria, with some opportunities to launch persistent attacks on civilians and security targets within the subregion of West Africa (Demuyne, 2021). According to the information available, there were over 85 instances of extremist attacks between January and March 2020 in Burkina Faso alone, which resulted in over 438 related deaths (Barkindo, 2020). These attacks and their aftermath impact other West African states such as Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, Niger, and Ghana. This suggests that the activities of violent extremists pose a threat to all member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other states. Even though numerous countries have taken both individual and collective action to thwart terrorist insurgencies and violent extremism, these trends continue to rise. There is no single best approach or universally applicable solution to address the issue of violent extremist activities. Developing a strategic security plan is important, yet it is insufficient to combat the threat. Furthermore, security solutions fail to address many of the root causes of violent extremism (Lord et al. 2009). The central objective is to examine the relationship between political determinants, chieftaincy, and violent extremism within Chereponi-Wenchiki on the Ghana-Togo border.

Ghana's chieftaincy institution is one of the enviable ones that has made a substantial contribution to the nation's socioeconomic development (Agyeman, 2020). The chieftaincy institution has endured the three stages of Ghana's political history—pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial—despite all of its difficulties (Owusu-Mensah, 2014). Since the institution has grown to be the foundation of Ghanaian society, any attempt by political players to control it could have negative effects on the country's politics and society (Bonotti & Weinstock, 2021). Indeed, ever since colonialism began in Ghana, there has been a persistent pattern of interethnic and communal violence that has caused widespread societal division and an almost perpetual state of instability, particularly in the country's north (Anamzoya, 2013). For instance, the chieftaincy problems in Dagbon and Bawku, which are purportedly "purely traditional matters," include both a local and a national political component (Anamzoya, 2013). Local sides in these chieftaincy crises have made an effort to win over national political figures, paving the path for politicians to constantly exploit the rift. Ghana's multiparty system has led to the separation of subjects along party lines, exacerbating the societal differences already present in these sectors, thereby intensifying the politicization of these conflicts (Bonotti & Weinstock, 2021). Ghana's political landscape is extremely complicated and has changed significantly during the past century. Several administrations have made an effort to change chiefs' political activities and role in society since colonialism (Bukari et al., 2017). As a result, the relationship between the state and traditional political institutions has undergone a complex and ongoing transformation, which has been the hallmark of the chieftaincy institution. Halawayhi (2017) posits that the power of chiefs remains contextual, reflecting ongoing processes of struggle and compromise between the state and traditional authorities. Because chieftaincy battles are ongoing and involve political actors, violent extremism may occasionally emerge from them.

It is important to note that this study investigates the relationship between violent extremism, politics, and chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana's North East region (especially the Chereponi district) and some border communities in Northern Togo along the Ghana-Togo border.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Chieftaincy and violent extremism do not have a strong documented connection to Ghana's highly competitive and deteriorating political context. Until now, there have been clear connections. Numerous chieftaincy conflicts often link to the dangers associated with violent extremism. These conflicts are not only communal but are also deeply rooted in political activities. The ruling families and the custodians of the traditional authorities are the main allies of Ghana's political parties. The major political parties in Ghana clearly link the Bunkpurugu chieftaincy conflict (Jafouk and Jamong families) to the Bawku ethnic conflict among the Kusasi (Mahama & Longi, 2013). The Nalori conflict, which occurred recently, is also associated with chieftaincy and political interests in Chereponi. Against this background, the study sought to determine the relationship between violent extremism, politics, and chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana's North East region, especially the Chereponi district, and some border communities in Northern Togo along the Ghana-Togo border.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the study is to determine existing relationship of Political activities, Chieftaincy conflict and violent extremism in the North East Region.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- (i) What is the relationship between political activities and chieftaincy conflicts?

- (ii) What is the link between politics and violent extremism?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 The Protracted Conflict Theory (PCT)

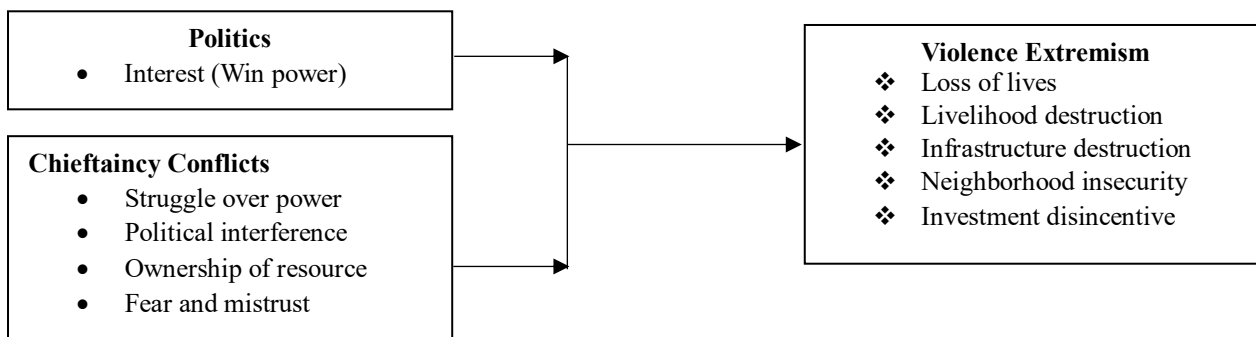
Edward Azar postulated the Protracted Conflict Theory (PCT) in 1990, which was later emphasized by Coleman (2000) among others. The theory describes continual confrontations within and between groups in a given area. The PCT explains deep-rooted conflicts between groups over basic demands such as access to resources, power, recognition, identity, and security (Coleman, 2000). These disputes are frequently complex, chronic, persistent, deadlocked, and intense, with far-reaching consequences affecting many aspects of life and development.

Human needs are the primary motivation for social disputes, according to research on this idea (Azar, 1990). Burton (1990) identified four sorts of human needs that must be satisfied to resolve conflicts and develop peace. It is important to emphasize that people often seek these needs together, and they are neither negotiable nor hierarchical. They include recognition, identification, fearlessness, and security (Burton, 1990). Recognition, for example, can involve acknowledging one's individuality and personal progress. The state meets these requirements by providing public goods to groups of people. However, a lack of these needs could lead to violence. Also, the act of intentionally denying people or groups their basic human needs could lead to war (Azar, 1990).

#### 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The main point of contention is whether politics and chieftaincy disputes contribute to violent extremism or not. This section shows the interconnections between the major variables under each of the ideas covered in the literature and the theories to explain how chieftaincy conflicts and politics contribute to violent extremism or otherwise. Based on the struggle of groups for a limited resource, as illustrated in Figure 1, the realistic group conflict theory postulates that conflicts between them may escalate into violent extremism (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Concerning power struggles, political meddling, and the absence of fear, the theory helps us understand the root causes of conflicts or disputes in Africa or Ghana, especially in the North.

Early resolution of disputes and conflicts becomes advantageous. Social order, acknowledgement, and improved decision-making throughout society were among the positive impacts (Botchwey, 2006). Resolved conflicts do not necessarily lead to extreme violence; as a conflict intensifies, the underlying factors continue to hold true. An act of violent extremism can lead to fatalities, damage to property, the disintegration of society, and the destruction of sources of income. The conceptual framework of the study captures the interplay of three variables or factors, namely politics, chieftaincy disputes, and violent extremism (as shown in Figure 1).



**Figure 1**  
*The Linkages between Conflicts and Development*  
**Source: Authors Construct (2024)**

#### 2.3 Empirical Review

Sulemana (2012) noted that while chieftaincy disputes are prevalent throughout Ghana, they primarily occur in the northern region of the country. There are numerous ethnic groups spread over five areas in northern Ghana. Because of problems with ethnic identity, recognition, and competition for limited resources, as well as a lack of strong institutional state authority, the northern sector is vulnerable to conflict (Adewoba, 2009).

Chereponi District is one of the six districts that make up Ghana's newly established North-East Region. The district has previously seen several conflicts, which others have even described as "wars." The area experienced the Konkombas and Bimobas conflict or war, the Konkombas and the Mamprusis conflict or war, and the Bimobas and the Mamprusis conflict. These ethnic groups were the principal parties to such conflicts or disputes. These battles or conflicts typically resulted in the loss of numerous lives, the displacement of numerous individuals, the destruction of properties, and a near-halt to social life. The effects of these conflicts are considerably more severe because they leave people from such affected areas traumatized, without social support, without a job, and with many becoming widows or orphans and estranged from their families, homes, or communities entirely (Kipo-Sunyehzi et al., 2024).

Moreover, interethnic conflicts have long existed amongst the four main ethnic groups of Chereponi: the district or area, namely Chokosis, Konkombas, Bimobas, and Mamprusis. For example, a dispute arose in April 2017 about fishing rights in the Kpembi River between the Bimobas and the Chokosis. In 2018, the Chereponi District Police Command report documented the destruction of over 500 homes, properties, and dwellings, the deaths of two (2) people, and the displacement of numerous others. Another clash occurred between the Konkombas and the Chokosis over a land dispute the following year (2018). It is important to highlight that throughout the country's northern regions, the Konkombas ethnic group has been involved in several conflicts with other ethnic groups. For instance, in 1981, the Konkombas and the Nanumbas engaged in combat (Sulemana, 2012). In 1991 and 1992, respectively, the Konkombas and Gonjas engaged in combat once more (Awedoba, 2009). In 1994, the Konkombas engaged in combat with the combined ethnic groupings of Nanumba, Gonja, and Dagomba (Mahama, 2011).

Since the Konkombas are known for having battled all of their neighbors in the past, it was not surprising when they engaged in combat with the Chokosis in December 2018. What was unexpected, though, was the sheer number of casualties. In one day, reports indicated the displacement of over fifty thousand people and the deaths of over twenty-eight (28) individuals. Sulemana (2017) reported the burning of 500 dwellings. The destruction of food crops, the burning of homes, and animal looting are the main characteristics of these wars in this region of the nation (Awedoba, 2009; Mahama, 2011; Sulemana, 2012; Yaro et al., 2018). On the other hand, in comparison to the recent war between the Chokosis and the Mamprusis, the amount of destruction was frequently minor. Once again, ethnicity has always been a factor in the majority of these confrontations. Geertz (1988) proposed that ethnic groups have been fighting because of innate animosity since the dawn of humanity. Nevertheless, relative deprivation theories and instrumentalism, two contemporary explanations of ethnic conflict, have supplanted this theory.

Mawuko-Yevugah and Attipoe (2021) examined the discourse surrounding the treatment of chiefs concerning the interplay between modernity and tradition through a case study of the modern Ghanaian chieftaincy institution. The study's development involved compiling and debating a comprehensive compendium of pertinent literature. The research identified the primary discourse surrounding modernity and tradition as rooted in a binary school of thought. This school of thought holds that the two can coexist harmoniously, while another strain argues that modern societies must be entirely devoid of tradition. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana acknowledges and grants autonomy to the chieftaincy institution in the Ghanaian context, according to the study (Mawuko-Yevugah & Attipoe, 2021). As a result, a split state has emerged, where both constitutional law and customary law are immediately mandatory. The interface between the two systems of government has revealed itself mainly in land management, local governance, and expansion over time. Chiefs were known for their important contributions to state development and asset assistance via land management (Mawuko-Yevugah & Attipoe, 2021). Chiefs acted as mediators between the government and their citizens, nurtured unity, and used their influence and familiarity to implement maintainable development enterprises in their corresponding regions. Current times have witnessed a decline in their influence and consequences, partly due to disagreements and inappropriate land management.

Agyeman (2020) aimed to boost knowledge of the factors that contribute to the hullabaloo, land and chieftaincy clashes, and the connection of political parties in the Bawku Traditional Area. Individual interviews were conducted with key informants to confirm the fourth-placed claims in the study and gather additional perspectives on unresolved conflict-related issues. The scholarly studies later fused the stories derived from the interviews, using them as themes and patterns. The study recognized political involvement, the spread of small arms, trepidation and suspicion, and insufficient access to social services as the main causes of the Bawku conflict. Furthermore, the study revealed that the conflict is merely in a state of deferment, with potential resurgence due to campaigns, elections, and other socio-economic concerns (Agyeman, 2020). The results show a significant link between the efficacy of election-managing bodies, the democratic system, and the prevalence of violence. To add to that, the study discovered that democratic governance in Ghana is noticeably more operative than in other countries in Africa, for example, in Kenya (Nambiema, 2012; Asamoah, 2019; Agbiloko & Chiotu, 2021).



Sithole (2018) studied the core contexts employed by the African Union (AU) in response to unofficial changes in government. These contexts demarcate model tactics for elections and conflict management. Despite the existence of numerous contexts for conflict management best practices, the study reveals that the African Union has not implemented these contexts when necessary. Francophone countries such as Cameroon, Niger, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, and Mali serve as examples.

The reoccurrence of violence related to elections and other instances of unconstitutional government changes, along with the subsequent reaction from the AU, has brought to light its deficiencies and lack of proficiency in conflict management. The study's findings suggest that unless the AU acknowledges and upholds its dedication to safeguarding democratic progress on the continent, Africa will encounter a formidable and challenging challenge in its efforts to solidify democracy.

Bukari et al. (2017) examined northern Ghana's socio-political repercussions of land disputes and interethnic chieftaincy. The primary aim of the research was to demonstrate, through the application of theoretical foundations, that conflicts possess certain advantages in terms of socio-political progress and that conflict theories also offer potential resolutions to disputes. Using examples from the emancipation disputes in Sissala, Mo, Kusasi, Dagomba, Nanumba, Gonja, and Konkomba, the study used content analysis of secondary data based on realistic group conflict theory. According to the study, the main positive effects of the conflicts are an improvement in decision-making processes regarding community development issues, a strengthening of interethnic unity, and assistance in the redemption of a group's identity; the major negative effect is the devastation of life and property.

Halawayhi (2017) investigated the function and characteristics of chieftaincy among Dagbamba migrants residing in the Metropolis. The research employed purposive sampling, observation, and interviews as data collection methods. It was discovered that the Dagbamba held their chiefs in tremendous regard. Nevertheless, the executives entrusted with ceremonial, consular, interface, and ambassadorial responsibilities encountered obstacles such as members' indifference towards their duties. Moreover, quotidian obstacles confronted the chiefs, including tensions stemming from the Yendi and Bimbilla skin affairs, religious sectarianism, and financial insufficiency. Once more, the article noted that the Dagbamba chieftaincy was proactive in ensuring the protection and integration of the rights and privileges of migrant Dagbamba within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, notwithstanding the obstacles encountered.

Owusu-Mensah (2014) investigated the correlation between politics and chieftaincy in Ghana by tracing the historical position of chiefs in the context of customary law. The study discovered that in Ghana, customary values and norms are guardianship-chieftaincy-style. According to Owusu-Mensah (2014), the chieftaincy institution has demonstrated remarkable resilience throughout Ghana's three political epochs. Furthermore, the author asserts that it fills the void left by contemporary partisan politics. Also, Anamzoya (2013) analyzed the Ghanaian instance of mixed government after drawing examples from other nations concerning mixed government. In addition to an exhaustive review of the relevant literature, he gathered empirical data for his paper via interviews and observation. As demonstrated in the instance of Ghana, the paper concluded that the chieftaincy institution in postcolonial Africa has a lengthy lifespan.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Study Location

Chereponi district, one (1) of six (6) districts created out of the Northern Region, aligns with the newly established North-East Region of Ghana. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, the district has a total population of 87,176, with a gender composition of 49% males and 51% females of the population; the youth constituent is more than half of the gross population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Chereponi District is unique among the six districts in the region. Chereponi District is the only district in the region where both its political administration and traditional administration belong to the North East Region (Manprugu) and the Northern Region (Dagbon), respectively. It has two major ethnic groups (Anufor and Konkomba), and other smaller ethnic groups include Mossi, Dagonba, Bimoba, Fulbe Ewe, and Kotokoli (Ghana Statistical Service, GSS-2021). The number of individuals engaged in the formal sector of the economy, including development practitioners, nurses, district administrators, and teachers, is relatively smaller compared to those in the informal sector within the Chereponi district. The majority of the inhabitants are involved in farming, forestry, fishing, and trading (GSS, 2021).

#### 3.2 Research Design

The research design employed for this study was the exploratory design, which aligns well with the pragmatic philosophy. This choice was made because it enables both quantitative and qualitative analysis (Creswell & Creswell,



2017). The exploratory method strategy was utilized, involving the collection and analysis of qualitative data before arriving at the final interpretation. This approach enhanced the study's robustness, going beyond a mere representation of qualitative data. Flick (2007) have noted that the qualitative strategy is particularly suitable for the pragmatic research philosophy due to the higher level of analysis it allows. The study's target population was deliberately limited to experts and individuals possessing experience and knowledge with respect to conflict situations in the district. This group include key figures such as the Chief Chiefs and elders, Teachers, Farmers, NCCE Official, political party leaders (NDC, NPP, PNC, CPP, etc.), Police Officers, BNI Officers, Prison Officers, Queen Mothers, fishermen, Traders and some youth leaders. Additionally, all the representatives were purposively selected due to their philosophical insights into the subject matter.

### 3.3 Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

The field data (primary data) for this study was gathered through individual interviews employing structured interview guides. This data was further enhanced by augmenting it with secondary data, which included journal articles, books, and online documents obtained from the internet. Each interview moment with respondents took about 30 minutes, and notification and consent were sought from all members. The interviews were conducted by the research team over two months, from the month of March 2024 to May 2024 in Northern Ghana, especially Chereponi District.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

A total of twenty (20) participants were initially selected for interviews, but only 19 of them participated in the interviews. Out of 19 participants, four (4) were experts in these areas: peace, security, conflict and chieftaincy while 15 were the non-experts. One participant had to decline the interview due to personal reasons. The researchers regarded this as an uncontrollable occurrence and considered it a normal part of the research process. The field data collected went through thematic analysis in which three major themes emerged namely political parties' meddling with chiefs, the linkage or connection between politics and chieftaincy, lastly, the security situations at border communities. These three major themes have emerged from the data gathered from the field. The analysis process started with the interview results, which were transcribed by the researchers and shared among them for editing and review. Subsequently, each researcher was tasked with developing codes, sub-themes, and main themes from the transcribed data. These identified themes, derived from the codes, were classified and named by each researcher accordingly.

In respect to constancy, steadfastness, and weight, the themes were then compared after the researchers coding and theming process. The researchers revised and corrected the codes, merging them into straightforward themes. These themes were later kept into wide-ranging themes. Finally, the results were construed in configuration with the recognized themes, all in accord with the study's objectives.

### 3.5 Ethical Consideration

The researchers adhered rigorously to the ethics of research and upheld them during the data collection process. These protocols included no harm to the study participants, gaining informed consent from participants, guaranteeing participants' confidentiality, ensuring anonymity, and maintenance of the well-being of the participants. Lastly, the researchers made it known to the study participants that participation in the study was strictly voluntary where participants could decline interviews without any consequences.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Findings

#### 4.1.1 Experts Opinions

The researchers sought the views of four security and conflict experts representing each of the five regions of Northern Ghana on issues concerning politics, chieftaincy and their relationship with violent extremism. The intention is to see whether there are connections, linkages or relationships between or among the three variables/factors (politics, chieftaincy conflict and violent extremism).

*How do the two main political parties in Ghana [the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC)] use chieftaincy institutions to strengthen their political power?*

This was how a security expert representing the Upper East Region of Ghana [Northern Ghana]. The Upper East Region some parts share border with Togo and other parts shares a border with Burkina Faso. So, experts from the Upper East are crucial in terms of issues of security at the border communities. This is how the security expert responded to the issues on the relationships between or among the three factors [politics, chieftaincy and violent extremism].

*In the Upper East Region, we have about 99% of the Chiefs saying they are affiliated to the NDC and they identify themselves with NDC. They feel that that is their party partly because they come to homes purported to be NDC before they became chiefs. So, they don't even hide. They'll tell you they are non-partisan and sympathize with the NDC. They may not be active members but work underground for those they are aligned with [Male Participant, BN001, Upper East Region, Ghana].*

This is how the expert from the Upper West Region of Ghana responded to the same question:

*Yes, they think that if this chief is in power, he can command his people to vote for them. That's all, so they want to install chiefs for themselves so that they know that this Chief is our man, so he commands respect, and he can call the community people and command them or warn them that they should vote for the party he supports. So, that is what they [politicians] think. [Male, PC002, Upper West Region of Ghana]*

This is how the expert from the North East Region of Ghana responded to the same issue/question:

*Politicians want power and can do anything to get power. So when there is chieftaincy conflict, they may benefit from that. Because, when two chiefs or gates are in conflict, they can come to support one side making them believe they have them at heart and they use this opportunity to canvas for vote and further create enmity between the two sides. All they are interested in is the vote to win power. [Male, PC003, North East Region, Ghana]*

The next question and the responses are presented as follows:

*Are there any connections or links between politics and chieftaincy issues/conflicts that may lead to violent extremism in your area?*

A response from an expert in the Upper East Region:

*The answer is yes, and it is also no. Yes, for areas closer to the border communities like Bawku, and Pusiga, especially those beyond Bawku due to cross-border crimes and cross-border associations. Areas far from the border areas, I will say no, such linkages are most unlikely. [Male Participant, BN001, Upper East Region, Ghana]*

An expert from the Upper West Region has this to say:

*The answer is a big yes. In this region it is worrying the level or extent to which Chiefs are getting into politics though the constitution does not permit Chiefs to do active politics, they [Chiefs] do politics well. But I do not see how extremists from the Sahel region can take advantage of the issues of politics and chieftaincy to perpetrate political violence or violence in the region. [Male, PC002, Upper West Region of Ghana]*

The expert from the North East response to the same issues/question:

*Yes, there are close links, it is politics that create conflict and most of the conflicts in the region are having political undertone. And it is the same politicians who hire hooligans and macho men to come and fight their political opponents to get power. Even to hire criminals and extremist groups' politicians can do that for the sake of power. Boram Haram is a case to look at in Nigeria. [Male, PC003, North East Region, Ghana]*

The researchers attempted to know or to find out how the area (community) is affected concerning the security situation.

*How has your area been affected by the security situation across the border?*

An expert opinion from the Upper East Region:

*I think we are very lucky that we don't have youth groups or individuals that are interested in these terrorist acts. That is our luck. Before terrorists can come into your area, they must first know the geographical area very well before they can operate. The lives we live here are common. Everybody knows everybody and they know what everybody does. So, if you go and join a different group, your family will not agree. If not, we have one of the most porous borders ever. [Male Participant, BN001, Upper East Region, Ghana]*

The expert from the Upper West Region of Ghana, this was how responded to the question:

*Yeah, you know, because of these conflicts and when there is no leader, it becomes so difficult and making the people so vulnerable, like for example, the people of Nandom. Nandom, even though now there is a leader, the people are still not accepting him. So, it makes the people more vulnerable. You see, we know there is a chief, somebody who is highly respected is the chief there but before then when there was no leader, it made the whole place vulnerable because other tribes were shooting their guns and doing all manner of things, yet nobody was there to control them. There's no leader. [Male, PC002, Upper West Region of Ghana]*



The North East Expert has this to say on the security situation on the borders (Ghana-Togo)

*There are indeed pockets of crime in the form armed robbery and violent extremism in some of the border communities as studies from the National Peace Council Regional Office have unravelled. But because these days, people are quite enlightened about violent extremism through the mantra of See Something, Say Something, it is quite better. Just that most rumours about terrorist activities in some border communities in the region turned out not to really be so after we found out. Aside the threats of crime like armed robbery and extremism, the issue is about chieftaincy and land disputes due to their proximity to Togo where some of these problems are also happening. [Male, PC003, North East Region, Ghana]*

#### 4.1.2 Non-Experts Opinions

*How do the NPP and NDC use chieftaincy institutions to strengthen their political power?*

A participant from Chereponi said this on how politicians use chieftaincy to back their power:

*Yes. This is what they [politicians] believe because sometimes they always believe that they know the truth but deny it and go and do other things to favour some maybe. [Participant 001, Chereponi]*

Another participant a female back the point that politicians use chieftaincy institutions for power:

*The NDC and NPP members all belong to clans and are using their people for power. [Female Participant, 005, Tambong Community]*

Interestingly, this participant indicated that sometimes politicians use some chiefs to boast image:

*Those in power [NDC/NPP] usually use the power of some of the chiefs to get more popularity. [Male Participant, 006, Farmer, Sargon Community]*

Controversially, this participant does not see any difference between the two major parties:

*Both NDC and NPP have those that they like and are using them to achieve their aims so right now everybody is divided that is why there is no peace. [Male Participant 007, Naduni Community]*

In addition, a participant opined that all the politicians have their targets on chieftaincy institution:

*All the parties have the chiefs they are working with to strengthen their political power deepening on their stronghold. [Male Participant, 008, Fisherman, Yorku, Border Community]*

This participant simply said the parties are in one way or the other involved in the area conflicts:

*These fighting that they are doing there [Chereponi-Wenchika areas], the NPP NDC, they are included. So, you see, in Chereponi, what is happening now we don't know. It is only God. Yeah, because now they will kill you, burn your house, burn your food, your property. What will you do again? What will do? You are now useless. Even if they killed you, it is better. So, people are suffering. You see the NPP and NDC, they are all the same. [Female Participant, 009, Fashion Designer, Chereponi]*

A local party executive admitted that politicians do assist in installing their favorites as chiefs:

*They [NDC and NPP] do by installing their favorites as Chiefs so that they can help them in campaigning for them. Yes. [Male Participant, 010, Constituency Political Party Leader, Chereponi]*

In this section, the searchers attempted to find if there is any connection or linkage between politics and chieftaincy. The responses of the participants are presented.

*Are there any connections or links between politics and chieftaincy issues/conflicts that may lead to violent extremism in your area?*

Chereponi resident said this:

*Just like external groups. Like, we have politicians, we have violent extremist organizations and then vigilantes. Yeah, the vigilantism, the vigilante. They are there because each time there is conflict, I understand they bring some people from some parts of town. They bring them from somewhere to come and help. Accra, Bawku. They mentioned Bawku. Sometimes they get people from Bawku and even the Northern region. [Participant 002, Chereponi]*

A participant from Wenchiki also said this on the same issue of the linkage between politics and chieftaincy:

*Yeah, if for example, the DCE is talking with the chiefs. You know at high-class meetings; they sit with the Chiefs and whatever comes out from that. The youth for example, normally point out the DCE and the political class that they are in bed with the chiefs and so on. [Participant 003, Wenchiki]*

A traditional leader added his views on the same issue:

*The chieftaincy issue here, it is not easy at all. We started in 1998. Violence, violence, violence. I didn't know the reason why. That city is from my grandfathers and my grandmothers. Wenchiki is my land; it is my area. The chieftaincy too is my property, but few people did not understand it. By they are not*



*from Wenchiki. They are not from Wenchiki and they want to spoil Wenchiki. The community in Wenchiki itself, they don't have a problem. People come from far away to come and push a few people that they should come and fight. They will come and support them. But every time, the same thing happens. When there is a problem, they push those who are in the community here to come and cause the trouble. Those from far away will come and support them. When it is dangerous, they runaway to their village but those who are here will suffer it. About four times, we have had chieftaincy conflicts in Wenchiki* [Traditional leader, Participant 004, Wenchiki (border Town)]

A participant from a much rural setting in the district of the North East of Ghana said this:

*Sure, there are connections, politicians want to use their positions to win the support of chiefs so that the chiefs will tell the people to vote for the MP or back the DCE.* [Female Participant, 005, Tambong Community]

A local politician based in the Chereponi district capital shared his opinions on the linkages:

*I do not think and see any link between politics and chieftaincy that will lead to violent extremism. You know despite all my political and chieftaincy troubles; we want peace and will not support any terrorist group or extremist groups here.* [Male Participant, 010, Constituency Political Party Leader, Chereponi]

The issues of security concerns around the border areas or border communities are asked and the responses presented:

*How has your area been affected by the security situation across the border?*

This was how a female participant responded to the security situation around the border:

*Yes, because in our area here we like fighting over lands and chieftaincy, terrorists may come in. The youth and young women are at high risk of recruitment because many of them are not working.* [Female Participant, 005, Tambong Community]

A male participant added his voice to security issues around the border areas (communities):

*Over here we are not by the border, but we are very concerned about the peace in the area. In terms of extremists operating around the border, the youth and politicians are at risk because many of them have nothing doing which they can easily be captured* [Male Participant, 006, Farmer, Sargon Community]

A participant from a rural setting of the district added his views on security situations at the border

*Security issues in this area are not the best because all the time different kinds of people pass which, we don't know their motives, we don't have police monitoring the border.* [Male Participant 007, Naduni Community]

A participant resident in a border community shared his live experience on the reality at the border:

*We are just by the border and everyday people cross but security persons do come from time to time to check especially those buying things from Togo to Ghana. I heard of them [extremists] but the very people who are at risk are the youth since many of them have nothing doing, to earn a living.* [Male Participant, 008, Fisherman, Yoraku, Border Community]

A local politician shared the issues of security at the Ghana-Togo border of the North East Region:

*Currently, we haven't experienced any attack from violent extremist groups around this area and I'm sure it's because of the security that we have around, that are being stationed all around. So, without any severe attack, I don't think they would have caused any effects on us as a community.* [Male Participant, 010, Constituency Political Party Leader, Chereponi]

A participant on the other side of the border has this to say:

*The security situation in Togo is hard and suggests that both countries' security need to collaborate in dealing with threats to lives and properties.* [Participant, 011, Anjo (Togo) Teacher (Professeur)]

He emphasized collaboration as the best conflict resolution measure on the chieftaincy issues:

*By tracing historical evidence from the traditional councils of each country and call, a spade, a spade and not a big spoon.* [Participant, 011, Anjo (Togo) (Professeur)]

Another participant in Togo added this perspective on security at the Ghana-Togo border:

*Provision of security to conflicted zones trained experts to mediate factions and, granting NGOs locally to help the situation.* [Douaniere (Togo Winchiki)]

## 4.2 Discussions

In terms of how the two dominant political parties in Ghana, namely the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), use chieftaincy institutions to strengthen their political power, The study revealed that both political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), hold a

significant stake in the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, frequently endorsing chiefs for their own political gains. Both the experts' and the non-experts' interviews corroborate the findings that politicians have a vested interest in reaping political benefits from chiefs, a trend that has persisted since independence. The empirical findings on the influence of Ghanaian politicians on the chieftaincy institution are consistent with previous studies (Bonotti & Weinstock, 2021; Agyeman, 2020).

This study also revealed that excessive politicization of chiefs, whether during the nomination or installation stages, exposes the chieftaincy institution to agitation by factions, a phenomenon known as "royal gates." These occurrences contribute to the problems of conflicts and disagreements, sometimes leading to violence, as observed in the Chereponi-Wenchiki areas of the Chereponi district in the North East Region of Ghana. Additionally, they raise questions about the appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms to address these disputes. These observations agree with previous studies (Sulemana, 2012; Awedoba, 2009; Kipo-Sunyehzi et al., 2024).

Regarding the issue of connections or linkages between politics and chieftaincy conflicts, the study discovered numerous connections or linkages between politics and chieftaincy in both Northern Ghana and Ghana overall. Both expert and non-expert opinions point to such connections. This study revealed a close link between Ghana's politics and the chieftaincy in the Chereponi-Wenchiki area, with politicians often exploiting the chieftaincy institution to gain political power or the chiefs' support. These findings align with the findings of previous studies (Owusu-Mensah, 2014; Anamzoya, 2013). But the study findings are inconsistent with those of Bonotti and Weinstock (2021), who revealed that any attempt by political players to control chieftaincy institutions in Ghana could have negative effects on the country's politics and society (Bonotti & Weinstock, 2021). This suggests that attempts by Ghanaian politicians to exploit chieftaincy institutions could result in severe consequences for them or the Ghanaian political system, potentially leading to negative outcomes. This means that the Ghanaian people must be careful in terms of mixing chieftaincy issues with political issues.

The argument that politics is connected to chieftaincy and such connections may lead to violent extremism seems not to be the situation in the study area (Chereponi District of the North East Region of Ghana). The responses of both the experts and the non-experts show no clear linkage. Thus, the study found no linkage between politics and chieftaincy that could lead to violent extremism. Most of the participants admitted that sometimes politics turns violent, but not yet in the situation where such disagreements or disputes pave the way for violent extremism. Ghana's border communities, including the Ghana-Togo border, have not yet documented any such connections. Participants in Ghana and Togo's responses did not suggest such linkages.

#### **4.3 Implications of Findings**

The study's findings imply that politicians meddling in chieftaincy issues has serious consequences because such meddling could easily lead to conflicts and possible violence. Additionally, some politicians' practice of promoting or pushing for the nomination of their favorites as chiefs posed a threat to Ghana's noble chieftaincy. The findings also suggest that, though there is no clear linkage between politics and chieftaincy that may lead to violent extremism, there is still a need for Ghanaians to be careful of the extent of violence or disagreements in order not to attract extremists.

### **V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

The study has established that both parties (NPP and NDC) are promoting the chieftaincy institution intending to gain political favour or support from the Ghanaian chiefs. It concludes that there is a clear link between politics and the chieftaincy institution in Ghana. The study established that the Ghana-Togo border is free from extremist activities.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

One, both parties need to discourage the practice of promoting some chiefs' interests against others. Also, there is the need to divorce or dissociate politics from chieftaincy in Ghana and Africa. Finally, per the findings of the study, it is recommended that Ghana and Togo strengthen their collaboration and increase their security information sharing to prevent acts of terrorism and an effective way in the fight against violent extremism in West Africa particularly, Ghana and Togo.

#### **Contributions**

The study contributes to politics and chieftaincy in Africa and the relationship between the two



## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

## Ethical Issues

Informed consent of participants was sought, and institutional permissions were received.

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