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Border Residents and Border Control in Ghana: Practices and Challenges

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Abstract:

This study assesses border control practices in Ghana, using evidence from the eastern border town of Aflao. It ascertains the practices adopted by the Ghana Immigration Service to identify illegal migrants and criminals from the large numbers of people who normally cross the border daily. It finds out that the Immigration Service performs the border control functions in an environment of a high local cross-border mobility. The situation has led to the development of many informal rules, which regulate cross-border mobility and the work of the service. To effectively implement the rules on cross-border mobility, the service has adopted practices, which strike a dynamic balance between the need for easy cross-border movement of border residents and the duty to prevent illegal migration. Challenges such as lack of border surveillance tools, border identification system, vehicles, and weapons, are undermining the work of the service. The study recommends the provision of logistics including surveillance tools, vehicles, and weapons, to the service.

Keywords: Immigration, border control, migration, Ghana immigration service, patrol

1. Introduction

A major challenge to border management in a world of fluid international movement of people and goods is the need to strike a balance between easy cross-border mobility and national security. This challenge is compounded in areas where international boundaries divide families and ethnic groups. In these areas, there are usually high levels of cross-border movement of border residents. The Ghana-Togo border epitomizes this situation (Bening, 1983; Nugent, 2011; Raunet, 2016). Strong ethnic, religion, economic, and social ties among divided groups across the Ghana-Togo border have produced high levels of cross-border movement among residents. Aflao, which is the area under investigation has high rates of both local cross-border movement and international traffic. At the main border post, it is difficult to differentiate between local residents and migrants. This is because petty traders, head porters, and other local border users cross the border regularly without any form of security checks. This coupled with the many unapproved entries (locally called beats) in the area have made border control difficult for the security agencies.

The main institution in charge of border control in Ghana is the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS). Under the Immigration Service Act 2016, the Service has a twofold objective. The first objective is to ensure the effective administration and management of migration. The second objective is to contribute to national security on matters relating to migration. The Border Patrol Unit of the Immigration Service has the mandate to ensure the protection of all borders (all entry and exit points both legitimate and illegitimate) against the unlawful entry or exit. This paper assesses the activities of the Immigration Service at the eastern border town of Aflao. It investigates the challenges posed to border security by the high level of cross-border mobility among border residents and how the immigration service performs its border control functions in this environment. In other words, the paper aims at understanding the practices or methods being used by the Ghana Immigration Service in identifying and separating people wanting to cross the border illegally from border residents who are entitled to free access. It also investigates the challenges facing the service in the discharge of its duties.

Before proceeding, some concepts used by the study need to be clarified. This study agrees with Okumu (2011) that border control "seeks to facilitate or limit the movements of people, animals, plants, and goods in and out of a country" (p. 5). It aims at identifying and separating legal migrants from illegal migrants for the purpose of denying illegitimate actors access to the national territory. According to Okumu, "border control is divided into two main categories: securing borderlines (activities along the boundary), and controlling ports (harbours, border posts and airports) of entry" (ibid, p. 5). This paper focuses on the latter, in this case, the border post at Aflao. Border control is understood within the broader context of border security. Border security refers to activities and policies aimed at preserving the territorial integrity of the state from external threats.

2. Methodology

The study is purely qualitative study. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. This was used in collecting the views of officers of the immigration service both at the national headquarters and the Aflao border. Semi-structured interview proceeds with an interview guide which has a set of predetermined questions. (Barriball & While,

1994; Galleta, 2013) However, the interviewer is allowed to ask follow up questions, which are not part of the predetermined questions if it becomes important in order to gain deeper insight into the topic of the interview. The use of the interview guide ensures that there is consistency in the areas or question asked the various interviewees. At the same time, the chance to ask follow up questions, which may be outside the interview guide allows both the interviewer and the interviewee the freedom to engage in detailed discussions on the topic of the research. Semi-structured was chosen for this research because it is envisaged to offer consistency in the line of questioning while allowing for deep probes when appropriate.

The study also uses observation in gathering data. Observation involves viewing and taking notes the behaviour or actions of actors. (Nicholls, Mills, & Kotecha, 2014) The study relied on observation to understand how the day-to-day issues of cross-border mobility are handled at the border post. To achieve this, the researcher stayed in the community during the time of data collection and spent a few days during working hours with the immigration service in particular. The researcher equally crossed the border through the main crossing point and also through the unapproved routes many times to understand how immigration officers are able to separate legal migrants from illegal migrants. Secondary data from books, journals and other sources were also used in these study.

3. Literature Review

Borderlands are unique cultural and economic zones. Martínez has argued that all borderlanders have the "border experience", due to the determining influence of the border irrespective of their socio-cultural background (Martinez, 1994, p. xviii). Konrad (2014, p. 41), similarly observed with regard to the Canada-US border that borderlands are transitional zones with "spatial characteristics and culture signatures" produced by the interplay of cultures and border. He noted that cross-border regions have a distinctive culture, which "both engages and resists the dominant cultures on either side of the border" (Konrad, 2014, p. 43).

Whether a particular border functions as a barrier (promote cross-border mobility) or bridge (prevent easy cross-border movement) depends on the nature of the border and human activities across it. Borders produced by natural barriers such as mountains, thick forests and deserts may produce walls of separation between groups and reduce cross-border interaction and mobility. It has been argued that such boundaries are suited for defence against external attack. According to Holdich (1916), mountain ranges offer the best form of protection to the state because they constitute "a magnificent wall of defence, unbroken, impressive, and defiant" (Holdich, 1916, p. 504). However, even in cases of boundaries produced by natural features like mountains and deserts, human intentions and activities across them influence their functions. (Brunnet-Jaily, 2007; Lyde, 1915) Acrimonious relationship between groups at either side of a common border may result in extreme border security measures even when topography is favourable. This results in borders that function as a barrier. The same can be said of the relationship between states. A friendly relationship between adjacent states may allow for borders to function as bridges and permit easy cross-border movement and cross-border trade. The opposite is true in situations where there is hostile relationship between states. (Bening, 1983)

In the age of globalisation, making cross-border exchanges easy is important to economic growth and integration into the world economy. Brigham (1919) in his advice to European leaders on how best to draw the post First World War political boundaries to avoid future wars, called for demarcation of international boundaries that provide justices to the people living at either side of the boundary. Justice in his view entails ensuring the economic welfare of the people on both sides of the boundary. Boundaries that are resisting economic exchange hinders economic growth and those that permit economic exchange encourages growth and development. (Walther, 2012; Niang, 2013; Boggs, 1940) The 'border economy' is an economic space largely influence by the presence of the border, (Afolayan, 2000; Nshimbi & Moyo, 2017; Galemba, 2012a; Bolt, 2015). Within this economic space, the local interest of borderlanders influences what is legal or illegal. Galemba (2012b) observes in relation to the Mexico-Guatemala border that residents have adopted a number of survival strategies in relation to the border. These strategies in many instances contravene the official position of the state. However, daily practice and the politics of survival within the borderlands have legitimized these practices and have drawn state officials into acceptance. Abraham and van Schendel also noted that the border areas are social spaces where illegal cross-border flows become "naturalized and intersected" with legal flows (Schendel & Abraham, 2005, p. 29). Smuggling and other illicit activities are said to be legitimate within this space.

Brunnet-Jaily (2007) in his study of borders, borderlands and security, observed that borders and borderlands are characterised by two features; human activities and broader social processes that frame individual action. The effectiveness of border policies and security policies are contingent on "the interplay and interdependence between individuals' incentives to act and the surrounding structures (constructed social processes that contain and constrain individual action, such as market forces, government activities, the culture and politics of a place)" (Brunnet-Jaily, 2007, p. 1). He noted that border porosity depends on the nature and form of human interaction across borders and this influences border security. Thus, the government have to increase cooperation, collaboration and co-production of security policies in order to avoid implementing misplaced security policies.

In Ghana, Nugent (2011), observed that rules of cross-border mobility are not solely determined by the state (formal rules) but various unwritten codes that have evolved through years of practice. Border control practices are constantly being negotiated and contested by the state and local residents. State officials he noted must learn the unwritten rules that govern cross-border mobility and border control on arrival at post. Local residents have drawn border officials into contest and compromise, and usually, appeal to informal rules in cases when they conflict with the security agencies. Spire (2010) equally observed the influence of local residents on cross-border mobility and concluded that in many cases, border officials are guest in the borderland.

In Northern Ghana, it has been observed that the routines of cross-border traders have led to the activation of state regulation thereby bringing the physical territorial and administrative expression of the state into being (Chalfin, 2001). The contravention of state regulations by cross-border traders invites the sanction and collusion of the state and in the process, they establish "a modus operandi for state agents stationed at the border" (Chalfin, 2001, p. 203) (Emphasis in the original). Illicit trade contributes to both the "discursive constitution of state power" and "its practical and experiential realisation" (Chalfin, 2001, p. 220). Hlovor (2018) points out that border residents regard borders as economic resources and opportunities to address issues of poverty and unemployment. This has led to strict state border rules being contested by local residents. This shows that the activities of border residents influences how the state performs its border control duties.

Sosuh, (2011) identified many challenges affecting border management in Ghana. Among others, she noted that the institutional challenges including "lack of modern border infrastructure and facilities, capacity building of the agents directly involved in border security and those that lend support to apprehend and deal with suspects". She further noted the "lack of public knowledge on border issues also compounds the problem". Chalfin (2008) in his examination of encounters between Customs officers and travellers at Ghana's international airport, maintains that sovereignty and citizenship are "deeply enmeshed in processes of liberalization" (p.519) in a developing state. His study supports the "contention that transnational flows and supranational interventions restructure rather than undermine state power...facilitate the expansion of administrative authorities oriented to the cross-border mobility of persons, capital, and commodities" (ibid, p. 519). While the authenticity of this argument is not indoubt regarding the operations of airports at borders, this needs to be assessed in another context. In this case, within the context of a land border post.

Hukportie, (2014) investigates the role of cross-border trade in regional integration and concluded that formal and informal cross-border trade are important to regional integration along the Ghana-Togo border. Similarly, Soulé, (2018), noted that in spite of the many challenges to cross-border trade, West Africa still posses enormous potentials to increase cross-border trade and regional integration. Amikuzuno, Setsoafia, & Seini (2015), also observe some evidence of the link between international borders and distance on the one hand, and the speed of price transmission on the other through the study of tomato traders using prices of tomato at the production centre at Burkina-Faso with prices on Ghanaian tomato markets. They show that "though borders in West Africa do not completely curtail cross-border trade, price transmission and consequently market integration, they nevertheless weaken these processes" (Amikuzuno, Setsoafia, & Seini, 2015, p. 55). This shows the need to achieve a balance between the need to facilitate cross-border trade through the guarantee of easy access and prevention of cross-border crimes.

This study adds to these bodies of literature but differed by looking at how the activities of border residents at Aflao influences border control. It assesses how the Ghana Immigration Service in the daily practice of border control achieve a balance between the local demand for unrestricted cross-border mobility and the need to prevent illegal migrants from territorial access.

3.1. Theoretical Perspective

Institutions are central to social and political order, as well as the stability and the efficiency of any organisations. According to Scott, institutions are "multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources" (Scott, 2001, p. 49). For North (1990, p.3) they "are the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction". Institutions are everywhere and influence everything. Even in areas of social life that seems to have no recognised rules, institutions do exist. The performance of any organisation is influenced by the procedures, rules, norms, customs, and the environment of operation. Institutions are both formal and informal rules governing human interaction in a particular social setting.

Both formal (rules, laws, procedures) and informal (norms, customs and traditions) rules constitute the guiding framework (institution), which shape choices and behaviour within a given social or political context. As North (1990) observed, formal rules are created by the polity or the state through legally established processes. Informal rules are constituted by norms, customs, traditions or all those aspects of our "heritage that we call culture" (North 1990, p. 37). The informal rules are created through involuntary practices over time. They are not consciously designed or constructed by society (Greif & Kingston, 2011). Institutions define the legitimate limits of human action and choices by allowing the convergence of actor expectations (Paul, 1994; North, 1990). They define power relations and how people interpret and relate to the behaviour of others (Fligstein, 2001; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

Cross-border mobility at the eastern border of Ghana and other parts of Africa is influenced by both formal rules of the state and informal codes of conduct that have evolved over the years. These informal 'codes of conduct' have been established through daily practices and interactions between the state and the communities along the border. (Nugent, 2011; Raunet, 2016) State practices on immigration and border control are influenced by the presence of the border population (Raunet, 2016). The Immigration Service and other border agencies learn on arrival to adjust and incorporate these unwritten rules into border control practices (Nugent, 2011). Thus, the institutional framework of controlling the border and cross-border mobility involves both explicit formal rules (Constitution of Ghana, Immigration Service Act, 2000, Human Trafficking Act, 2005 etc) and informal rules (norms, customs on the cross-border mobility of local residents).

This study, therefore, proceeds from the theoretical understanding that border control and cross-border mobility are influenced and governed by both formal and informal rules. The work of the immigration service is influenced by both formal and informal rules. Hence, to understand how the service undertakes its duties and the challenges it faces demands an appreciation of the institutions regulating its practices. Thus, it provides an overview of the legal and policy framework

within which the immigration service works. It also gives insight into the informal norms, practices and conditions that influence its practices.

3.2. Legal and Policy Framework

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana provides the basic legal framework for the administration of Ghana. It defines the framework for protecting the territory and the people of Ghana. Article 1 of the constitution recognises that sovereignty resides in the people and that the powers of government are to be exercised in their name and for their welfare. Under the directive principle of state policy, Act 35 (1), the constitutions called on the state to "safeguard the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ghana," and "seek the wellbeing of all her citizens." Protecting the territorial integrity involves protection of the national borders in order to prevent persons, goods, animals, and substances considered to be threats to the health and security of the people and the nation from entering the country. The constitution under Act 83 provides for a National Security Council to be chaired by the president. The National Security Council is the main body in charge of the internal and external security of Ghana. In addition, the Security and Intelligence Act, 1996, establish Regional and District Security Councils to be in charge of security in the regions and districts respectively. The constitution also created the police service, the armed forces, and the prison service to ensure law and order as well as defend the territory of Ghana. The Ghana Armed forces have the traditional role to defend Ghana's territory against external military aggression.

Besides the constitution, there are many other laws and policies border security and immigration in Ghana. Many of these laws and policies are in line with regional and global immigration laws. The Ghana National Migration Policy is one key policy for the management of borders in Ghana (Government of Ghana, 2016). The national policy maintains that "effective management of national borders constitutes an important concern for the promotion and maintenance of security and is an essential element in the national migration system of Ghana". The national policy states five main objectives for border management. First, it aims at preventing irregular migration, human trafficking, smuggling, and other illicit activities through effective border management. Second, it aims at the establishment of a national entry/exit database. Thirdly, it aims at strengthening the capacity of border management systems and technology. It also aims at ensuring the free movement of persons, goods and services among ECOWAS citizens, and promoting inter-State cooperation on border management. To achieve the objectives of the policy some strategies have been proposed. These strategies include: enhancing the capacity of government agencies on migration and national security; establishing mechanisms for the management of mixed migration flows; strengthening inter-State and inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination to combat immigration crime and manage border movements; developing a viable database and publish information on migration stock and flows; and establishing a rapid response capability within the Ghana Immigration Service. (Government of Ghana, 2016)

The Immigration Service Law of 1989 (PNDC Law 226), the Immigration Service Act of 2000 (Act 573), Immigration (Amendment) Act 2012 (Act 848) and Immigration Regulation 2001 (L.I.1691) provide the framework for regulating the entry and exit from Ghana. The Immigration Services Act aims at protecting the country against various cross-border criminal groups while enabling territorial access for legitimate actors. It aims at ensuring that only legitimate actors have access to Ghana's territory. It is the main instrument for border management in Ghana. It defines the everyday practices of Immigration Service. The Immigration Service Act 2000 defines border-resident as "a national of a neighbouring country who ordinarily resides within five kilometres radius of either side of Ghana's territory frontiers with Republics of Togo, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire." In section 3 (4) of the Immigration Service Act, 2000, provision is made to allow free entry into Ghana for border-residents for the purposing of attending to routine economic and social matters. This provision highlights the complex ethnic, cultural, economic and social challenges along Ghana's borders.

Other laws concerning border security in Ghana are the Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694), which aims at preventing trafficking of people, particularly women and children both within and outside the country. In Act 2 and 3, it prohibits human trafficking and makes it unlawful to be associated with human trafficking in any form. In Act 4, it makes it an offence to employ or use trafficked persons. The country also has the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2008 (Act 762) and the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2012 (Act 842), which are intended to provide the framework for Ghana's fight against international terrorism. PNDC Law 305D provides for the regulation of refugees. The Anti-Money Laundry Act 2008 (Act 749) also aims at preventing money laundering and denying criminal elements the opportunities to benefit from the proceeds of their crimes. The Narcotic Drugs Law (Control, Enforcement and Sanctions) 1990 (PNDCL 236) also aims at providing the legal framework for the fight against narcotic drugs use and trafficking in Ghana. It bans the importation, exportation, possession, use, and the cultivation of narcotic drugs.

Many of these domestic laws and regulations are to give effect to international laws such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, International Covenant on Civil and political Rights 1966, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, 1999, The African Union Convention on cross-border Co-operation (Niamey Convention), ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, and Residence and Establishment (1979) and ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials (2006).

The overall aim of the various legal and policy tools for border and immigration control in Ghana is to ensure secure borders that prevent criminals from accessing the national territory. They also aim at allowing easy access to legitimate migrants. In reality, however, the implementation of these formal rules, policies and laws are influenced by the informal rules (norms, customs and traditions), which evolved over time through daily practices.

3.3. Practices and Challenges

It is estimated that an average of about 3,000 undocumented travellers use the Aflao border each day. However, only 200 of those travelling cross with endorsable travel documents. Majority of those crossing the border are border residents and ECOWAS nationals. Only a few foreigners outside the ECOWAS region use the border post. (International Organization for Migration, 2016, pp. 26-27). Many of the local border residents and ECOWAS citizens cross the border without any form of national identity document. At the Aflao border petty traders, hawkers and other local border users carry a variety of items across the border without any checks or restriction. Although the requirements for free entry and exit for ECOWAS citizens are important for political and economic integration of the sub-region, the lack of identity documents on the part of many ECOWAS migrants presents many operational difficulties to immigration officers.

Similarly, the lack of any form of an identity document for border residents has posed difficulties to traveller profiling at the border. Thus, border agencies are confronted with large numbers of people moving across the border without any form of identification document. In the absence of official border resident identification documents, the immigration service and the other border agencies have to rely on a combination of techniques to profile locals and identify migrants who are trying to outwit the security system at the border. One of the techniques being used by the Immigration Service is the observation of passenger behaviour. The officials of the immigration usually positioned themselves at vantage points of the border, observing the behaviour of the large numbers of people who are crossing the border. In this exercise, the officers take note, if possible, of how often a person crosses the border, dressing, language, and level of confidence, among others. Generally, they try to observe any sign of deviation from the normal behavioural patterns of local residents when they are crossing the border. Long distance travellers are mostly targeted. This situation confirms Nugent's position that "whereas international borders are often depicted as walls and barricades, in fact, they are best thought of as nets design to catch particular kinds of fish while allowing others to pass through." (Nugent, 2011) At the Aflao border post, the Immigration Service aims at 'catching' long-distance travellers and criminals while guarantying easier crossing for locals. As Spire rightly observed, the ability or easiness of crossing the border depends on who you are, your mode of dressing and your language. (Spire, 2010) The possession of these qualities allows some kinds of people passage, while the lack of them deny others same. Once a person shows any sign of deviation from the established behavioural pattern of the residents, the officers stop and interrogate the person. The officers try to identify through questioning, the origin and the destination of person. They also demand any form of national identity document. More attention is paid to people travelling from far distances than to those originating from nearby towns and villages. If the person mentions a town close to the border as the origin and/or destination, he may be asked to state the purpose of crossing or identify an opinion leader in the town of origin. If any suspicion arises, the opinion leader mentioned may be contacted or brought in to identify the person. This role of traditional authorities and opinion leaders in the borderlands make them important gatekeepers who determine who is to be included or excluded and, by extension, who is a citizen and who is not. (Raunet, 2016) They acquire de facto power to control cross-border mobility and determine borderland membership. However, in most cases, simply identifying an opinion leader would suffice to let the person through. Immigration officials with time become accustomed to the movement of locals and this practice that they may not be conscious of their actions (Nugent, 2011, p. 365).

Secondly, at the border, the immigration service also recruit local residents as informants. These informants are said to be very conversant with the people and can identify non-residents. Some of them are positioned at the border crossing and directly assist in the profiling of the passengers or people crossing the border. Others only provide information to officers about suspected illegal migrants or criminals and their routes in return for money. Those stationed at the border are given uniforms (khaki uniform), which is different from the uniform of the official immigration service personnel. Many immigration officers noted that these recruited local residents have become an integral part of their operations and are very helpful in identifying the movement of nonresidents across the border. In the words of one senior officer#2, "they are important tools in trying to identify illegal migrants taking advantage of the mass movement of the local people across the border"¹. One of the local recruits#1 stated that "it is easy for him to identify the non-residents crossing from both sides because he knows his people"², in reference to the local residents of Aflao. This confirms the view of Lamprey (2013) that border residents are valuable source of security intelligence due to their deep-rooted knowledge about the border terrain. This approach is not new and has been used since the colonial era, where colonial authorities relied on local residents to provide information on smugglers and to enforce the border (Raunet, 2016, p. 17; Lentz, 2003, p. 278). The major problem with reliance on the local population for intelligence is that the local informants tend to engage in the selective use of the information they provide. They may provide some information to aid the border agencies while using others to facilitate smuggling and other cross-border activities at the blind side of the security. They may even give false information about criminal routes and movement as a means of aiding others to outwit immigration at the post (Raunet, 2016).

The third approach seeks to support the others. This involves allowing the officers of the immigration services to stay at the post for long years. In this direction, many of the officers are allowed to stay at one particular border post for five years or more. This allows the officers to become familiar with the behavioural patterns of residents and identify them as they cross the border often. An officer#1 of the border unit at the national headquarters asserted "this approach allows officers to build experience in identifying the locals from the travellers or migrants"³. At the Aflao border, about 80 per cent of the immigration officers are accommodated among the residents in the community in order to enhance their ability

¹ Interview with Senior Immigration Officer #2, 24 February 2017

² Interview with local recruit#1, 24 February 2017

³ Interview with Senior Immigration officer No.1, 22 February 2017

of the officers to be familiar with residents. Although this may be strategic, it equally has to do with the limited accommodation facility available for the immigration service.

The activities of border residents, particularly the youth who engage in aiding smuggling and other criminal activities in return for money also compounded the difficulty of the immigration in discharging its mandate. The youth of the area engage in two main activities that have adverse consequences for border security and migration control. These are goods smuggling and people smuggling. According to a senior immigration officer#1,⁴ human smuggling takes the form of travellers or passengers who are aided to cross the border through either the main crossing point or the many unapproved entry points. The modus operandi of the human smugglers involves carrying the person close to the border area and disguising him or her as a local resident. Various techniques are employed in this operation. For commercial motorbike operators, they normally handover the motorbike to the traveller to push or ride across the border. In case, the person is too sharply dressed, the person is aided to dress in a manner that reflects local patterns. In other cases, passengers or travellers, particularly women are dressed like local head porters or hawkers. They are then given goods or head pans to carry across the border as if they are local residents going to sell across the border. Other travellers are also given items such as wheelbarrows and carts to push across the border like local residents. The strategy is to look as much possible like a local resident crossing the border. During the period of data collection in the community, I relied on the method of pushing motorbikes at different times to cross the main border crossing into Togo prior to notifying the immigration service of my presence. Before embarking on each crossing, the motor rider normally coached the passenger on how to behave when crossing the border to avoid suspicion. On some occasions, they would engage in conversation with passenger as they cross the border. They also made some passengers to cross ahead of them with the motorbike.

For goods smuggling, the youth perform two tasks, they are either smuggling the goods themselves or serving as couriers to smugglers. They normally carry the goods through the unapproved routes. If they serve as couriers, then the main smuggler will cross through the main crossing point or through the unapproved routes and meet his or her smuggled goods at a designated point away from the border agencies. Here again, motorbike operators become very useful in aiding the carrying of the smuggled goods from the crossing point to the designated point where the owner will collect them. Some of the residents also carry the goods through the main crossing point by disguising them as item bought across the border for domestic use. To be successful, a large load is divided among individual couriers. After crossing the border, the goods are reassembled at a designated point for the owner. Besides these two activities, the youth also control the illegal entry points or beats. Both immigration and customs official were unhappy with this development. At these unapproved routes, the residents have become unofficial border agencies, whom direct people to pass through these routes instead of the main border crossing. Although the immigration service has stationed its officers at all the beats and the customs service has at selected beats, they are incapacitated to prevent the youth from operating the unapproved routes. According to one senior#2 officer, "any attempt to close the beats is seen by the youth as a threat to their livelihood and fiercely resisted".⁵

Related to aiding smuggling is the robbery of traders. The officers noted that not all the youths are interested in helping people cross the border at a fee. Some only divert traders to places where they rob them of their goods under the cover of helping them cross the border. This activity of the residents benefits from the early closure of the border at night forcing traders who arrived late with their goods to find alternative ways of crossing since some of them need to be at the market very early to make good sales. According to the officers, the border closes at 10 pm and traders arriving after that have to wait until the next day to cross. This has led them to look for other ways to cross the border and falling victim to robbery gangs or groups. This situation however is likely to be addressed with recent agreement between Ghana and Togo to keep the border open at all times. Robbery of traders also benefits largely from ignorance and fear of security officers among travellers. Officers of the immigration service noted that in some cases travellers have valid travelling documents and do not even carry goods or anything that would prevent them from crossing but would still rely on the youth to pass the 'beats'. Many travellers or traders simply want to avoid immigration or customs even if they have nothing to hide. The residents are able to quickly identify travellers and offer their service by creating the impression of the border being difficult to cross. Indeed, people crossing the border for the first time and uninformed about procedures and operations at the border are likely to be persuaded by the residents to cross through the beats.

It was also evident from the views expressed by the border agents that they are constant physical attacks and threats of death on them by the residents. Any attempt by the Immigration Service to prevent the residents from their activities often result in physical attack or death threat. On one occasion during the fieldwork, a resident along one of the beats, openly said, "We need to kill one of these immigration officers for them to know the limits of their powers in this place". His colleagues replied him enthusiastically in an equally volatile language by stating "do not worry, just have patience when the time comes, and their corpses are being carried every day, they will know the landlords of this place". Immigration officers are seen as 'strangers' or guests. This reaffirms the position of Spire that border officers are guest in borderlands. (Spire, 2010) A senior office#3 noted, "Try to stand in their way by doing what you are trained to do and you will quickly be subjected to physical attacks. Within minutes, a mob will surround you and you have to call for security for yourself. The people here would not compromise even if they know what they are doing is wrong. For them, they are entitled to make a living so no one can stop them. They are always looking for the opportunity to attack".

The Ghana Immigration Service with the establishment of the border patrol unit has moved beyond its hitherto limited domain of dealing with immigration and immigration-related offences to the forefront of border security or protection. (International Organization for Migration , 2016) However, not much has changed in terms of capacity to

⁴ Interview with Senior Immigration Officer No.2 at Aflao 25 February 2017

⁵ Interview with Senior Immigration officer No.2.

undertake its new role of securing the territorial integrity of Ghana through border patrol duties. The service lacks the needed logistics to effectively perform the newly assigned duties. Logistically, the Immigration Service is not fully equipped to ensure effectiveness. The Service lacks modern surveillance and operational equipment such as drones, vehicles, and weapons among others. As already stated, though members of the service were trained to handle arms and the Immigration Service Act, 2016 gave them the legal backing to carry arms, the service lacks sufficient arms to perform its duty. The service is yet to have the arms capacity needed to confront armed criminals and groups along the border. Due to this, it relies on the police service in instances of physical attack on its members. Although the Immigration Service relies on the Police Service in effecting the arrest, the police are not physically present at the border. They are only called in when situations become violent and out of control.

The Immigration Service benefits from close collaboration with traditional and local authorities. Indeed, officers normally call on chiefs and opinion leaders who mediate issues between them and the local people. They also depend on the chiefs to send out information to the people. In addition, the Ghana Police Service has been actively collaborating with GIS to deal with threats to the personnel and to arrest criminals. However, the relation between GIS and Customs sometimes become a source of worry. There have been instances of open confrontation between personnel of the two agencies over roles and mandates. Obviously, the extended mandate of the GIS through the establishment of the border patrol unit includes some traditional customs duties. This needs cooperation and coordination which is currently lacking between the agencies. Although there is the Joint Border Security Committee comprising officials from Ghana and Togo, it seems the Togo side of the border has little incentive to discourage illegal cross-border activities, particularly smuggling. Togolese border agencies look passive in preventing the use of the unapproved routes (beats). Indeed, as Nugent noted that there is little incentive for them to prevent smuggling into Ghana since such trades are essential to the viability of the port in Lome. (Nugent, 2011)

4. Conclusion

The Ghana Immigration Service performs its border control functions within an environment influenced by local cross-border mobility. This has led to the evolution of various norms and rules that govern cross-border mobility and the work of the service. In order to implement the various formal rules on cross-border mobility and security, it has adopted flexible techniques that achieve a delicate balance between the needs for easy cross-border movement of locals and the prevention of illegal migrants. These techniques rely on the personal skills and experience of the officers. It also depends on the willingness of local residents to volunteer information to the service. Unfortunately, poverty and unemployment within the borderlands have forced many of the local residents to use the intelligence they gather to aid smugglers for financial return (Hlovor, 2018). The institution of border control operates within a context of both formal and informal rules with the informal rules resulting from the activities of border residents.

To improve border control functions of the immigration service, the country needs to invest in its border infrastructure. A national or sub-regional border identification system is urgently needed. The ongoing national identification project must make provisions for specific identity of people classified as border residents. Cooperating with neighbouring states to advise a unique border identity system will also be helpful. Border surveillance equipment such as CCTV and drones are needed. The Service also needs logistical support in terms of arms, vehicles and other forms of automobiles to enhance movement. It must also pursue vigorous public education to win the cooperation of local residents. To this end, the friendly relationship between the service and, local and traditional authorities must be taken advantage of to control the activities of residents whose activities under the work of the service. In the absence of arms, police personnel should be stationed at the border with the immigration.

5. References

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