



Political Party Youth “Vigilante” Groups in Ghana

Rebranded, but Business as Usual

University of Cape Coast & Elva Community Engagement

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Authors: Dr. Kaderi Noagah Bukari (UCC), Dr. Sabina Appiah-Boateng (UCC) and Dr. Patrick Osei-Kufuor (UCC).

Project team: Aneliese Bernard (Elva), Aaron Atimpe (Elva), Prof. Stephen Bugu Kendie (UCC), Prof. Francis Enu-Kwesi (UCC), Mr. Richard Ametefe (UCC) and Mr. Prince Amfo Wiafe (UCC).



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Executive Summary

Vigilantism is defined as any activity performed by a social group, with the intention of enhancing the security of the group's communities.¹ However, these activities can manifest as a violent reaction to the perceived growth of deviance and injustice within one's political and social space. These perceptions that lead to vigilantism are therefore a product of a government's lack of response to managing crime, corruption, and other destabilizing issues. In Ghana, politically influenced vigilantism has a long violent history, impacting elections and fomenting tribalism within political parties, which negatively impacts democratic cohesion.

The Fourth Republic of Ghana has experienced the worst forms of vigilantism since Independence in 1957, as various politically and non-politically aligned groups have deliberately used violence to promote their agendas,² under the protection of political and business elites. Political Vigilante Groups (hereafter referred to as 'groups' or 'vigilante groups') in Ghana are generally composed of political party members, youth, and volunteers. Technically, group members are given political campaign responsibilities, such as supporting polling stations, monitoring the electoral process, campaigning, and providing security to political party offices and events. However, in practice, these groups have been activated to participate in more destructive political activity, such as ballot box snatching, levying violence and threats against political opponents, and disrupting the voter registration processes to undermine their political opposition. Their activities extend beyond elections, as these vigilante groups are often deeply embedded within networks of elected assembly members, Members of Parliament, politicians, political party financiers, businessmen, and government officials.

In a bid to end political vigilantism, Ghana passed the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, Act 999 in 2019. In principle, Act 999 prohibits and punishes all activities linked to political vigilantism and vigilante-related violence in Ghana by setting a low threshold for participation, with its definition of vigilantism as *"a group of two or more persons acting as a vigilante group associated, related, connected or affiliated to a political party and acting in concert with the aim of enforcing law and order without authority."* Per the law, actions or behaviors that are unruly, violent, disruptive, unlawful, and criminal all constitute *Vigilantism*.

This research analyzed the intra- and inter-party compositions and interactions of political vigilante groups in Ghana beyond the parties themselves, looking deeper into the groups' interactions with communities, security forces, and local and traditional authorities. While there is quite a bit of literature on how these groups have operated in Ghana historically, the literature falls short of reviewing group dynamics and operations since the passage of Act 999. As such,

¹ Johnston, L. (1996). What is vigilantism? *British Journal of Criminology* 36(2): 220–236.

² Alidu, S. M. (2014). Party politics and electoral malpractice in Ghana's election 2012. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 1449-1464 and Bentil, E. P. (2020). The threat of political vigilantism to political security in Africa: A case of Ghana (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Coast).

this research brings together a review of the available literature and primary research conducted among active vigilante members in Ghana, to understand how these groups have responded to the passage of the law, by rebranding or modifying their activities. Additionally, this study includes a novel in-depth social network analysis that maps out how individual vigilante groups relate to each other, and to the political actors that sponsor them, in an attempt to highlight these complicated relationships. Finally, the study also includes an assessment of the roles and actions of non-vigilante or non-affiliated groups, especially the ones in border communities, on which there is no research. These groups play a dynamic role in filling the security vacuum in border communities, particularly in towns located on the border with Burkina Faso, where violence from the Sahel is constant. In these towns, these vigilante groups go beyond serving as community watchdog committees, especially in border towns where violent extremist organizations (VEOs) present growing risks to Ghana.

The study used mixed methods to understand the complex relations in the operations, funding, organization and actor relations of vigilantism in Ghana, and how vigilante groups continue to operate now, since the passage of the law on Vigilantism and Offences Related Law (Act 999). The primary research relied on 547 interviews with politically affiliated and non-affiliated vigilante group members, vigilante leaders, political party leaders, government officials, politicians, the police, traditional leaders, and civil society leaders. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyze the survey and qualitative data.

The research found that vigilante groups have indeed modified their activities since Act 999's passage. However, these groups are difficult to dislodge from Ghana's electoral process due to their symbiotic relationships with their affiliated political parties. The research found that all 'affiliated' groups in the study were aligned with either the current ruling party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), or the primary opposition, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). **Many groups, though, have 'rebranded', and violence has objectively decreased; however, this could change in the lead-up to the 2024 election.**

Box 1: Key Findings

Group Organization. Political vigilante youth groups are organized quite informally, although there is always a well-structured leadership that is tied to Ghana's political party leaders. The membership is composed of primarily youth, on average aged 24 years, and are more often male, with women only in support roles, like cooking. The groups typically maintain close relationships with various political elites in Ghana, including political party executives, politicians within and outside their party, party contractors, and security agencies (especially the police). These connections are often driven by primordial (ethnic), religious, economic, and political ties. The youth lead the political parties 'militant' agenda (the use of violence, intimidation, and provision of security for the party).

Political vigilante groups as security provisioning. Many vigilante groups have rebranded following the passage of Act 999 (2019). However, these groups continue to engage in ballot box protection, violence, intimidation, use of force, and provision of security for their party and campaigning activities. The groups have found a way to evade the law by changing and rebranding their names, positioning themselves as ‘party security’ or ‘party operations’. Some –especially those belonging to the ruling NPP – have been integrated into official security roles, serving as police and personal security detachments.³

Principal-agent actor relationships. Internally, the group’s social networks include party members, leaders, government officials, financiers, and youth groups. Externally, vigilante groups have networks with individuals, businessmen, security agencies, traditional authorities, land guards,⁴ and other vigilante groups in other towns. Actors (principals) use vigilantes (agents) to promote their interests and to leverage power and resources. Political vigilante groups use intermediaries such as opinion leaders, Members of Parliament (MPs), and members with positions in the party and government to further their agenda of getting resources from their party.

Active throughout the election cycle. Their mode of operations and interactions reveal varied activities throughout the election cycle. While most members are actively carrying out vigilante and political activities during election seasons, they also undertake a number of activities before and after elections, such as helping in the reorganization of the party (especially when the party is in the opposition) and voter mobilization.

Recruitment is voluntary and based on shared identity and relationships. Members are recruited through voluntary participation, party influence, and friends. The recruitment process is selective, potentially targeting individuals with specific skills (e.g. people who appear to be particularly resilient, strong, and versatile), influence, or standing within the community.

Discrete Financing. The groups are funded and supported by political leaders, businessmen, contractors, party financiers, and others who have an interest in maximizing the benefits that come with political power. Non-affiliated groups are often funded by locals, but political figures will contribute as well.

Non-affiliated groups as defense forces. Non-affiliated groups in Sapelliga and Googo view themselves as ‘neighborhood watch’ groups, formed to protect the community against bandits, and armed robbers. They are supported by and known to security agencies like the police and immigration service, MPs, assembly members, and community members, and have significant links with self-defense groups in Burkina Faso like the Kogelweogo and Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP).

Drugs and spiritual involvement in activities of vigilante groups. The consumption of drugs such as tramadol (especially in Tamale, Damongo, Techiman, and Ejura), cannabis, and Ataya tea is popular among group members and can be drivers of violence. In some communities, spiritual fortification from traditional and religious leaders also similarly inspired group members to deploy violence.

³ Aning, K., & Albrecht, P. (2020). Vigilante groups of Ghana’s political parties pose a serious threat to security in the country. Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs.

⁴According to Bukari & Bukari (2021), Land guards are usually armed young people who are hired by landowners to protect their lands.

Violent activities in the 2024 elections. The 2024 elections in Ghana might experience a replay of violence by vigilante groups aligned with both the NDC and NPP, due to the contentious environment in which both political parties vie for power at all costs. The youth groups are likely to become the vehicles for perpetrating such violence in areas like Techiman, Tamale, Ejura, Hohoe, Kasoa, and Damongo.⁵

To reduce the tendency towards vigilantism and the likelihood of violence, the Government of Ghana (GoG) and other stakeholders, like international NGOs, can consider and implement the following recommendations before, during, and after the 2024 elections.

- **Despite the existence of Act 999, there is minimal enforcement of the law**, and as a result, vigilante groups continue to operate, raising concerns about the risks of violence ahead of the 2024 elections. To mitigate the risk of elevated levels of vigilante-related violence and promote compliance, the GoG should ensure that the relevant law enforcement agencies uphold the law.
- The GoG should consider **constitutional reforms addressing excessive executive powers, the "winner-takes-all" system, electoral management, security force deployment**, and effective enforcement of Act 999 through judicial processes are necessary to address the root causes of vigilantism.
- To prevent electoral violence, it is essential to **address public and political parties' mistrust in law enforcement and election management agencies**. The National Peace Council (NPC), Electoral Commission (EC), and National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should collaborate with law enforcement to implement trust-building dialogues and public sensitization about their roles.
- The NPC played a facilitating role in the **signing of a code of conduct in 2020 to guide the eradication of political vigilantism** by political parties. To ensure its effectiveness as captured in the code of conduct, the NPC should establish a robust monitoring system to track the compliance of political parties, and their national and local executives, with the code of conduct's provisions.
- To ensure that all relevant stakeholders, particularly youth/vigilante groups, are informed about the provisions and implications of Act 999, the NPC, NCCE, civil society organizations (CSOs), and faith-based organizations should **embark on intense peace education and awareness** to address grievances and mitigate electoral violence ahead of the 2024 elections.
- **Due to the establishment of community watchdog committees as a means to conduct community policing** and enhance state security efforts, the GoG should strengthen the technical and operational capacities and increase the visibility of **the Ghana Police**

⁵ Previous elections in 2020 have seen the death of eight people following vigilante clashes in the elections. See Ghana Business News (19 December 2020). Eight people killed during Ghana 2020 elections – Police. <https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2020/12/19/eight-people-killed-during-ghana-2020-elections-police/>

Service at the community level. This would serve to reduce the need for parallel security arrangements and enable better oversight of the activities conducted by community watchdog and volunteer committees.

- **CSOs need to engage government officials, security agencies, the EC, political parties, and politicians at the higher government level** to help build relations, foster trust, and build peace among stakeholders to ensure a peaceful 2024 elections and beyond. CSOs must collaborate with Zongo communities (marginalized non-indigenous settlements in urban centers)⁶ to train, engage, and educate youth on peaceful coexistence and knowledge, reducing their vulnerability to political manipulation.
- In the long term, the GoG, as part of its strategy to address the problem, **should more actively disband vigilante members, restore security through formal means, and transform these groups into political activist groups.** This transformation can be achieved through the development of educational interventions, provision of employment opportunities, and institutionalization of deliberative dialogue between political parties and security agencies in advance of the 2024 elections and beyond, bringing together relevant political elites and representatives from the EC, beyond the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC).

⁶Adamu (1976, p.16) states that the word Zongo is used in Ghana specifically to refer “to the residentially segregated quarters where strangers, especially Muslims or at least people influenced by Islam, settle.” Thus, a Zongo is a settlement of non-indigenous people, mostly from the Sahel regions of West Africa and beyond and differ from the indigenous ethnic groups on accounts of language, social organization and cultural norms. Zongos are usually characterized by unplanned spaces, informal settlements and grow to become big slams. They are marginalized, deprived and ‘dangerous’ communities to live in. Besides, Zongos are characterized by insanitary conditions and are levels of crime are high.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

Term	Definition
CECOTAPS	Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DCE	District Chief Executive
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoG	Government of Ghana
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
Juju	Seeking supernatural power using charms and spells to inflict someone or for protection
KII	Key Informant Interview
Kogelweogo	A vigilante in Burkina Faso
Mallam	Traditionally refers to Muslim religious teachers, but, in Ghana, it's associated with a Muslim cleric who endows supernatural protection powers on people
MCE	Municipal Chief Executives
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (in Ghana)
MPs	Members of Parliament
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
Non-affiliated 'Vigilante' Groups	Groups that use vigilante activities to achieve an ethnic, social, economic, or political aim
NPC	National Peace Council
NPP	New Patriotic Party
Political 'Vigilante' Youth Groups	Youth groups affiliated with political parties or a political group with the aim of achieving a political aim
VEOs	Violent Extremist Organizations
Vigilante	The use of force, violence, intimidation, and persuasion by a group, mostly a youth group, to achieve a political, ethnic, or social aim
VDPs	Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland

1. Introduction

Scholarly consensus characterizes ‘vigilantism’ as the extrajudicial pursuit of activism for a cause. Available literature highlights how the formation of groups by private citizens emerged in Ghana, to deploy violence as an expression of their disenchantment and dissatisfaction with their government, and to achieve political outcomes.⁷ Since the return to multi-party democracy in 1992 under the Fourth Republic, youth groups aligned with vigilantism have been established across the political spectrum. These groups have engaged in activities such as ballot box theft, politically targeted violence, disruption of the electoral process, and seizure of government offices. As Ghana prepares for the upcoming general election in December 2024, concerns about electoral violence are on the rise. The high political stakes and the intense competition between the two main political parties, NPP and NDC, could reignite vigilantism as campaign activities polarize the political environment.⁸

Box 2: Theoretical Underpinning of the Research

The principal-agent theory and the social exchange theory help explain the emergence, role, and actions of political vigilante youth groups in Ghana:

The Principal-Agent Theory provides a strong framework for analyzing many aspects of the relationship between political elites and their affiliated vigilante groups. In accordance with this theory, the agent performs outputs, per an agreement, that are then compensated by the principal.⁹ “Plausible deniability”¹⁰ is visible in the principal-agent analysis as the political leadership delegates to the agents in order to avoid accountability for illegal action. Since the principal does not have full control over the agent's ability to act in their best interests, the principal uses incentives to motivate the agent to perform as the principal would prefer.

The Social Exchange Theory helps to examine political vigilante networks. This theory assumes that social behavior is the result of an exchange process.¹¹ Social exchange relationships can occur whenever two or more actors depend on each other for valuable outcomes. The implication is that people in a relationship weigh the potential benefits and risks of their social relationships. The theory therefore assumes that a relationship between two people is created through a process of

⁷ Nivette, Amy E. (2016). Institutional ineffectiveness, illegitimacy, and public support for vigilantism in Latin America. *Criminology* 54(1), 142–175.

⁸ Asamoah, K. (2020). Addressing the problem of political vigilantism in Ghana through the conceptual lens of wicked problems. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 55(3), 457-471.

⁹ Douma, S., & Schreuder, H. (2002). *Economic approaches to organizations*. London: Pearson Education.

¹⁰ Byman, D., & Kreps, S. E. (2010). Agents of destruction? Applying principal-agent analysis to state-sponsored terrorism. *International Studies Perspectives*, 11(1), 1-18.

¹¹ Dijkstra, J. (2015). Social exchange: Relations and networks. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 5, 60.

cost-benefit analysis, in which the actors involved tend to repeat actions rewarded. In such a relationship, the purpose of the exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs.

1.1 Research Purpose

Although there is a wealth of literature available on the drivers, effects, activities, and formation of vigilante groups in Ghana.¹² This research was carried out to address several gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, there has been no comprehensive research on *how* these vigilante groups have responded to Act 999 and *how* they have rebranded since the ban on their organization was enacted. Secondly, this study addresses another gap in the literature by examining the social networks of vigilantism in Ghana. It seeks to map the complex relationships among the various actors involved across the political and social spectrum. Finally, there is no research on non-vigilante or non-affiliated groups, especially the groups that operate in border communities; therefore, this research reviews how these specific groups have become security proxies, filling the security vacuum in their communities. It sheds light on the role of these groups beyond being mere community watchdog committees.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objective of this research therefore is to examine political party youth “vigilante” groups in Ghana, with the intent of mapping and analyzing their activities, particularly of those groups that are framing their activities as just political youth groups, even though they clearly continue to operate as armed vigilante groups. The research does this by analyzing group composition, inter- and intra-party constellations and interactions, functions, and networks. The research intends to help influence practical recommendations for dealing with issues related to intercommunal violence and youth-driven crime, political party violence, electoral violence, and organized criminality, and the risk that this poses to Ghana in a context of the increasing pressure of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) originating from the Sahel.

¹² Aning, K., & Albrect, P. (2020). Vigilante groups of Ghana’s political parties pose a serious threat to security in the country. Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs.

Aning, K., & Danso, E. (Eds.). (2012). Managing election-related violence for democratic stability in Ghana. Accra: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, FE.

Asamoah, K. (2020). Addressing the problem of political vigilantism in Ghana through the conceptual lens of wicked problems. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 55(3), 457-471.

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Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2012). Political party activism in Ghana: factors influencing the decision of the politically active to join a political party. *Democratization*, 19(4), 668-689.

Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2014). Party youth activists and low-intensity electoral violence in Ghana: a qualitative study of party foot soldiers' activism. *African studies quarterly*, 15(1), 125.

Gyampo, R. (2010). "Political Apparatchiks and Governance in Ghana’s Fourth Republic, *Educational Research*, 11(1): 561–567.

Gyampo, R. E., Graham, E., & Asare, B. E. (2017). Political vigilantism and democratic governance in Ghana's Fourth Republic. *African Review*, 44(2), 112-135.

- **Objective 1:** To analyze political youth (ex-vigilante)¹³ groups' composition, intra- and inter-party interaction, and relationships with external actors beyond the political parties such as communities, security forces, and local and traditional authorities.
 - **Sub-Objective 1.1, Examination of the group composition:** intra- and inter-party interaction of political vigilante groups (current and ex-vigilante) in Ghana;
 - **Sub-Objective 1.2, conduct a social network analysis (SNA):** illustrate external actors, people, and networks and the ties, edges, or links (relationships or interactions) that connect political party youth vigilante groups with external actors beyond the political parties (communities, individuals, businessmen, party financiers, security forces, government officials and local and traditional authorities) in their formation, composition, and operations.

- **Objective 2:** To explicate the groups' mode of operations and interactions in their environments, despite the legal prohibition and the potential evolution of these groups as a result.
 - **Sub-Objective 2.1, Mapping the Modus Operandi:** explain vigilante groups' mode of operations and interactions in their environments despite the legal prohibition (Act 999) against their organization, and the potential evolution of these groups as a result;
 - **Sub-Objective 2.2, analyzing political party impacts/effects on vigilante groups:** specify the political influence of political parties on vigilante groups, including promoting political mobilization and participation, not only during peak electoral seasons, but also during off-electoral seasons;
 - **Sub-Objective 2.3, develop actionable recommendations:** synthesize informed policy and practical recommendations for managing political vigilante groups in Ghana, that provide practical insights on how political party youth vigilantes can be addressed to ensure peace and security in Ghana.

1.3 Methodology

The study used a mixed methodological approach to map the complex relations in the operations, funding, organization and actor relations in the practice of vigilantism in Ghana. The research was informed by 567 interviews based on qualitative and quantitative inputs, consisting of surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). The sample population comprised members of political vigilante groups, non-affiliated political vigilante groups, political party leadership, religious leaders, youth groups, women leaders, officials of Regional Peace Councils (RPC), District Security Councils (DISEC), youth groups affiliated with political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), party financiers, security forces (police and

¹³ The ex-vigilante term here was used due to awareness of the law, on the parts of the members of the political youth groups.

immigration officers), assembly members, community members, and traditional authorities. Table 1 shows the distribution of the quantitative respondents and qualitative participants (survey, focus group members and Key Informants).

Table 1: Sample size for the study, Source: Fieldwork 2024

No.	Study participants	Sample size	Total	Sub-total
Sample size for the survey				
1.	Political vigilante group members	VG*20	200	
3.	Non-affiliated political vigilante groups	2*10	20	
5.	Community members	10residents*12community.	120	
Sub-total				340
Sample size for FGDs				
1.	Political vigilante groups	10VG*10 participants	100	
2	Non-affiliated political vigilante groups	10VG*4 participants	40	
Sub-total				140
Sample size for KII				
1.	Political vigilante group leaders	10	10	
2.	Non-affiliated political vigilante groups leaders	6	6	
3.	Political party leaders	20	20	
4.	Religious leaders	5	5	
5.	Women leaders	5	5	
6.	Officials of Regional Peace Council (RPC)	7	7	
7.	Police	5	5	
10.	Civil society officials	6	6	
11.	Party financiers	2	2	
12.	Assembly Members	8	8	
13.	Traditional authorities	8	8	
14.	Youth groups affiliated with political parties	5	5	
Sub-total				87
Total Sample Size				567

Geographically, the study was conducted across eight (8) administrative regions in Ghana (see Figure 1). Three key criteria informed the selection of the areas: 1) areas or locations in which vigilante groups operate and are known based on literature and information gathered, 2) known hotspots for political violence that have recorded tense competitive elections by the police and other studies, and 3) the presence of non-state actors like community watchdog groups (Kogelweogo) and land guards, and how they influence political processes. Using these criteria, 31 communities were selected in:

- Upper East: Bolgatanga, Sapelliga, Googo
- Northern: Tamale
- Savannah: Damongo
- Bono East: Techiman
- Ashanti: Asawase, Ejura
- Greater Accra: Odododiodio, Nima
- Volta: Hohoe
- Central: Kasoa

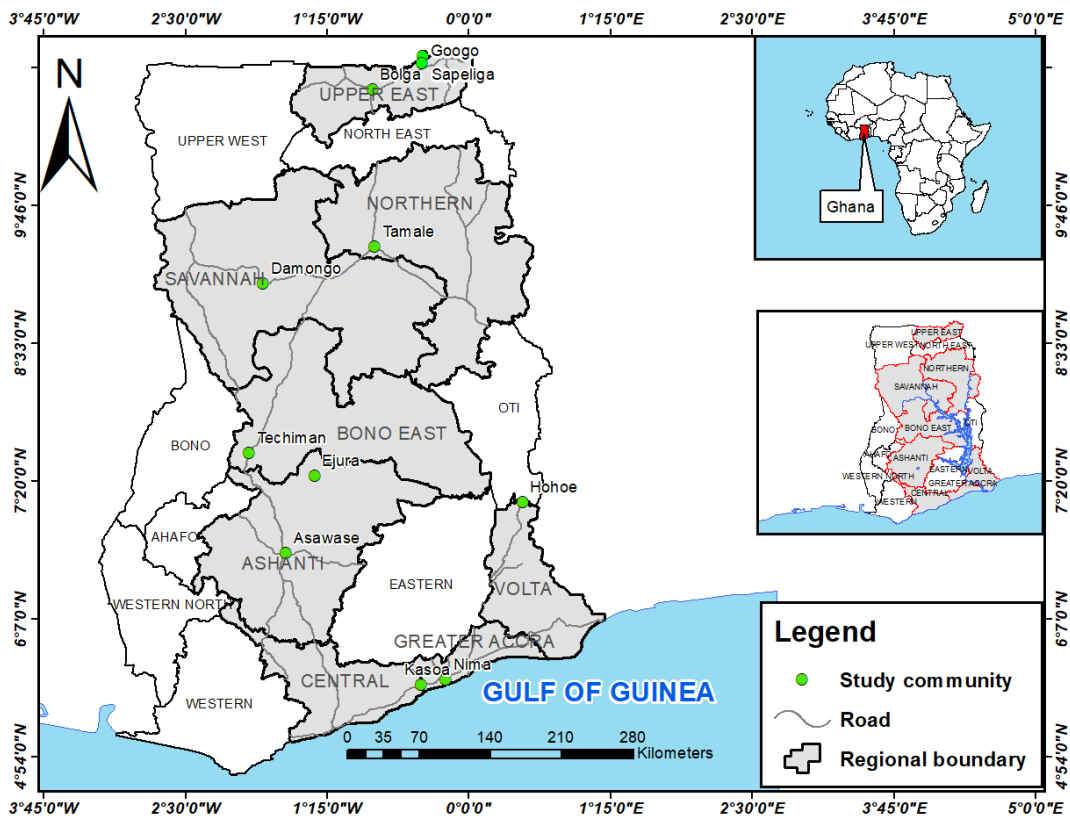


Figure 1: Map of studied communities. Source: Cartography and GIS Unit, UCC

Data was collected using surveys, KII and FGD guides. The survey data was collected using the Kobo Toolbox, while the KII and FGD interviews were recorded when authorized, and transcribed. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the KIIs and FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis. The social network analysis (SNA) was created using the kumu.io software.

Overall, the study relied on data from 340 respondents for the survey, which included interviews with 220 vigilante group members and 120 community members. The study involved a survey of 20 politically affiliated vigilante groups, with 10 groups that are affiliated with the current ruling party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), and 10 that are affiliated with the opposition, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The research also included 10 members each from two non-affiliated groups. The qualitative aspect included 140 focus group discussants and 87 key informants. The results are presented in two main sections: political youth groups (ex-vigilante) compositions and social networks, and their modus operandi and interactions in their environments.

2. The Social Network and Composition of Political Youth Groups

The Vigilantism and Related Offences Act 2019, Act 999 has sought to disband and end vigilantism in Ghana. Following the passage of the law, which involved civil society and state collaboration, political parties were believed to have disbanded their affiliated vigilante groups. However, as explained further in Part 3, these groups have, for the most part, simply rebranded to evade the law. The real application of the vigilante law is therefore yet to be seen, as no individual has been convicted or arrested for their continued participation in vigilante-related activities. During the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections, these groups did not directly front as vigilante groups but were used in various other ways. For example, the ruling NPP party integrated many affiliated vigilante members into the state security apparatus, instead of demobilizing them.¹⁴ The opposition, the NDC, continues to embolden their vigilantes as youth wings within the party structures who campaign for the party. Thus, vigilantism is still present in the Ghanaian political landscape, though officially these groups are being referred to as ‘political youth groups.’ So, although the names have changed, the actors and networks remain. This section presents findings about the composition of intra- and inter-party interactions of political vigilante groups (both currently active groups and ex-vigilante groups) in Ghana and their social networks.

2.1 Group Composition and Demographics

The research found that the organizational structure of political vigilante groups is largely informal, comprising a group of young people who spontaneously organize to participate within a formal party structure. These groups are not typically registered, lacking documented records

¹⁴ Aning, K., & Albrect, P. (2020). Vigilante groups of Ghana’s political parties pose a serious threat to security in the country. Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs.

Antwi-Boateng, O., & Braimah, M. K. (2024). Political vigilantism in Ghana: Motives, membership, and financing. *Politics & Policy*, 00,1–23.

of their name, aims of their establishment, and leadership structure, so their group becomes informally recognized within the political party they associate with, and their community.

However, despite their informal nature, they are well-structured and predominantly composed of influential, energetic young members. They utilize the context of being defined as a 'youth group' to mobilize their political agendas. For example, older members aged 59-69 years old, will still identify as 'young' given their association with a vigilante group, which serves as a significant incentive for participation. The research also found that older members of these vigilante groups held regular jobs and income-generating activities, in addition to the role they had within these groups. As such, in not being 'full-time' vigilante group members, elders often remained in advisory roles within the groups. Additionally, these groups retain relationships with political party executives, politicians within and outside their party, party contractors, key opinion leaders within the community, and security agencies (especially the police). These social networks are predicated on primordial (ethnic), religious, economic, and political ties. They drive the parties' 'militant' agenda through the use of violence, intimidation, and provision of security for the party. Though not legally (or technically) included as a component of the political party, political parties usually recognize aligned vigilante youth groups as part of their structure and use them to support their activities.

The quantitative data reveals that most political vigilante youth group members are between the ages of 19-69, but on average aged 39.¹⁵ These members are typically undereducated, and 41.8% have received only basic education (primary and junior high school). Because the overwhelming majority of members are young and undereducated, they are reportedly more susceptible to political manipulation by their patrons and principals. As a result, the research found that in some cases, political actors prey on the low level of education and unemployment status of vigilante members, to manipulate them to engage in politically motivated violent acts. This might include using them as props for protests or in carrying out acts of violence against political opponents (as seen in places like Techiman, Ejura, Hohoe, Odododiodio, Kasoa, Tamale and Damongo). According to a CSO leader in Tamale, *"Due to the little education and enlightenment, the youth are being devoured by politicians and used for violence and attack on their enemies."*

Although some groups have both male and female membership, traditional gendered assumptions about appropriate roles, and cultural dynamics, impact the assumed roles of both genders, and what they are allowed to do with regard to vigilantism. As such, males typically hold more dominant and active roles in these groups, because of the violence and physical demands associated with group activities, while females primarily hold 'backseat' positions, like

¹⁵ It is important to note that across West Africa, the conceptualization of youth is arbitrary, and the concept of youth to many of these groups, is not necessarily about age but about shared experiences, close affinity of people and relations. In the research locations, some members of vigilante groups were even older than 69.

canvassing votes from women and elderly people, and cooking for group members. In Tamale, most of the groups did not have female members at all, due to traditional and religious patriarchal norms that limit women's participation outside the household. Some groups claim that "*women cannot keep secrets*", and since group activities require high levels of discretion due to the criminal nature of vigilantism in Ghana, male members have used this stereotype to exclude women from participating in groups entirely, or from certain activities. The main motivation for females joining these groups is primarily economic, specifically to gain economic benefits from the political leadership. Additionally, they are motivated by the primordial social networks they share with their male counterparts, and so the wives, sisters, cousins or community members of male participants might be inclined to join.

One group that was mentioned in the study as being used and manipulated by politicians is the Zongo Youth. Zongo communities are densely populated, primarily Muslim, migrant neighborhoods in Ghana; in recent years, due to a variety of reasons including economic hardships and growing suspicion of migrants from the Sahel due to VEO threats, these communities have become the focus for potential spaces where youth radicalization could take place, due to widespread poverty and political disenfranchisement that marks these communities in Ghana's urban settings. Respondents interviewed for this research reported that Zongo youth in Techiman, Asawase, Nima, Kasoa and Ejura were the most involved in vigilante activities and violence. The study found that youth in several other Zongo communities across Ghana especially from Nima, Ashaiman, Tamale and Asawase were recruited and transported to other constituencies like Kasoa, Tema, Tafo and Adansi Asokwa to intimidate their opponents and deploy violence against them.

2.2 Group Identity and Names

These groups often take on militaristic names with violent associations, like 'the Taliban, Hawks or Task Force.' The names are intended to invoke fear in their opponents by associating with dangerous wildlife or mythical creatures, or famously violent countries or groups, to signal to their opponents their groups' ability to deploy 'violence' to achieve their aims. As one vigilante group leader explained about names, "*You need to communicate violence to send a message to your opponent to deter them... In Newton's third law of motion, every action calls for extreme reactions. So being feared is a good thing, to prevent your opponents from cheating you.*"

2.3 Group Structure

Group membership ranged significantly from as few as 15 members to as many as 500, according to the research. Those groups with membership exceeding 150 persons, such as the Invincible Forces, Azorka and the Hawks, usually also have national representation. For instance, the Invincible Forces (now assuming the role of 'Party Operations' for the NPP) claimed to have a membership roster of over 5,000 members countrywide. In some instances, members of larger

groups are not involved in everyday activity but will participate in bigger political events including violence.

The internal structures of these groups are strong, with leadership that commands group activities and sets quasi-systems of management and rules that members are required to follow. The leadership organizes the group structure, liaises between the political party and group members, and is instrumental in the group's use of violence. Leadership is determined either by the members themselves or by the founder becomes the de-facto leader. Key traits for a vigilante leader are their commitment to the group's objectives, loyalty and operating as the "secret keeper."¹⁶ The majority (80.9%) of political youth vigilante groups are structured hierarchically, with the leadership at the top, followed by various senior task holders like the secretary, organizers, commander and treasurer. The rest of the members are less organized by rank and file. The titular names of party leaders also differ based on the theme of the group. For example, Delta Force, Taliban, Hawks, Invincible Force, Russian Boys, Task Force, and Al-Qaeda owing to their 'militaristic' titles, refer to leadership as 'commanders', while groups like Russian Boys, Azorka Boys, Scorpion, High Tension and Be Neeti called their leaders, 'chairmen.'

2.3 Motivation and Reasons for Group Formation

The main motive for establishing vigilante groups is politics. The research found that 47.7% of these groups were established to carry out activities – violent or otherwise - for the interests of their party. These findings show a significant level of political instrumentalization of these groups and how prone they are to manipulation by their political parties. Over 22.3% of respondents said that these groups were established to serve as security for the political party members and activities, highlighting the propensity towards political violence in Ghana; the formation of party-affiliated security groups suggests the existence of parallel security structures that operate alongside official law enforcement agencies, highlighting a lack of public confidence in the police. The existence of non-state vigilante forces always risks undermining any state's monopoly on the use of force, especially because private security units might operate extrajudicially.

Key informant interviews highlighted that vigilante groups were initially formed in response to concerns about general insecurity, but evolved into securitized political tools. A vigilante group leader intimated that, "*we established this group, because we don't trust ... the police who are supposed to protect us. We don't trust them so we need our people to protect us.*" This leader went on to explain that the groups have since taken on the role of supporting various political parties during election cycles, through voter intimidation and ballot box policing.¹⁷ Similarly, another leader in Ejura explained, "*We formed our group because of attacks on us... by the NPP,*

¹⁶ A person who is able to keep secrets of the group and is trustworthy.

¹⁷ Key informant interview with a vigilante group leader.

specifically the Bamba Boys,” highlighting how some of these groups have emerged directly in response to political violence that they have experienced.

Box 3. Drugs and Spirituality Fueling Violence

One key issue that came out of this study was the linkage between vigilantism and the use of drugs and spirituality to fortify group members during vigilante activities, and therefore instill a sense of power in these members when they carry out violence. The study found that respondents believe that there are links between the use of drugs (tramadol, cannabis, and the mix of these drugs into the local tea called ‘Ataya’), invocation of spiritual protection, and vigilante violence. According to key informants, the consumption of these narcotics in Tamale, Damongo, Techiman, Kumasi, Ododiodio and Ejura, was cited as having encouraged vigilante groups to engage in violent action, because the drug-induced a stimulated state, that aided their violent efforts.¹⁸ A leader of the Big Six group mentioned that the fight against tramadol use in Tamale among the general public is complicated partly because of the high consumption among vigilante groups.

Additionally, vigilante groups were reported to rely on spiritual means to fortify and protect themselves, when engaging in their activities. Respondents in Tamale, Bolgatanga, Ejura and Techiman revealed that some vigilante groups engage the services of Mallams¹⁹ and powerful ‘Juju’²⁰ spiritual leaders to protect them from being killed, injured or arrested during vigilante activities. This is because they feel they are spiritually inoculated against death and injury, they are prepared to use violence to defend themselves.

Vigilante groups can also have a positive influence on the political landscape, playing a significant role in grassroots campaigning. For example, political youth groups participate in a range of activities leading up to elections to influence the electoral landscape, motivate voters, and advance their party’s interest, such as campaigning activities like door-to-door canvassing; providing private security for political events and voter registration exercises at the polling stations; registering and educating voters and participating in hosting events during political rallies. These groups have leveraged vigilantes for their interest, to access power and resources, or to show their commitment to various political parties.

¹⁸ Expert interview with Regional Peace Council in Tamale and multiple KIs with respondents from Tamale, Damongo, Techiman, Kumasi, Ododiodio and Ejura.

¹⁹ Mallam, originally means a Muslim religious teacher. However, in Ghana, the term is associated with a Muslim cleric who provides supernatural powers to people for protection.

²⁰ seeking supernatural power using charms and spells to inflict someone or for protection.

2.4 Youth Unemployment, Economic Dissatisfaction and Vigilantism

The study also found that rising youth unemployment, linked to Ghana's economic crisis, is leading to high levels of grievances and discontent among young people. These socio-economic grievances increase their vulnerability to manipulation by political elites to participate in political violence, particularly during campaign and electoral periods. Respondents reported their discontent about the state of democracy in Ghana where, as the young people explained, "*democratic politics is not yielding the dividends for their future as youth.*" These young people attributed the poor economic situation to growing levels of corruption and poor leadership. Out of this frustration, the research finds that more young people are increasingly willing to join vigilante groups, to advocate for their needs, through violence.

2.5 Non-Affiliated Vigilante Groups

Non-affiliated vigilante groups do not retain ties to political parties, but still use vigilante activities to achieve ethnic, social, economic and even political aims. The non-affiliated groups in Googo and Sapelliga were formed primarily to reduce criminal activities like robberies, petty crimes and cattle rustling, and to help keep the peace among community members. As such, these groups operate more akin to community-based watchdog committees or self-defense groups that police the community at night. Their responsibilities have recently evolved into mainly protecting communities from any incursions by VEOs from the Sahel, and as such, they frequently collaborate with their counterparts in Burkina Faso, the Kogelweogo²¹ and the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDPs), by sharing information about suspicious activity over the phone and social media. It was suggested that these groups were directly influenced by the Kogelweogo in Burkina Faso, and sometimes refer to themselves as Kogelweogo as well.

These cross-border networks with Burkinabe groups were initially established through primordial and cultural ties due to the porosity of borderland communities in northern Ghana, wherein groups move frequently across borders for work, school and to visit family. They remain relevant by retaining strong networks with the Kogelweogo and VDPs in Burkina Faso, security agencies (e.g. immigration and police officials who they share intelligence with), traditional leaders and politicians within the community. Their affiliation with these officials grants them some form of legitimacy and recognition. Through WhatsApp, they share information about people, who they suspect are 'violent extremists,' armed robbers or cattle rustlers. In recent months, VEOs linked to the al-Qaeda consortium Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), have been seen in Ghana, most recently in Sapelliga in late February 2024.

According to the leader of one of these non-affiliated groups, Burkinabe Kogelweogo are increasingly sharing more information with their Ghanaian counterparts about the growing reports of VEO movements into Ghana, which these groups then pass on to security forces.

²¹ Kogelweogo, which means "bush guardians" in Moore, are traditional communal militias typically found in Burkina Faso that provide local security to communities, where the government is weak or absent.

However, security on the border remains weak, particularly in these communities that are difficult to access. Therefore, in the absence of Ghana's security forces, these groups have taken on the responsibility to repel VEO incursions in their community, which has manifested in many ways into ethnic profiling of Sahelian Fulbe, who travel frequently through these borderlands. The study found that by targeting ethnic Fulbe, their actions are further aggravating the stigmatization and marginalization of this group, which can devolve into inter- and intra-communal conflicts.

Similarly, in Damongo, High Tension is a non-affiliated group that tackles criminal activity, including policing for drug use, youth delinquency and prostitution. Whilst the group claims political neutrality and non-use of violence, the research found that the group has a history of engaging in violence and that its leader is a disgruntled member of the ruling NPP.²² The group often engages in political activities when invited and paid to do so by a specific political party, as it did in 2020, for the NPP. A community member stated that "*the group is mainly composed of 'weed smokers' and drug addicts.*" The group leader denied this claim.

Finally, the Asafoatse Group (Land Guards) in Kasoa also was established to serve as warriors and land guards for chiefs and traditional rulers.²³ When not participating in political vigilantism, they serve as land guards and security providers. During a focus group discussion with group members, they claimed that they are also 'land tax collectors' for the chief of Kasoa. Despite the role this group plays as a traditional warrior group, many community members view the group as just land guards, thus not accrediting them with the respect they would otherwise give to the Asafo (warriors) of the chief. According to one respondent, the NDC used the group to campaign for the current MP for Kasoa during the 2020 elections, which corresponds with the literature that highlights how land guards are often used by chiefs or political candidates, to fight in chieftaincy conflicts.²⁴

2.6 Communication between Members and Political Parties

About a quarter of vigilante group members (Figure 8) reported that they have direct reporting mechanisms with senior leadership of the political party, including politicians, parties/leaders, and financiers. These communications between groups and political party actors are usually controlled by group leadership. The party youth organizer remains the primary point of contact with political parties and is often the main person attending meetings with officials. Because of Act 999, political parties are now more careful about openly being associated or seen with these groups. Currently, 25.8 percent of community members stated that political parties are directly involved in the structuring and mobilization of youth groups. As such, the focus groups revealed that politicians' relationships with vigilante groups are largely informal - likely to maintain a

²² Kills in Damongo.

²³ Interview with a traditional chief, Kasoa, Central Region, 29/01/2024.

²⁴ Bukari and Bukari (2021). According to a respondent, the group was used by the NDC to counter the current MP for Kasoa in the 2020 elections.

Executives (DCEs), and party officials, who play a pivotal role through direct involvement and support. This political backing often manifests in financial contributions and organizational support, which are crucial for the sustainment and operation of the vigilante groups. The intricate web of interactions and relationships between vigilante groups and their stakeholders paints a complex picture of mutual dependence and influence. Political figures and parties emerge as critical actors whose support plays a significant role in these groups' operational viability and strategic direction.

The SNA (Figure 2) shows how the complex relations between vigilante groups and internal and external actors manifest themselves in a complex web of multiple actors and stakeholders interacting at different levels to achieve the goal of the political party. Regarding the internal actors involved in the activities of vigilante groups, the Chairman was the most connected, as he directs the actions of his group members, and he also represents the group during political dialogues and engagements with politicians, inside and outside their party. Their central position indicates that they are likely the key decision-makers and have control over the flow of information and resources within the network. Moreover, the Chairman's extensive connections suggest that they can sway opinions, mobilize support, and shape the agenda of the political youth groups. Their influence extends within the group and potentially beyond, impacting broader political dynamics in Ghana.²⁶

Political party leaders had the next highest connections and nodes. As shown in Figure 2, the strong centrality of political party leaders indicates a significant level of interaction between the political youth groups and established political parties. This suggests that the youth groups are not operating in isolation but are actively involved in the broader political landscape, likely seeking support, resources, or guidance from political party leaders.

The SNA also highlights how members themselves are connected as either a competitor or an ally. Connections between groups that are competitors suggest a complex interplay of competition and cooperation within the political landscape. This indicates efforts by groups to assert their influence, expand their support base, or compete for resources and political power. Conversely, connections between groups that are allies suggest strategic alliances aimed at pooling resources, amplifying their collective voice, or advancing shared goals and interests. These connections among the groups suggest that any discussions around governance structures, decision-making processes, and mechanisms for conflict resolution should consider the interconnected nature of the political youth network, aiming to balance the interests of groups with the collective goals of the network.

²⁶ The importance of the Chairman emerged strongly on the field when most of these groups decided not to speak to the research team in the absence of the Chairman.

3. Modus Operandi and Interactions among Vigilante Groups

Part 3 reviews how these groups continue to operate, despite the recent legislation that criminalizes their activities and organization. It also looks at the potential evolution of these groups as a result of the new legal environment that they exist in and assesses their influence.

3.1 The Passage of Act 999 and its Current Implementation Status

The passage of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 was mainly in reaction to electoral violence at the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election on 31 January 2019. The public outcry about the violence and political vigilantism in general led Ghana's President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to establish the Emile Short Commission of Inquiry on 8 February 2019 to investigate the incidents. The committee recommended a law banning vigilante activities in Ghana. Following this, the National Peace Council (NPC) engaged political parties on a way forward to end vigilantism, which culminated in the passage of Act 999, by Parliament on 22 July 2019.

Following the passage of the law, the NPC set up a code of conduct to help guide political parties in their implementation of the law, with the stated aim of eradicating political vigilantism. However, the code of conduct is still yet to be implemented, and the NPC has still not been able to roll out the implementation of the code at the national, regional, and constituency levels. The passage of Act 999 was expected to proscribe acts of political vigilantism and enhance electoral security in the country. Sections 2 and 3 of Act 999 provide for the disbandment of political vigilante groups and the prohibition of their organization and activities. While both main political parties in Ghana issued directives to allegedly disband vigilante groups aligned or affiliated with their parties, the research found that these groups remain intact and not disbanded as publicly stated.

Many of these groups have modified their appearance and public activities, in response to the passage of Act 999. For example, some groups changed their names, while others rebranded into youth bases. It is noteworthy that groups with national representation did not change their names, but instead were absorbed into mainstream party structures, and vigilante members now hold positions as party security and operations for the NDC and NPP respectively.²⁷ The integration of these groups into mainstream party organizations enabled the parties to keep these groups available as internal security during elections. As party operations and security, members of these groups are deployed to several hotspots during election cycles to foment or dispel violence in the interests of their parties.

²⁷ Some examples of groups that have been absorbed by the main political parties are the Invincible Forces, Delta Forces, Azorka Boys, The Elephant, NDC internal Security, Die Hard.

Other groups have continued to operate, representing themselves as ‘social groups’, while still maintaining much of their membership, organization, and modus operandi. Almost 18 percent of the research sample indicated that they would continue to support their party through political action, irrespective of the legal measure to ban political vigilantism. It is important to acknowledge that the two main political parties in Ghana, the NDC and NPP, continue to leverage their political bases, as security and in support of operations in diverse ways similar to that of the political vigilante groups. Finally, the existing vigilante groups that have maintained their names do so on the basis that contrary to Section 1 of Act 999, they do not use acts or threats of violence in their activities (see Table 2).

3.2 The Emergence of Youth Bases

Since the law was passed, there has been a proliferation of political youth bases across communities formerly occupied by vigilante groups. Although these youth bases maintain the structure of the vigilante groups, the effort to rebrand themselves gives them some cover under the law. As such, these bases have become the meeting points for party youth, and a place for recruitment of party loyalists to perform security functions during pre-election and election day. The youth bases are typically registered under the youth wing of each political party.²⁸ The motive for registering the youth bases is to enable the political parties to supervise and control their activities using a code of conduct and ethics developed by the party.

The youth bases²⁹ are dominant in the Northern, Upper East, and Savannah Regions. The research found that there is a particularly large number of these youth bases in Zongo communities in Ejura, Techiman, Nima, Asawase, and Tamale. The political youth bases name themselves after their patrons or take on names that depict a positive or neutral image, clearly to avoid the perception of violence that vigilante groups had. At the surface level, youth bases are simply seen as places for conversations and camaraderie, however, in reality, they are sites for contestation. A community leader from Ejura indicated that *“the bases are common in this town... no one will show you but when you step into town, you’ll see them. It is very visible. The two political parties have bases and even within the same political party, there are different bases... supporting different elites in the same party. Some of the bases are break-away bases that have severed ties with their mother base and even fight with them.”*

Some of the youth groups even now see themselves as the armed security wing of their party. In areas like Tamale, Kasoa, Nima, Asawase, and Bolgatanga, the political parties themselves have established units known as party security or party operations, staging out of these youth bases. The party security units have hierarchical structures and continue to operate in military-styled arrangements and ranks, holding titles such as commanders. They provide security for party officials and at political party functions, and sometimes even operate beyond their

²⁸ Key informant interview with a Regional Youth Organizer of a political party.

²⁹ Youth base are places where the groups gather.

geographical area defending their political interest. In order to avoid being identified by community members, the political parties at times call on youth bases outside their areas to participate in campaign activities. What the research found, is that in a sense, these political vigilante groups continue to operate, disguised under different names, and as one respondent explained, “*some of these groups pose as youth bases but in effect, they are vigilante groups working with the political parties.*” These rebrands and changes highlight how the use of legislative measures to curb political vigilantism, ultimately has had very little effect on their nature and character.³⁰

Table 2: Changes in names of Vigilante groups since the passage of Act 999

Former Name	Current Name	Political Party Affiliation	Location
Together as One		NDC	Ashanti Region: Asawase
Hawks (Kumasi)	Task Force	NDC	Ashanti Region: Asawase
Maxwell Boys	Maxwell Boys	NPP	Ashanti Region: Asawase
Benghazi Base Boys	Benghazi Boys	NDC	Ashanti Region: Ejura
FM Base	FM Base	NPP	
Dragons	Party Security	NDC	Bono East Region: Techiman
Scorpion	Party Operations	NPP	
Hawks (Kasoa)	NDC internal security-Kasoa	NDC	Central Region: Kasoa
Delta Force	Fidelity Men	NPP	Central Region: Kasoa
Freetown Movement for NDC	Freetown Movement for NDC	NDC	Greater Accra Region: Nima
Delta Force	The Elephant	NPP	Greater Accra Region: Nima
Shoeno Boys	Shoeno Boys	NDC	Greater Accra Region: Odododiodio
Sempe Great Warriors	Sempe Great Warriors	NPP	Greater Accra Region: Odododiodio
Gbewaa Youth	Gbewaa Youth	NDC	Northern Region: Tamale
Invincible Forces	Party Operations	NPP	Northern and Ashanti Region
Trouble Base	Trouble Base	NDC	Savannah Region: Damongo

³⁰ Fieldnotes, Interview with Municipal Commander.

Invincible Forces	Atabia Base	NPP	Savannah Region: Damongo
Die Hard	Die Hard	NDC	Upper East Region: Bolgatanga
Bolgatanga Bull Dogs	Dazota	NPP	Upper East Region: Bolgatanga
Holland Base	Holland Base	NPP	Upper East Region: Bolgatanga
Okada Riders	Okada Riders	NDC	Volta Region: Hohoe
Nima Base	Nima Base	NPP	Volta Region: Hohoe
Gogo Kogelweego Neighbourhood Watchdog	Googo Community Neighbourhood Watchdog Committee	Non-Affiliated	Upper East Region: Googo
Sapelliga Kogelweego Neighbourhood Watchdog	Sapelliga Community Neighbourhood Watchdog Committee	Non-Affiliated	Upper East Region: Sapilliga
Azorka Boys	Azorka Boys	NDC	Northern Region: Tamale
Kandahar	Kandahar	NPP	Northern Region: Tamale
Be Neeti	Be Neeti	NDC	Northern Region: Tamale
Russian Boys	Russian Boys	NPP	Northern Region: Tamale
Taliban	Taliban	NPP	Northern Region: Tamale
Al-Qaeda Boys	Al-Qaeda Boys	NDC	Northern Region: Tamale
Aluta Boys	Aluta Boys	NDC	Northern Region: Tamale
Bokum Base	Bokum Base	NPP	Accra Region: Ododododio
Big Six	Big Six	NPP	Northern Region: Tamale
Aduwa Base	Aduwa Base	NDC	Savannah Region: Damongo
77 Base	77 Base	NPP	Savannah Region: Damongo
High Tension	High Tension	Non-Affiliated	Savannah Region: Damongo
Super Die Hard	Super Die Hard	NDC	Upper East Region: Bolgatanga
Rotman Base	Rotman Base	Mixed	Volta Region: Hohoe
Fadama Base	Fadama Base	NDC	Volta Region: Hohoe
Ayaata Boys	Ayaata Boys	NDC	Accra Region: Ododododio
Zion Base	Zion Base	NPP	Bono East Region: Techiman
Fit Green Gym Boys	Fit Green Gym Boys	NDC	Bono East Region: Techiman
Rapper Base	Rapper Base	NPP	Ashanti Region: Ejura
Mallam Base	Mallam Base	NDC	Ashanti Region: Ejura
Asafoatse Group	Asafoatse Group	Non- Affiliated	Central Region: Kasoa

The Taliban	The Taliban	NPP	Volta Region: Hohoe
Aljazeera	Aljazeera	NDC	Northern Region: Tamale
Boko Haram	Boko Haram	NPP	Northern Region: Tamale
Benghazi Base	Benghazi Base	NDC	Volta Region: Hohoe

Source: Fieldwork 2024

3.3 Perceptions of Act 999

Act 999 has been met with mixed responses and feelings from both individuals involved in vigilantism and those not involved. Some groups consider the disbandment of their group as an infringement on their rights and freedom of association, and some respondents even suggested that they plan to protest and demonstrate against the law if it is actively enforced. Overall, the research found that the characteristics of violence often associated with political vigilante groups have diminished greatly since Act 999 came into effect. Hitherto, clashes between political vigilantes from different political parties were often common, and violent, especially during election season. But since the new law was passed, despite its lack of enforcement, respondents from Techiman, Tamale, Kasoa, and Damongo, observed a decline in the use of violence during recent voter registration exercises. This is an indication that the law has been somewhat effective in reducing electoral violence, but it is not strictly enforced and remains largely untested in the lead-up to the 2024 election.

Despite the passage of the law, this research study found that political vigilante youth groups continue to operate business as usual.

4. Interactions between vigilante groups and other actors

This section of the report examines interactions between youth groups and other actors within a political network, such as traditional authorities, state security, political parties, and community members. It was necessary to analyze their interaction with these groups because, in a society, individual and group behaviors are shaped through interactions with nature and, predominantly, community members and the people around them. Although most of these groups are formed by their own initiatives to support their political party agenda, they do not operate in isolation. Instead, they interact within a spectrum of complex actors and stakeholder networks that influence their activities.³¹ These different actors and stakeholders could be categorized into primary, secondary, and tertiary actors.³² Studies³³ have argued that issues linked to socio-

³¹ Bukari, K. N., Ametefe, R., Osei-Kufuor, P., & Imoro, R. J. (2023). Actors and networks embedded in political vigilante groups in Ghana. *The African Review*, 1(aop), 1-33.

³² Kuupiel & Nangwele, 2023.

³³ Gabdulhakov, R. (2019). Heroes or hooligans? Media portrayal of StopXam (Stop a Douchebag) vigilantes in Russia. *Laboratorium. Журнал социальных исследований*, 11(3), 16-45.

economic inequality, political disenfranchisement,³⁴ and underemployment³⁵ are major drivers that push people to form or join vigilante groups, and these vulnerabilities are often leveraged and exploited by most actors, especially politicians and party leaders, to their benefit, influencing the activities of these groups to achieve their political objective (seen in Figure 3).

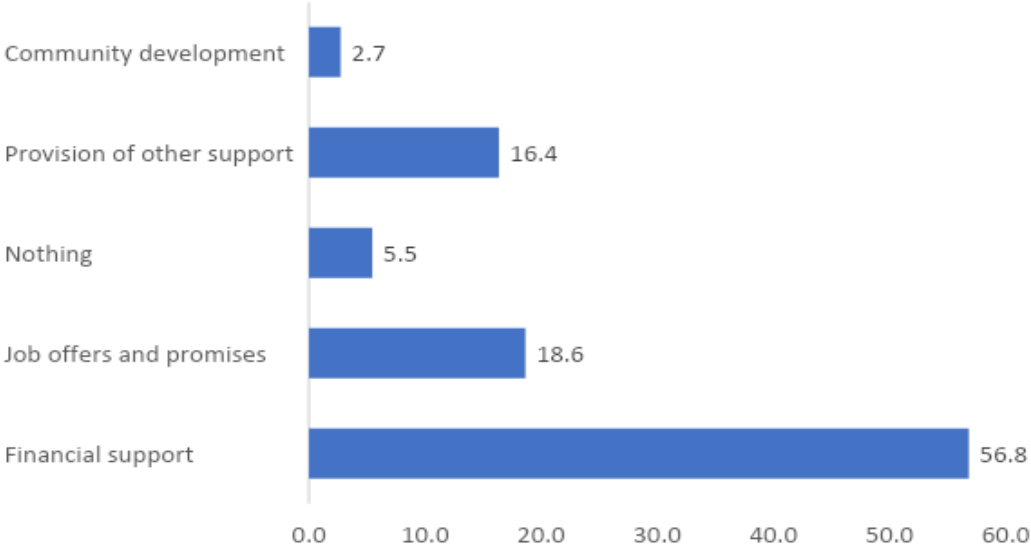


Figure 3: Influence of politicians on political youth group activities
Source: Field data, 2024

4.1 Primary actors

The primary actors include political vigilante groups, the youth of political parties, polling agents, and supporters of political parties.³⁶ These primary actors are often the main perpetrators of violence during electoral and political activities. Appendix 1 presents some vigilante groups and their interactions with other vigilante groups.³⁷ It must be noted that all these groups are involved in a complex web of interactions through influence as allies or competition. For example, the study realizes that most of the groups within the NDC take inspiration from other NDC groups like the Azorka Boys, the Task Force, and the NDC Operations; conversely, they also see NPP groups like the Invincible Forces (now NPP Operations), Boys and Delta Forces as their greatest competitors. The same dynamic applies to NPP-affiliated groups.

Sidang, H. O. (2020). Role of vigilante groups in crime management in Kariobangi North, Nairobi County, Kenya (Doctoral dissertation, Africa Nazarene University).

³⁴ Gyampo, 2011.

³⁵ Bukari et al, 2023.

³⁶ Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020.

³⁷ Some of the vigilante groups that have been operating in Ghana include the Hawks, Holland Base, Atlantic Base, Taskforce, Dragon, Gbewa Youth, 77 Junction, Dazota, Invincible Forces, Kandahar Boys, Delta Forces, Bamba Boys, Maxwell Boys, FM Base, Rapper Base, NDC Operations, Together as One, Die Hard and Scorpions.

The research found that the majority (80%) of vigilante group members interviewed have friends and relatives in different groups outside their communities both within and outside their party. The existence of friendships and familial relationships across different vigilante groups suggests a high level of network connectivity and a potentially widespread, interlinked support system. This interconnectedness can facilitate the exchange of information, resources, and strategies across groups, enhancing their collective resilience. In terms of what they do with these groups, as Figure 16 shows, 36.8 percent of them collaborate with other groups to achieve a party goal or support party issues when they are attending rallies and other political party events.

This level of collaboration indicates the presence of informal networks or alliances among political youth groups, which are established based on trust, common political goals, and mutual support that extends beyond the confines of individual groups. These groups mobilize swiftly and effectively, showcasing their organizational complexity and strategic planning. These forms of cooperation were elaborated on by one group leader, who explained *“Sometimes, we travel from our region to different regions for rallies and other party programs; we will not pick any weapon or anything to protect ourselves, but the moment an issue arises, and we need those things, we can call for it, and within minutes we will have whatever we need for whatever activity we want to do. This is so because we have friends all over.”*

It is common for vigilante groups to share information and travel to other communities and provide support. Evidence of such cooperation is seen in by-elections, voter registrations, and intra-party elections. For example, during the fieldwork, our researchers observed the Gbewa boys in Tamale mobilized other vigilante groups like Aluta Boys, Al-Qaeda, and other affiliated NDC groups to the regional party headquarters to burn and destroy party property, as an aggrieved response to the suspension of the regional treasurer. This event highlights the mobilizing power of vigilante groups to bring out other affiliated vigilante groups to deal with intra-party problems that go beyond their bases’ priorities.

The study found that strong vigilante groups are sent to constituencies where competition is high, and to hotspots of potential violence. For example, during the NPP primaries on 27 January 2024, a leader of Invincible Forces in Asawase stated that his members were deployed to all 39 constituencies in the Ashanti Region. However, he and others were specifically deployed to five hotly contested constituencies. Similarly, NDC-affiliated groups (such as Azorka) also stated that they will be deployed in December 2024 to places like Techiman to ensure the election is not rigged.

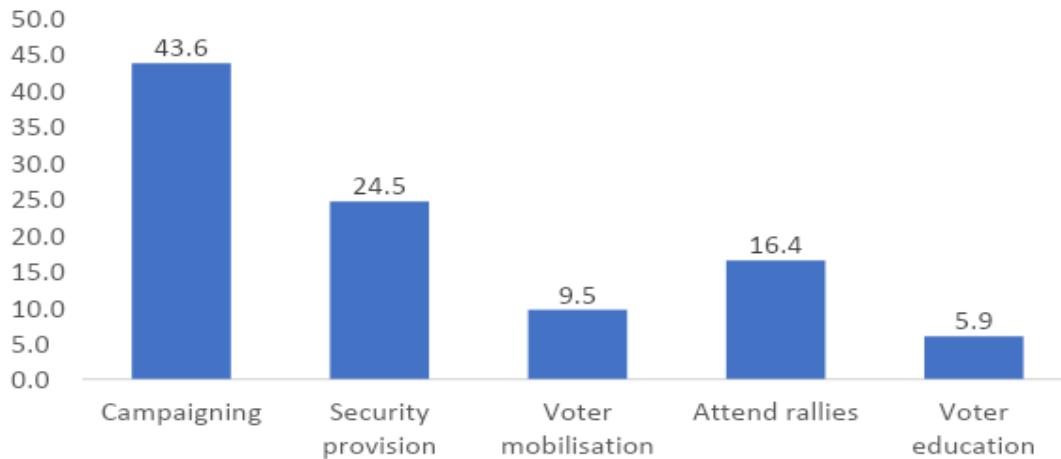


Figure 4: Roles performed by political youth groups before elections

Source: Field data, 2024

Political vigilante youth groups, particularly those connected to political parties, participate in a variety of activities leading up to elections to influence the electoral process, motivate voters, and advance their party’s electoral chances. Both the interviews and surveys show that political vigilante groups mainly engage in campaigning activities like ‘door-to-door’ campaigning for votes for their political party (43.6% of survey respondents indicated so); providing security before the elections, especially during party events and voter registration exercises at the polling stations. 24.5% of survey respondents indicated so; as seen in Figure 4); party reorganization including mobilizing party members to be active, especially during voter registration exercises; voter education; and attending party rallies and events.

During election periods (Figure 5), political vigilante youth groups often play roles that can influence the outcome and the overall democratic process. The research found that while the electoral activities are underway, these groups engage in ballot box protection, while others serve as party security in monitoring the various processes. These activities could have several negative implications on the outcome of the elections. For instance, the research found that the presence of political vigilante youth groups at polling stations intimidates voters, especially if these groups are perceived to enforce specific parties’ interests. Community members in Kasoa, Tamale, Techiman, and Ejura noted that they are always afraid of the possibility of violence at the polling and registration centers. Also, when different youth groups supporting opposing parties are involved in ballot box protection there is a higher possibility of tensions which could potentially lead to violent confrontations.

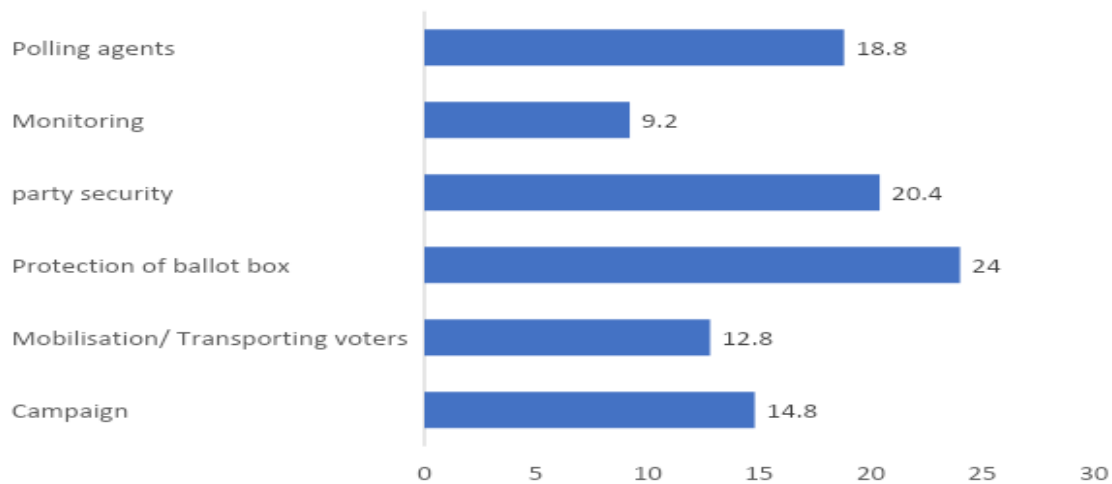


Figure 5: Roles performed by political youth groups during elections

Source: Field data, 2024

Finally, during the post-election period (Figure 6), there is a decline in party activities (19.5%), as the groups and the parties focus on reorganization. This continuity suggests that these groups have objectives and agendas that extend beyond merely serving as instruments for electoral campaigns, potentially encompassing broader social, economic, or political goals such as voter intimidation, suppression of opposition, achieving economic benefits, and ensuring the welfare of group members. Nonetheless, the research found that some members will continue the political fights in support of their party’s interests, which can escalate into post-election violence.

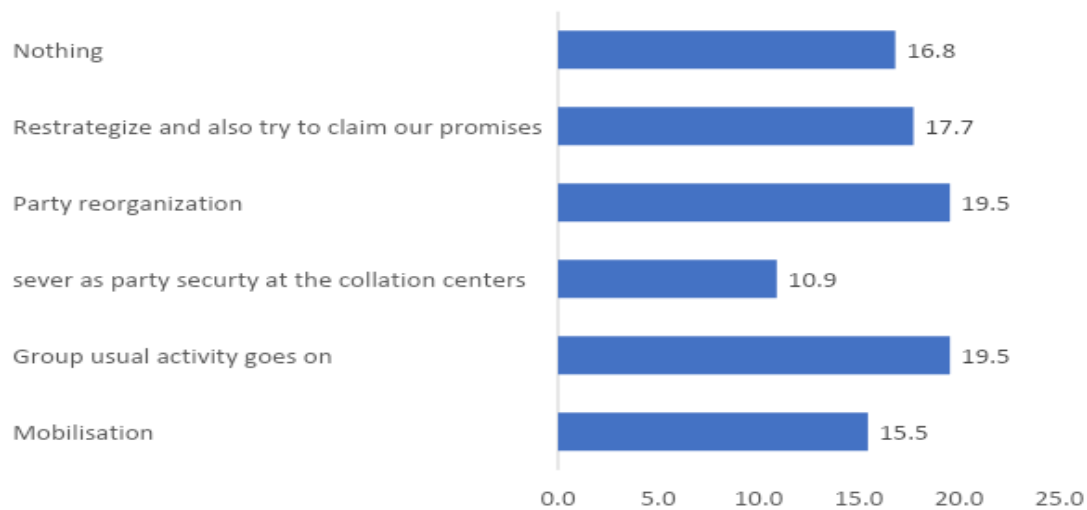


Figure 6: Roles performed by political youth groups after elections

Source: Field data, 2024

4.2 Secondary Actors

Secondary actors³⁸ are usually politicians, aspirational candidates, and political party leaders.³⁹ Because most of these groups are created by or for these actors, to expand their political agenda, they often become the direct inciters, sponsors, and beneficiaries of vigilante violence during electoral activities. The study found that political party executives (32.7%) are the major stakeholders in the activities of vigilante groups in Ghana, followed by parliamentary candidates (20.6%), as indicated in Figure 7. The data shows that party executives are the fulcrum of party organization and are therefore seen by these groups as key stakeholders. More importantly, as highlighted below, secondary actors are critical for vigilante groups, as these political and business elites protect vigilante actors from the law, allowing them to operate with some level of impunity. They achieve impunity because their principals are politically connected and have influence over the police and security agencies, so the police will avoid arresting vigilantes.

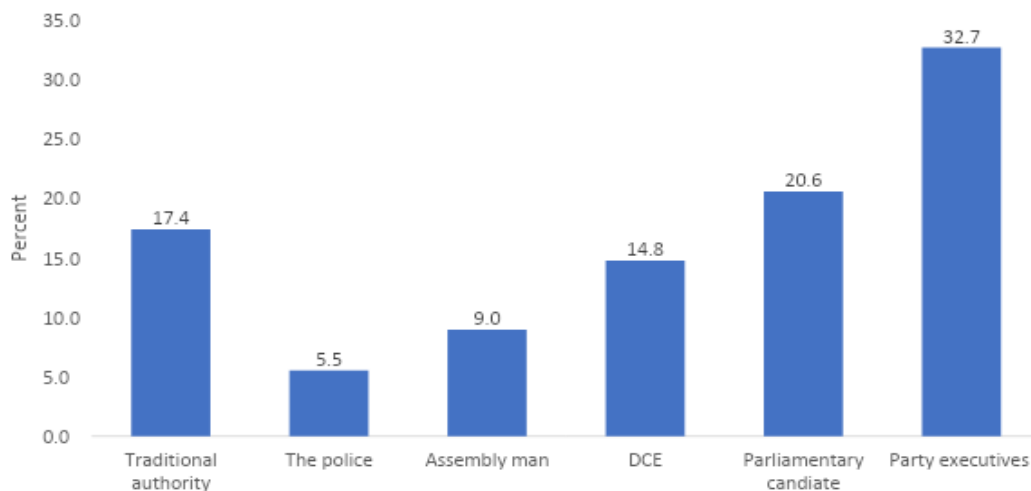


Figure 7: Actors/stakeholders that are involved in vigilante activities

Source: Field data, 2024

The close relationship between vigilante groups and party executives suggests a high level of instrumentalization of these groups for political purposes (Omach, 2010). It implies that these groups may primarily serve the interests of specific political parties or leaders rather than broader community or societal objectives. The association with these secondary actors - political party executives - can lend these groups a veneer of legitimacy and protection. Moreover, because these stakeholders have so much power and influence, they can always leverage the political capital they have with political elites in Ghana, and get these groups to bid for them, while whoever stands in their way will face the consequences.

³⁸ Kuupiel & Nangwele, 2023.

³⁹ Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020.

4.3 External actors

External actors often include the key stakeholders that cannot be relegated to the background in the discourse of political party vigilantism. The literature highlights how the Electoral Commission of Ghana, media, security agencies, traditional leaders, and religious leaders are some of the critical tertiary ‘external’ actors in political vigilantism in Ghana (see Figure 17, for a list of the various relevant external actors listed in the research).⁴⁰ The stakeholders and external actors included Members of Parliament (MPs), Municipal Chief Executives (MCEs), traditional authorities like the Chief, assembly members, and the police. All these actors and stakeholders, through their behavior and interactions, are actively responsible for the rise and thriving environment of political vigilantism in Ghana, though they were not perceived to be involved in or contributing to the violence.⁴¹ The actor analysis and SNA show that external actors have substantial influence over the activities of these vigilante groups.

5. Conclusion

The research found that political youth vigilante groups are still clearly part of Ghana’s political landscape despite the law to ban them. Since the passage of Act 999, most of the groups have rebranded and now pose as youth bases and political party security guards.⁴² Moreover, many of the ex-vigilante groups or members have been integrated into politics and employed as formal national security operatives. The groups remain informally organized; nevertheless, they also feature well-structured leadership and roles within the political party structure to which they are affiliated. Political party leaders are being careful about associating with the more famously violent groups publicly. Meanwhile, non-affiliated vigilante groups have continued to carry on the role of watchdog committees, operating like self-defense groups, and working closely with the government. However, since the groups have not fully disbanded, despite the imposition of Act 999, they have the potential to result in violence in the 2024 election.⁴³

5.1 Looking Ahead to the 2024 Elections

One of the major indicators in assessing the strength of a country’s democracy is its ability to hold periodic peaceful and fair elections. Ghana is viewed as a bulwark of democracy due to its ability to continue to organize successful and peaceful democratic elections and transfers of power. However, economic challenges, public discontent over corruption and poor leadership,

⁴⁰ Dumenu and Adzraku, 2020.

⁴¹ Ashiabi, 2021.

⁴² The Invincible Forces, the Hawks, Dragons, Scorpions and Delta Force all have been rebranded as party security.

⁴³ In Techiman, the likelihood of vigilante groups getting involved in the 2024 elections is very high, due to a hardened pro-NDC base that feels aggrieved for losing the election in 2020. The continuous arming of groups in Kasoa and the role of the MP, Hawa Koomson, presents challenges to peaceful elections. Generally, keenly contested areas like Techiman, Tamale, Bawku, Ashiaman, Tarkwa, Essikadu-Ketan, Asawase, Kasoa, Hohoe, Ejura, Atebubu, Savelugu could see violence if measures are not put in place.

high youth employment, and fierce political competition could derail the country's democratic gains. Also, data suggest an upsurge in violence rather than a decrease, anytime the country heads to the polls.⁴⁴ According to the Ghana Police Service, there were 61 incidences of violence in the 2020 elections and a total of 8 deaths. All elections in Ghana, whether presidential, parliamentary elections, or by-elections, have experienced some form of violence,⁴⁵ and the 2020 election, although generally peaceful, recorded a higher number of deaths and violent incidents as compared to previous elections.⁴⁶

The 2024 general elections are expected to be particularly tense, and although vigilantism has been outlawed, the politically affiliated vigilante groups are expected to be involved in some fashion. Therefore, experts anticipate that electoral violence is high.⁴⁷ The preparation and planning by vigilante groups to engage in acts of violence or revenge significantly heightens the potential for conflict. One vigilante group leader stated that, *"this year's elections will not be peaceful..."* going on further explain how because the NPP is planning to run for a third term, the NDC affiliated groups plan to take violent action to thwart their win, by further elaborating that, *"we, the NDC, will do everything possible to stop them. And when that happens, there are higher chances of violence and misunderstanding... Everyone is fighting for power."*

The activities of political vigilante groups pose a significant risk of violence during the upcoming elections, which in turn increases the potential for radicalization. Some of these groups are formed just to operate during elections, while other groups have been established specifically to carry out reprisal violence on political opposition, addressing grievances from previous electoral cycles. In Kasoa, for example, a new political vigilante youth group has emerged, in defense of their interests in the upcoming election. One group member explained that, *"war will come, because they never listen to us...It is a do-or-die affair,"* and went on to elaborate how much violence he anticipates will occur during the election cycle. This narrative is not an isolated case, but rather reflects the current tense political environment across Ghana. The consistent formation of groups with intentions rooted in revenge (both intra and inter-party) sets the stage for escalating tensions in the upcoming elections. As these groups set their minds to retaliate for past grievances, the likelihood of violence increases. Another vigilante youth group member described the need to engage in reprisal violence against previous onslaughts of violence these communities faced in prior elections, highlighting also fears that if one party's vigilantes do not prepare for conflicts, they will invariably face violence from their opposition.

⁴⁴ CDD, 2019.

⁴⁵ CDD, 2019.

⁴⁶ CDD 2022.

⁴⁷ Comments about anticipating vigilante violence during the 2024 election cycle were raised in several statements and responses obtained from the field, both from political group members and other stakeholders.

Narratives shared by vigilante group members in key informant interviews highlighted how the youth have lost trust in state institutions that have been mandated to protect them. This is because some state actors are perceived to be partisan or directly involved in political violence, and the level of trust in these institutions has largely eroded. Therefore, the researchers found a very charged sentiment among the youth, about their belief that they must take the law into their own hands. This potentially may lead to an escalation in conflict as groups seek to defend their interests outside the legal framework. This sentiment has been exacerbated by perceptions of opposition-affiliated vigilante groups, that the ruling party has integrated vigilante members that support their politics into official security and law enforcement positions.

Overall, the research found a troubling growing sentiment and mobilizing approach to the upcoming election, signaling a readiness to engage in retaliatory violence. The reference to “*an eye for an eye*” suggests a justification for using violence in response to perceived wrongs or threats. This mindset can lead to a significant escalation of violence before, during, and after the elections. It indicates a willingness to resort to physical aggression rather than legal or peaceful means to resolve disputes, potentially spiraling into widespread unrest.

Another significant factor that may lead to potential violence is the current economic inequality and challenges experienced by many young people in Ghana. Many of the youth groups believe they can only break the shackles of poverty when their political party or candidate is in power. Therefore, they perceive election day as a battle to overcome their economic misfortune. As one vigilante youth group member explained, “*The state machinery is failing all of us... But because my party came to power, they have employed me as a security person in public service. It was based on political patronage.*” The ideology of the “*winner takes all system*” is among the driving forces of these groups to continue to perpetrate crime in the name of defending their political party’s interest because they know “who gets what” and “how much”. This system creates high stakes for political competition, as the rewards of victory are substantial while the consequences of defeat are severe. Knowing that political power can significantly determine access to resources and opportunities, groups may feel incentivized to use aggressive tactics to ensure their party’s victory.

These issues highlight the many challenges to electoral integrity and democracy in Ghana. The boldness of political youth groups, fueled by perceived impunity and the support of influential backers, poses a significant risk to the peaceful conduct of the upcoming elections. These factors, combined with a retaliatory ethos as expressed in some quarters, threaten to escalate tensions and violence, undermining public trust in the electoral process and potentially destabilizing the political landscape.

6. Policy Recommendations

Respondents in the study also shared their views on potential solutions to address the issue of political vigilantism. Some of the vigilante group members provided the following recommendations: enforcement of the law through prosecution and arrest of offenders, ensuring fairness and neutrality of the EC and security agencies, promoting education and awareness, creating job opportunities, and fostering skills development. They emphasized the importance of involving all stakeholders in these efforts (Figure 8). The community respondents also expressed similar views (Figure 9).

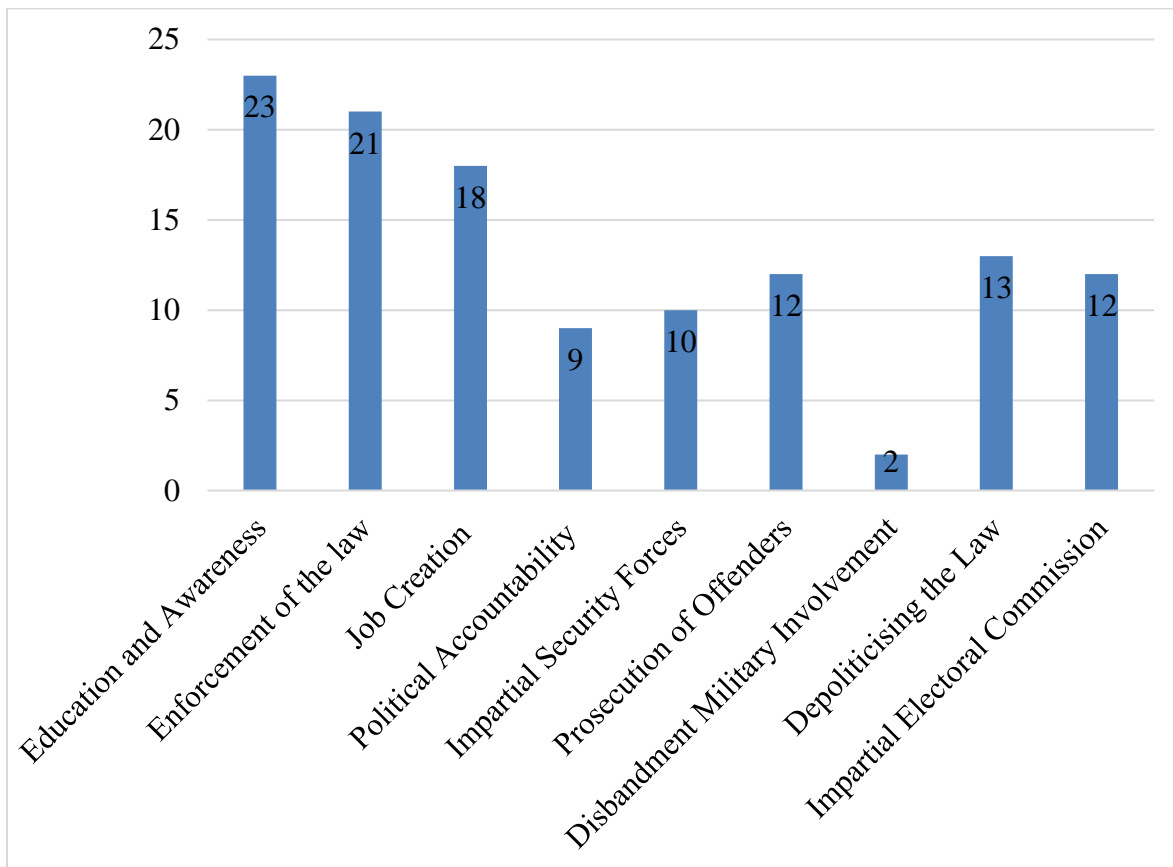


Figure: Recommendations from Community Members

Source: Field data, 2024

Short-Term Recommendations: The following recommendations can be implemented before the December 2024 elections:

1. Policy Reforms in election security management: The provision of security is paramount to preventing violence in the run-up to the 2024 elections. Bias and mistrust in the application of law enforcement, which was highlighted during the 2020 election, need to be addressed, to reduce the potential for violence. **Recommendation:** Police crowd control methods must be

efficiently and professionally applied before, during, and after the election. Therefore, security during the collation of results must be strengthened through additional police training on crowd control and responding to community violence, in the lead-up to the election, and by deploying extra police on election day, so that officers are not overwhelmed.

2. Security provisioning and the role of the Ghanaian state: The rise of communal and self-defense groups in providing security for their communities, requires oversight and regulation. If unregulated, these vigilante groups and other communal self-defense groups could abuse human and civil rights and take the law into their own hands, resulting in unaccountable violations and violence, as seen with the Kogelweogo and VDP in Burkina Faso.

Recommendation: To reduce the tendency for citizens to arm themselves and create self-defense groups, the Ghanaian government and its local representatives as well as mandated security forces like the Ghana Police Service need to be more present at community levels to ensure people do not form parallel security arrangements.

3. Fairness on the part of the Electoral Commission: The posture, transparency, and communication by the EC are key to building trust among all political players. The EC needs to engage more with the political parties and must be seen to be neutral and fair to all political parties.

4. Intense Peace Education and Stakeholder Dialogue: The National Peace Council (NPC), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and CSOs/NGOs need to embark on peace education and awareness creation of citizens and political parties. Intense engagement of political parties is important before and after the elections. There is a need for stakeholder Dialogue beyond IPAC, involving the security and political parties and EC and political parties – NPC and NCCE have this responsibility.

5. Diplomatic Engagement at the Highest Government Level: To help ease tensions, prevent electoral violence during the 2024 elections, and consolidate Ghana's democratic gains, NGOs and diplomatic missions need to engage government officials, security agencies, the EC, political parties and politicians at the higher government level.

6. Targeting Zongo Youth: There is a need to intentionally target Zongo communities and draw out targeted programs for them because of their peculiar situation (being less educated, poor, prejudiced, and discriminated against and higher levels of unemployment). CSOs/NGOs and international development programs can design educational programs and training on peaceful co-existence, knowledge empowerment, manipulation, and possible radicalization by negative groups.

7. Application of the Code of Conduct on Vigilantism: The code of conduct agreed on by political parties and the NPC need to be implemented. It should begin with re-engagement with political

parties at the constituency level. It then should be followed by the education of all political actors across the country. The NPC needs to establish a monitoring system to track the compliance of political parties, and their national and local executives, with the code of conduct's provisions.

B. Long-Term Recommendations: The following long-term recommendations can be implemented after the 2024 elections:

1. Enforcement of the Law, Act 999: The enactment of the vigilante law was expected to eradicate vigilante activities. However, there appears to be little enforcement of the law, and the key informants explained that they continue to operate and prepare for the upcoming election, citing threats of violence, with impunity. **Recommendation:** To ensure compliance, and free the political space of vigilante activities, the state must ensure implementation of the law.

2. Transform vigilante groups into political youth volunteer groups: Because vigilante groups are sometimes viewed positively within their own communities, it is possible that they can be transformed - or be remodeled - into political youth groups or volunteer groups within their political spaces, that mobilize youth as activists in a civic space, instead of resorting to violence. This would allow communities to engage in positive political campaigns, voter education, and pressure groups for community development. **Recommendation:** Ghana's National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and CSOs should register youth bases and transform them into community clubs and voluntary groups, that create spaces for activities, such as the following:

- **Youth capacity building** and training in nonviolent approaches to peacebuilding and conflict management.
- **Inter-dialogue platforms to engage youth** across the political spectrum and involve them in politics more directly, emboldening them as political actors instead of just armed youth.
- **Formal political dialogue** across political parties and security agencies, to debunk mis/dis-information that has in the past fueled mistrust in the government and sometimes devolved into electoral violence between vigilante groups aligned with the political parties. This dialogue should be facilitated by the ruling party, the NPC, and decentralized to the lower level of political party organizations. It should immediately engage opposition party members, to ensure transparency and democratic appeal. This would include engaging the Electoral Commission directly, and the media as necessary, in these dialogues.

3. Employment Creation and Development Education: Comprehensively dealing with political vigilantism requires giving employment opportunities to the burgeoning unemployed youth. **Recommendation:** This can be addressed through skills development training vis-a-vis the establishment of entrepreneurial villages/hubs to help train youth in alternative income-generating activities. Additionally, youth need more access to education to increase youth awareness and understanding of issues around them (especially against political manipulation) and be included in decision-making processes.

4. Mapping and Engaging Vigilante Networks: To address the risks presented by vigilantism in Ghana, these groups need to be identified and registered. **Recommendation:** Peace researchers and other stakeholders (CSOs/NGOs, security agencies, NPC, NCCE, and MMDAs) should compile a database of youth groups (affiliated and non-affiliated), and establish their locations, and modus operandi with the aim of building capacity for community development and conflict management. This will help us see the names and proper designation of political vigilante groups and the networks within which they are embedded.

5. Constitutional Reforms: The GoG must make constitutional reforms that practically address key issues such as excessive executive powers, the "*winner-takes-all*" syndrome, electoral management, security force deployment, and practical application of Act 999 through judicial processes to deal with vigilantism. **Recommendation:** Lobby the government to quicken the pace of ratifying and implementing constitutional reforms that include amending Act 999, as its current form does not address the nuances of the vigilantism menace.

6. Increase Visibility and Presence of the Ghana Police Service at the Community Level: Many communities especially border communities require a strong security presence to deal with a number of security challenges, including the looming presence of VEO threats from the Sahel which have encouraged vigilantism in northern communities. **Recommendation:** The GoG should increase police numbers and strategically place police in these communities to fill the security vacuum. The current state of community policing and community watchdog committees should be viewed as temporary security in these communities, through messaging campaigns the government deploys, to reduce the pull towards non-state groups involved in community policing. While these groups are still active, they need to be engaged and trained to prevent them from engaging in human rights abuses and violations and on how to effectively collaborate with mandated security forces, like the Ghana Police Service, who hold the ultimate authority in matters of community policing.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Political Vigilante Groups, Political Party Affiliations, and Location

Location	Political Party	Name of Political Vigilante Group for survey	Name of Political Vigilante Group for FGD
Ashanti Region: Asawase	NDC	Together as one	Taskforce
	NPP	Maxwell Boys	Party Operations (Invincible Forces)
Ashanti Region: Ejura	NDC	Libya Boys	Mallam Base
	NPP	FM Base	Rapper Base
Bono East Region: Techiman	NDC	Dragon	Fit Green Gym Boys
	NPP	Scorpion	Zion Base
Central Region: Kasoa	NDC	NDC Internal Security- Kasoa	NDC Internal Security- Kasoa
	NPP	Fidelity Men	Fidelity Men
	Non-Affiliated		Asafoatse Group (Land Guards)
Greater Accra Region: Nima	NDC	Freetown Movement for NDC	Hollandians
	NPP	The Elephant	Motor Riders for Change
Greater Accra Region: Odododiodio	NDC	Shoeno Boys	Ayaata Boys
	NPP	Sempe Great Warriors	Bokum Base
Northern Region: Tamale	NDC	Gbewaa Youth	Aluta Boys
	NPP	Operations (Invincible Forces)	Big Six
Savannah Region: Damongo	NDC	Trouble Base	Aduwa Base
	NPP	Atabia Base	77 Base
	Non-Affiliated		High Tension
Upper East Region: Bolgatanga	NDC	Die Hard	Super Die Hard
	NPP	Holland Base	Dazota
Volta Region: Hohoe	NDC	Okada Riders	Fadama Base, Rotman Base

	NPP	Nima Base	The Taliban
Upper East Region: Googo	Non-Affiliated	Gogo Koulwego Neighbourhood watchdog	Googo Koulwego Neighbourhood watchdog
Upper East Region: Sapelliga	Non-Affiliated	Sapelliga Koulwego neighbourhood watchdog	Sapelliga Koulwego neighbourhood watchdog

Source: Field data, 2024

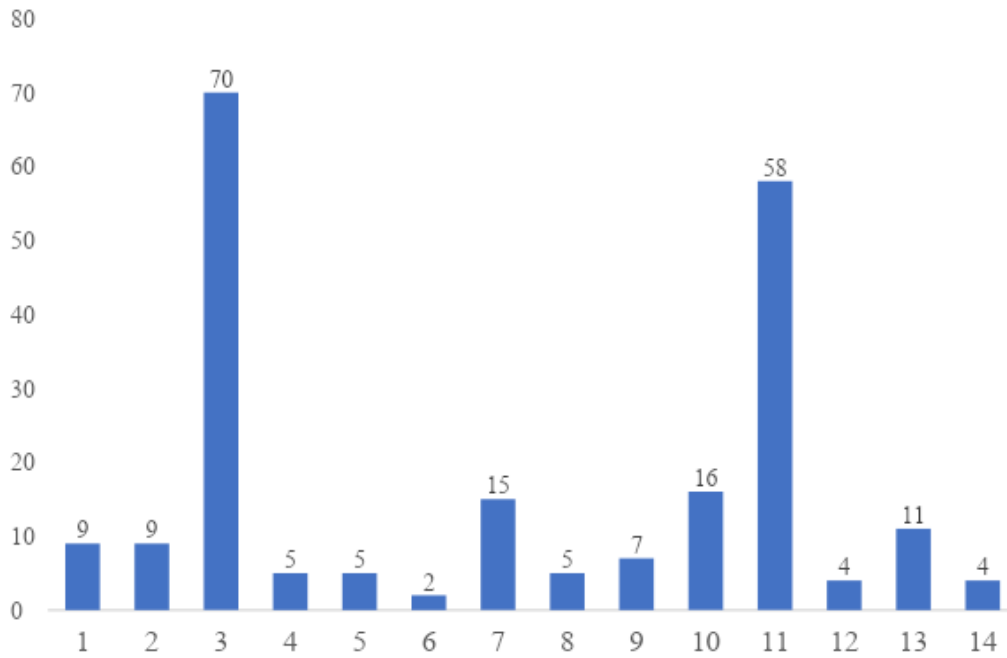
Appendix 2: Age group of vigilantes

Age	Frequency	Per cent
15 - 24 years (early working age)	3	1.4
25 - 54 years (prime working age)	213	96.8
55 - 64 years (mature working age)	3	1.4
65 years and over (elderly)	1	0.5
Total	220	100

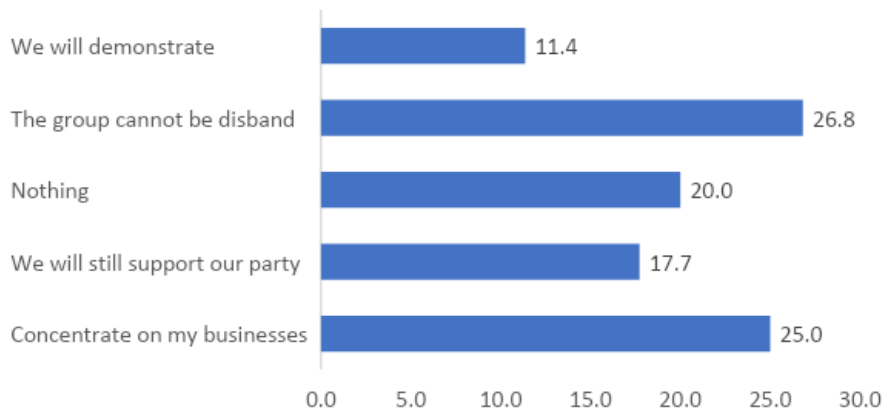
Appendix 3: How members are recruited into vigilante groups

Means of Recruitment	Frequency	Per cent
Coercion	3	1.4
Invitation	51	23.2
Other	4	1.8
Voluntary participation	162	73.6
Total	220	100

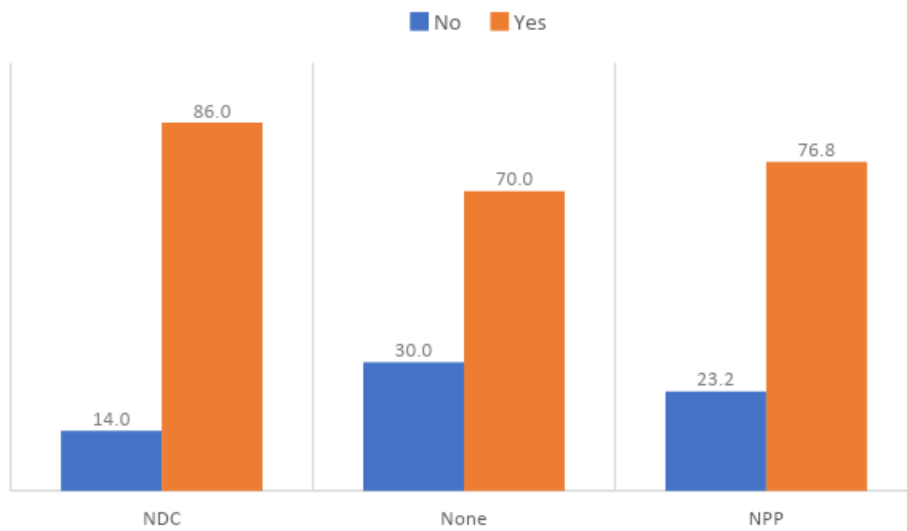
Appendix 4: Reasons for Joining Political Youth Group



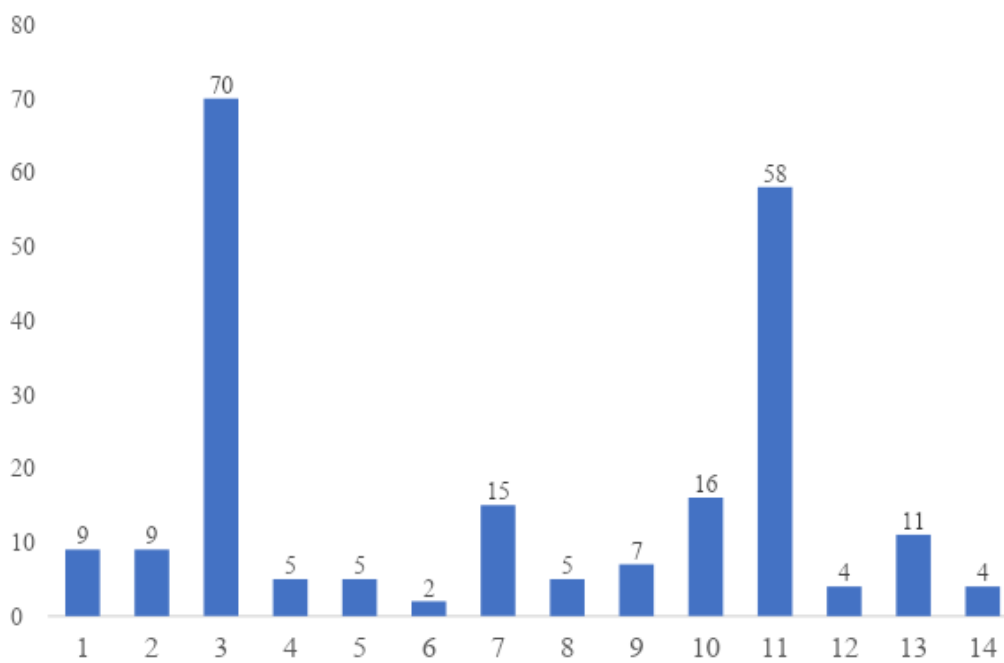
Appendix 5: Action to be taken if the group is disbanded



Appendix 6: Group affiliations and perspective of Political Vigilantism as a security threat



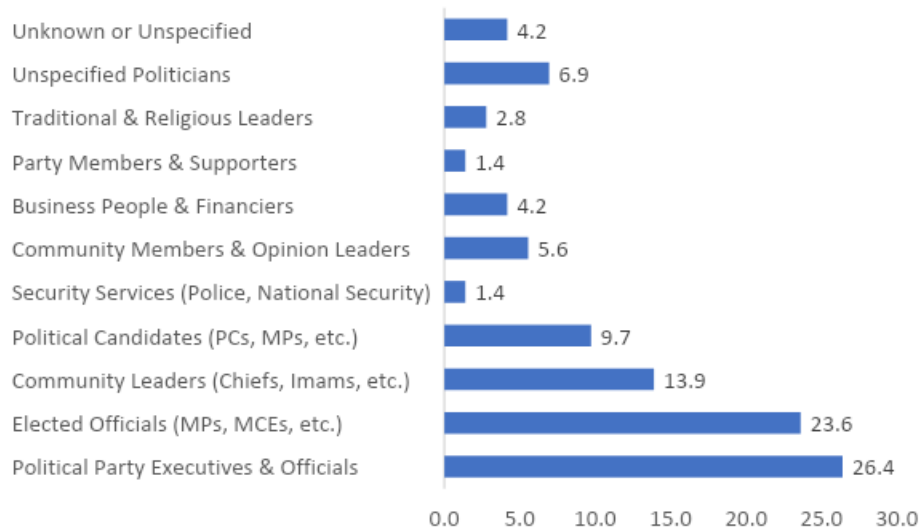
Appendix 7: Reasons for joining Political vigilante Youth Group



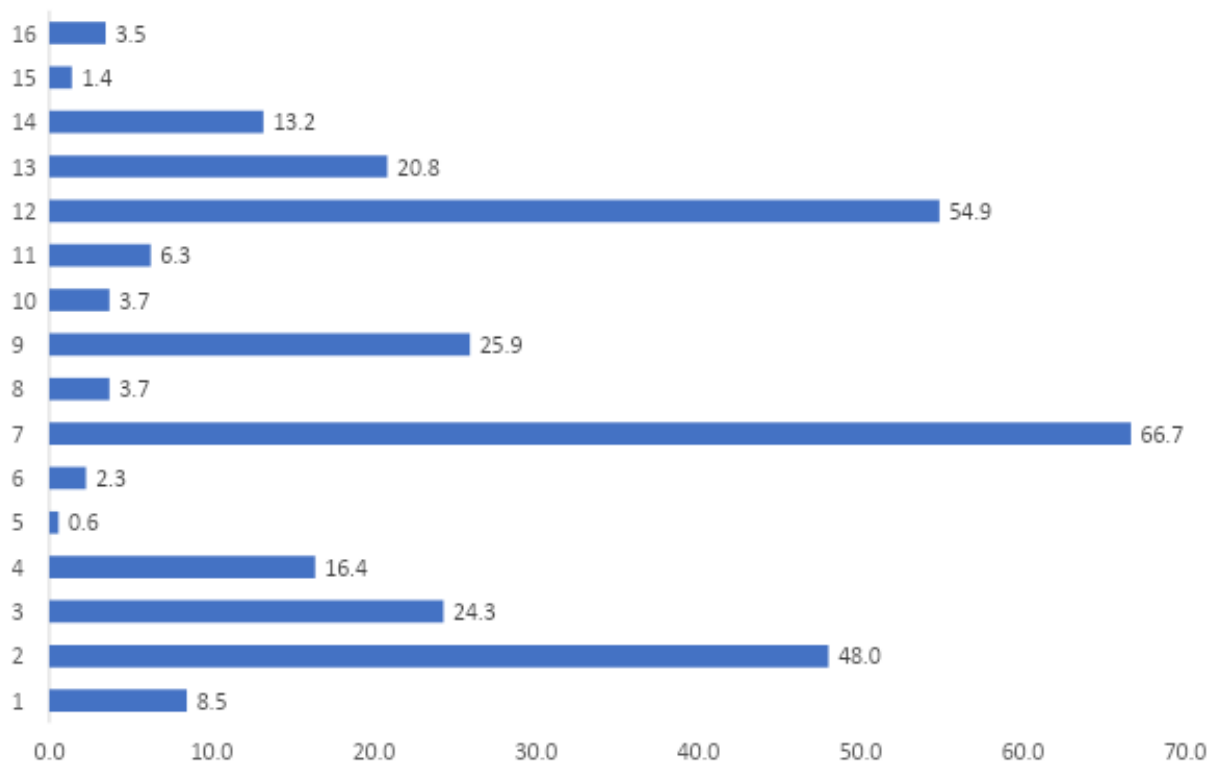
Appendix 8: Community members' view on how politicians influence political youth group activities

Means of Influence	Frequenc y	Per cent
Financial Support and Incentives	45	37.5
Job Promises and Opportunities	21	17.5
Providing Resources and Materials	9	7.5
Engagement in Party Plans and Campaigns	5	4.2
Promises of Education and Support	6	5.0
Incitement to Violence or Security Roles	20	16.7
Do not know	14	11.7
Total	120	100.0

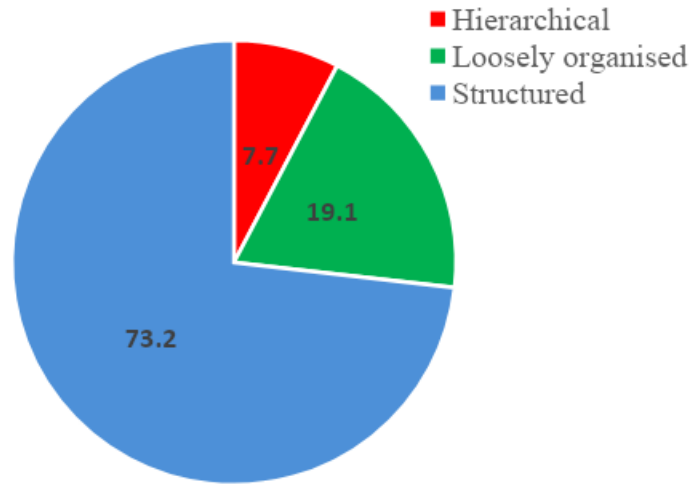
Appendix 9: Stakeholders involved in the activities of the political vigilante youth groups



Appendix 9: Sources of funding for vigilante groups



Appendix 10: How vigilante groups are organized



Appendix 11: Mode of communication aside from physical meetings

