



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**ESCALATION OF ISLAMIST INSURGENCY IN WEST
AFRICA: PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE
PHENOMENON TO THE TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY OF GHANA**

by

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December 2023

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC, 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE December 2023	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE ESCALATION OF ISLAMIST INSURGENCY IN WEST AFRICA: PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE PHENOMENON TO THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF GHANA			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Ernest B. Darkwah				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) The Islamist insurgency in West Africa has evolved into a cause for substantial alarm as the phenomenon escalates across international borders. The affiliation of the insurgent groups with global extremist organizations, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS), indicates the groups' ambition to form a caliphate in the region. This study aims to assess the possibility of Islamist insurgency in West Africa spreading to Ghana's territory and to suggest how to enhance the government's strategy for preventing the insurgency phenomenon. The study confirms that Ghana is not currently facing any form of insurgency or terrorist attacks. However, conditions that gave rise to insurgencies in other West African countries exist in Ghana. The situation could spread to Ghana since the overarching objective of the Islamist insurgents is to form a caliphate in the West African region. Additionally, the strategy being used by Ghana to prevent the spread of Islamist insurgency to its territory has some gaps such as ineffective surveillance and intelligence gathering, competition and turf war among the security agencies, and reliance on military operations at the detriment of resolving the root cause of insurgency, among others. These gaps could be exploited by the insurgents to infiltrate the country. The study recommends that the Ghanaian government strive to address the root causes of insurgency and establish a cordial relationship with the populace.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Islamist insurgency, West Africa, terrorist, insurgency, Ghana, caliphate, international borders, Jihadist movements, radicalism, Islamic teachings, insurgency deterrents, ECOWAS protocol, conflict prevention, charismatic leaders			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 101	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE PHENOMENON TO THE
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF GHANA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

The Islamist insurgency in West Africa has evolved into a cause for substantial alarm as the phenomenon escalates across international borders. The affiliation of the insurgent groups with global extremist organizations, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS), indicates the groups' ambition to form a caliphate in the region. This study aims to assess the possibility of Islamist insurgency in West Africa spreading to Ghana's territory and to suggest how to enhance the government's strategy for preventing the insurgency phenomenon. The study confirms that Ghana is not currently facing any form of insurgency or terrorist attacks. However, conditions that gave rise to insurgencies in other West African countries exist in Ghana. The situation could spread to Ghana since the overarching objective of the Islamist insurgents is to form a caliphate in the West African region. Additionally, the strategy being used by Ghana to prevent the spread of Islamist insurgency to its territory has some gaps such as ineffective surveillance and intelligence gathering, competition and turf war among the security agencies, and reliance on military operations at the detriment of resolving the root cause of insurgency, among others. These gaps could be exploited by the insurgents to infiltrate the country. The study recommends that the Ghanaian government strive to address the root causes of insurgency and establish a cordial relationship with the populace.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
COIN	Counter Insurgency
DI	Defense Intelligence
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FOB	Forward Operating Bases
GIABA	Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa
GPS	Ghana Police Service
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
HSGF	Homeland Study Group Foundation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IS	Islamic State
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahel
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State in West Africa Province
JNIM	Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen
MLF	Macina Liberation Front
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MNS	Ministry of National Security
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MUJAO	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NAFPCVET	National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism
NCTC	National Counter Terrorism Center
NIB	National Investigation Bureau
NSA	National Security Apparatus
OSINT	Open-Source Intelligence

R&D	Research and Development
SIG	Surveillance and Intelligence Gathering
SMT	Social Movement Theory
STC	State Transport Corporation
WTRF	Western Togoland Restoration Front

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Islamist insurgency in West Africa is escalating from the region's center, where the Muslim population is more prominent, to the coastal countries with larger populations of Christians and other religious groups.¹ West African insurgent organizations predominantly affiliate themselves with globally known violent extremist organizations, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS), for instance.² The insurgent groups propagate the international terrorist groups' ambition of forming a caliphate in the region, expanding their activities to neighboring countries. The study aims to assess the possibility of Islamist insurgency in West Africa spreading to Ghana's territory and enhance the government's strategy for preventing the phenomenon.

Gaps in Ghana's COIN strategy, including over-reliance on military approaches to the detriment of resolving the root causes of insurgencies and the absence or inadequate security agencies' presence, particularly in the northern sector, were identified. The study recommends that the Ghanaian government strive to address the root causes of insurgency and use non-military solutions, such as traditional leaders, as well as youth groups, in finding amicable solutions to conflicts. The proposal is vital in building an environment devoid of grievances that could be exploited by Islamist insurgents.

The research plan used in the study is qualitative. It collected secondary data from Ghana government websites, books, peer-reviewed journals, and news media on the escalation of Islamist insurgencies in West Africa. It selected cases in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali as areas of study due to the ongoing Islamist insurgencies, affiliation of the insurgent groups to terrorist organizations, and the international cross-border nature of the insurgency phenomenon in these countries. It uses thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data to produce findings that answer the research questions.

¹ International Center for Counterterrorism, "The Risk of Jihadist Contagion in West Africa," December 20, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/c%C3%B4te-divoire/b149-lafrique-de-louest-face-au-risque-de-contagion-jihadiste>.

² United States Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, June 2, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ghana/>.

The study finds that Islamist radical teachings have the potential to escalate into revolts. Charismatic leaders usually take advantage of grievances among the populace to mobilize individuals and motivate insurgencies where governments fail to provide infrastructure, job opportunities, and good governance, or where they discriminate against ethnic or religious groups. The affiliation of insurgent groups in West Africa to transnational terrorist organizations such as AQIM and IS influences them to expand their objectives to include the establishment of a caliphate in the region.³

Several factors, including violent clashes among the Islamic sects in Ghana, economic and infrastructure development inequalities, the quality of life between Ghana's northern and southern sectors, and ethnic/chieftaincy disputes, indicate Ghana's vulnerability to Islamist insurgency. Despite all the vulnerabilities identified, Ghana has not been attacked by Islamist insurgent groups or experienced any terrorist attack.

Ghana's counterinsurgency strategy, however, has some gaps in it, which Islamist insurgents could exploit:

- Ghana's surveillance and information-gathering effectiveness is declining due to limited human resources, technological capabilities, and intended target diversity.
- Inter-agency rivalries have also hindered the smooth operationalization of the counterinsurgency strategies. There are overlapping functions between security agencies, which causes rivalry among them.
- Ghana's counterinsurgency strategy favors military-oriented responses to the detriment of tackling the root causes of Islamist insurgencies. Military operations, however, temporarily halt insurgent activities and do not provide a lasting solution.
- The approach does not tackle the root causes of insurgency adequately. Factors such as ethnic ties across international borders and cultural norms necessitate

³ International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder: Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State," March 14, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-islamic-state>.

the counterinsurgency strategy to be comprehensive to cover the root causes of insurgencies.

The following recommendations will improve Ghana's existing COIN strategies and operational options:

- Ghana's government should expand infrastructural development and offer financial resources to deprived communities, particularly in the northern sector of the country. These necessities will provide equal opportunities to citizens, preventing them from harboring grievances that insurgent groups could exploit.
- The national security apparatus (NSA) should monitor schools and institutions established by Islamic sects to prevent indoctrination by reformist Islamic movements and deradicalize those exposed to jihadist ideologies. Additionally, Ghana's government should establish more government schools as a countermeasure.
- Models such as the Comprehensive Defense Strategy and McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model could be employed by the MNS to rectify the gaps in the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET).
- The Ministry of National Security (MNS) should partner with the technology sector to develop modern technology to help the state avoid technological surprises related to insurgent techniques, online recruitment, and means of attack.
- The MNS should ensure that the measures outlined under the four pillars of the NAFPCVET are adhered to after it has been reviewed. The enforcement of the action plan could prevent Islamist insurgencies in Ghana.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Dr. Matthew Zefferman for his outstanding research assistance and unrelenting support. His advice and suggestions have enhanced the quality of this study significantly. My appreciation also goes to Professor Sean Everton, my second reader. Our many insightful discussions centered on this topic and touched on many aspects of religion and social mobilization, for which I am thankful.

I presented my initial idea for this thesis to Dr. Carter Malkasian, the Chair of the Defense Analysis Department, as a final paper in the Deterrence, Coercion, and Crisis Management Course (DA3882). His positive feedback and constant encouragement made me progress in this area of research. I am grateful for your support, Sir. This work has also benefited from helpful comments from Professor Timothy Warren and Professor Gordon McCormick, which I greatly appreciate. I salute the reviewers and editors at the Graduate Writing Center of NPS for their support.

My appreciation goes to my children, Elliana Acheampomaa Darkwah, Mikel Ofosuhene Darkwah, and Annalisa Asantewaa Darkwah, for their understanding during the period of study when they had to endure my absence and the time I spent in front of the computer instead of giving them the attention they deserve. Finally, my sincere appreciation goes to my wife, Mrs. Bernice Asantewaa Darkwah, for caring for our family in my absence and for her constant love and support. It means the world to me. Thank you.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Islamist insurgency in the Sahel area of West Africa has become a predominant feature with frightful effects on the populace. The conflicts in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are all worsening and spreading to other countries within the region due to poor response from concerned states.¹ The phenomenon appears to be escalating from the region's center, where the Muslim population is more prominent, outwards to the coastal countries with larger populations of Christians and other religious groups.² Ghana is one of the relatively peaceful countries in the West African region that is not currently facing an insurgency. It is, however, facing internal security issues that gave rise to an insurgency in other countries in the region. These conditions include the proliferation of small arms, ethnic clashes, and an uprising of a secessionist movement that aims to form a separate country, among others. Additionally, countries bordering Ghana are either actively in a state of insurgency or facing political tensions.³ This puts Ghana in a volatile position as the threat of insurgency could spread to it.

The affiliation of the insurgent groups to violent extremist groups, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Islamic State (IS) indicates the groups' ambition to form a caliphate in the region. These violent extremist organizations feed off inter-communal tensions and grievances of vulnerable populations.⁴ The successful creation of the caliphate would offer a favorable location for terrorist groups to operate from. The Islamist insurgency requires a viable solution to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. A successful approach to restrain or manage the insurgency in Ghana

¹ Alexandre Marc, Neelam Verjee, and Stephen Mogaka, *The Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa*, African Development Forum (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2015).

² International Center for Counterterrorism, "The Risk of Jihadist Contagion in West Africa," December 20, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/c%C3%B4te-divoire/b149-lafrique-de-louest-face-au-risque-de-contagion-jihadiste>

³ International Center for Counterterrorism.

⁴ United States Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, June 2, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ghana/>

could be emulated by other countries, as conditions that lead to insurgencies are similar across the region.⁵

In this thesis, I will assess the possibility of Islamist insurgency spreading to Ghana's territory and suggest how to enhance the government's strategies and operational options for preventing the insurgency phenomenon. I will answer the question: How best can Ghana restrain the escalation of Islamist insurgency in West Africa to its territory?

A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study's specific inquiries are:

1. What is the background of insurgency in West Africa?
2. What measures are currently in place to stop insurgency in West Africa, and why are they not working?
3. What are the indications that Ghana is attracting insurgency?
4. What is Ghana doing right to prevent the spread of insurgency to its territory, and how can these approaches be improved?

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section covers previous research on the escalation of Islamist extremism in West Africa and Ghana's attraction to the phenomenon. It provides an overview of key findings, concepts, and developments concerning the threat of Islamist insurgency. It also discusses the possibility of jihadism spreading to peaceful countries like Ghana and the measures in place to check the intensification of the phenomenon.

1. Expansion of Insurgent Activities Across National Boundaries in West Africa

The increased insurgent activities in the Sahel region of West Africa raises many concerns. The militant group Ansaroul Islam is establishing itself in Burkina Faso

⁵ Marc, Verjee, and Mogaka, *The Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa*.

following its unpopularity in Mali.⁶ The situation has aroused a growing concern for the security of Burkina Faso's neighbors, including Ghana. Terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso have rekindled the uncertainties of jihadist movements traveling down the coast of West Africa.⁷ Ansaroul Islam aims to revive a historical Burkinabe empire that was erased by French influence in the 1800s.⁸ Most of Ansaroul's activities, hence, take place in Mali and Burkina Faso, the ancestral area of the reemerged Djeelgoji.

Similar to other Islamist organizations in the area, Ansaroul initially embraced extremist Islamic ideologies without violence. The emergence of the Al-Irchad Network can be attributed to the proliferation of extremist doctrines in informal gatherings and through various media outlets. The Network upheld the ideals of parity and fraternal unity among the diverse social and ethnic factions in Burkina Faso.⁹ The organization's actions turned into an uprising following the arrest of its leader, Ibrahim Malam Dicko, during the French counterterrorism operation in 2013.¹⁰ Ansaroul Islam has received support from various affiliated groups, including the Macina Liberation Front (MLF) and Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).¹¹

The sentiments that drive the diffusion of insurgency in West Africa transcend intra-state and international borders. "The historical and ideological connections among West African countries, complicated by forces of globalization, aid the movements of weapons, conflict diffusion, and contagion."¹² This explains why smaller militant

⁶Frederick Appiah Afriyie, "Burkina Faso: An Inquisition of Ansaroul Islam Insurgency in West Africa and Its Emerging Threat," *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, no. 29 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.24193/csqr.29.1>.

⁷ Afriyie.

⁸ Afriyie.

⁹ Afriyie.

¹⁰ Pauline Le Roux, "Ansaroul Islam: The Rise and Decline of a Militant Islamist Group in the Sahel," *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* (blog), July 29, 2019, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/ansaroul-islam-the-rise-and-decline-of-a-militant-islamist-group-in-the-sahel/>.

¹¹ Roux.

¹² Muhammad Dan Suleiman, "How Coastal West Africa Can Stem the Jihadist Wave," *The Conversation*, September 18, 2022, <http://theconversation.com/how-coastal-west-africa-can-stem-the-jihadist-wave-190009>.

organizations in the territory tend to align themselves with well-established larger groups. The association provides smaller militant groups with the needed support to gain roots.¹³

Globalization and historical factors have made West African countries accessible to external actors. West African states have hence become susceptible to the spillover effect of global insecurity such as Islamist insurgencies.¹⁴ Boko Haram's commitment to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and terrorist attacks carried out by AQIM-affiliated insurgent groups in West Africa are examples of ideological conflict in the world and its spillover in the region.¹⁵ The West African states initially did not look at the bigger picture of global influence in the fight against violent extremist organizations. The states focused on individual groups within the geographical areas.

The insurgency threat has become more regional and less national, with local insurgent groups joining Jihadist coalitions.¹⁶ The expansion of Boko Haram activities into neighboring Niger and Cameroon can be linked to ethnocultural, proximity, and historical ties among the nations.¹⁷ "The resilient and intractable nature of the insurgents derives from the internal and external linkages and material support from outside groups."¹⁸

2. Ghana's Attraction to Insurgency

Developing fertile grounds for insurgencies has been part of human history, as people generally seek to oust the ruling authority and replace it with their form of government.¹⁹ Thomas Hobbes argues that a social contract exists between the citizenry

¹³ Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, "Ansarul Islam," Center for International Security and Cooperation, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/ansarul-islam>.

¹⁴ Muhammad Dan Suleiman, "Global Insecurity and Local Conflicts in Ghana," *Peace Review* 29, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 315–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2017.1344759>.

¹⁵ Suleiman.

¹⁶ Suleiman, "How Coastal West Africa Can Stem the Jihadist Wave."

¹⁷ Suleiman, "Global Insecurity and Local Conflicts in Ghana."

¹⁸ Fineman Guy Goyei, "Nigeria's Boko Haram and Its Security Dynamics in the West African Region," *Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa* 9, no. 1 (May 3, 2018): 102–30, <https://doi.org/10.4314/jolte.v9i1>.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Siaw and Eric Elikem, "The Rise of Insurgency in Ghana: Developing Fertile Grounds," *Otoritas: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 7, no. 2 (December 7, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.26618/ojip.v7i2.824>.

and the state.²⁰ The state provides security and opportunities for development in exchange for citizens' cooperation. The populace's grievances motivate insurgencies where governments fail to fulfill their part of the social contract.²¹ Charismatic leaders usually take advantage of such situations to mobilize individuals and organizations using hyper-nationalism, religion, or other types of rhetoric.²²

African governments' inability to provide basic infrastructural needs for the citizenry is the primary cause of grievances. Other factors, including authoritarian governments and state discrimination against ethnic groups or religions, have also contributed to insurgency on the continent. Military takeovers and civil upheavals are usually justified by economic mismanagement, social hardships, and bad governance, even in an apparent thirst for political power.²³ Ideas of insurgency originating from foreign nations could also jeopardize Ghana's security. The populations might rebel to reverse the social contract between the government and the citizenry. Additionally, "the economic, political, and religious issues that lay the foundations for insurgencies in some West African countries are present in Ghana."²⁴

Polarized countries on religious and ethnic levels tend to be prone to insurgency. According to Rotberg, the risk of a country transitioning into insurgency is higher when a majority group and a well-organized minority group exist.²⁵ In an extremely divided nation where one main religious group controls the affairs of the state, religious minority groups may experience a sense of exclusion from both political participation and economic prospects.²⁶ As argued by Siaw and Elikem, excluding the minority from participating in

²⁰ Teach Democracy, "Bill of Rights in Action," Spring 2004, <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-20-2-c-hobbes-locke-montesquieu-and-rousseau-on-government.html>.

²¹ Siaw and Elikem, "The Rise of Insurgency in Ghana."

²² Seth G. Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons from the Vietcong to the Islamic State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²³ Siaw and Elikem, "The Rise of Insurgency in Ghana."

²⁴ Siaw and Elikem.

²⁵ Robert I Rotberg, *Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2003), https://www.brookings.edu/asset/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeoferror_chapter.pdf.

²⁶ Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare*.

political affairs and accessing economic prospects usually motivates them to engage in rebellion.²⁷ Some scholars have also argued that “larger excluded ethnic groups are better able to challenge a government because of their superior numbers, which enables them to recruit fighters.”²⁸

Additionally, larger ethnic groups have the potential to mobilize more resources to sustain an organizational infrastructure.²⁹ Fearon and Laitin, on the other hand, argue that ethnic or religious differences or broadly held grievances are not causal factors of civil violence. Instead, Fearon and Laitin think they are conditions that favor insurgency. They believe the existence of poverty, weak states, and political instability tends to favor insurgency and the recruitment of rebel groups.³⁰

Muhammad Dan Suleiman, a Research Associate at Curtin University, Australia points out that “Ghana has not experienced the level of internal political disruptions that beset some of its regional neighbors, including Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.”³¹ Nonetheless, Ghana persistently experiences ethnic conflicts, chieftaincy disputes, sectarian religious conflicts, and other resource-driven issues.³² The internal conflicts, despite being less intense, still indicate the ethno-religious splits in Ghanaian society, which can turn detrimental when exacerbated. External influence and individuals in local conflicts do not initiate the phenomenon on their own; instead, they serve as factors that worsen the complexity of internal divisions.³³

²⁷ Jones.

²⁸ Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis,” *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (2010): 87–119.

²⁹ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min.

³⁰ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3118222>.

³¹ Suleiman, “Global Insecurity and Local Conflicts in Ghana.”

³² Suleiman.

³³ Suleiman.

3. Mobilization of People for Insurgency in West Africa

The seeming or real sidelining of Muslims and societal grievances restrict some Muslims' understanding of Jihadism. The concept is misunderstood mainly by some Muslims to mean a Holy War, in which case they are prepared to die in defense of Islam.³⁴ Hence, they will kill non-Muslims for derogatory remarks against the Prophet Mohammed or the Islamic religion.³⁵ Translating Islamic core teachings into societal practices hinges on the ability of leaders to interpret the Quran and adherent populations' understanding.³⁶ Those who adhere to fundamental religious practices may resort to violence. Some religious people are swift to retaliate or resort to violence when other people offer violence in their dealings with them. Charismatic leaders tend to exploit existing groups and affiliated networks that are prone to violence and mobilize them for social movements.³⁷

Denny and Walter postulate that ethnicity is crucial in most African insurgencies. Ethnic groups have the propensity to harbor grievances, exhibit greater vulnerability to insurgent mobilization, and encounter intricate negotiation challenges.³⁸ The circumstances are a result of the historical allocation of political power on an ethnic foundation and the concentration of ethnic groups in geographical locations.³⁹ People on the peripherals of the Ghana–Burkina Faso border speak common languages, even though they belong to different states. The Kasena ethnic group, a majority in Ghana, see their territory as undivided despite the colonial boundary separating it. Similarly, members of

³⁴ Kwesi Aning and Mustapha Abdallah, "Islamic Radicalization and Violence in Ghana," *Conflict, Security & Development* 13, no. 2 (May 2013): 149–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2013.796206>.

³⁵ Aning and Abdallah.

³⁶ "The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding," The British Academy, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/conflict-stability-role-religion-conflict-and-peace-building/>.

³⁷ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁸ Elaine K. Denny and Barbara F. Walter, "Ethnicity and Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (March 2014): 199–212, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343313512853>.

³⁹ Denny and Walter.

the Lobi ethnic group in Burkina Faso trace their origin to modern-day Ghana.⁴⁰ The ethnic ties amongst the people on both sides of the Ghana-Burkina borders have the potential to influence events in both countries.

4. Regional Counter Insurgency Measures

Cooperation within the West African region in countering terrorism and insurgency, as well as how states handle national security in modern times, have affected the area in the fight against the threat of insurgency. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has instituted mechanisms and frameworks for dealing with insurgency challenges in West Africa. Prominent ones include “the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) and the Protocol for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security.”⁴¹ The creditable initiatives that are aimed at preventing the financing of violent extremist groups and countering terrorism/insurgency have been facing challenges in implementation. ECOWAS’s inability to administer security cooperation has led to the protocols’ failure.⁴² The transnational nature of the Islamist insurgency in West Africa has made it difficult to combat the threat. Bala and Tar emphasized the importance of ECOWAS integrating all its member states into the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Practical cooperation and commitment by all the regional states could present a formidable and efficient approach to halting the spread of the insurgency.⁴³

⁴⁰ Sten Hagberg and Alex B. Tengan, eds., *Bonds and Boundaries in Northern Ghana and Southern Burkina Faso*, Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology 30 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2000).

⁴¹ Olajide O. Akanji, “Sub-Regional Security Challenge: ECOWAS and the War on Terrorism in West Africa,” *Insight on Africa* 11, no. 1 (January 2019): 94–112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087818805842>.

⁴² Bashir Bala and Usman A. Tar, “Regional Cooperation in West Africa: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency,” *African Security* 14, no. 2 (April 3, 2021): 186–207, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1929747>.

⁴³ Bala and Tar.

5. The Gaps in Literature on the Spread of Islamist Insurgencies in West Africa

Several research papers and books by scholars on the spread of Islamist insurgency in West Africa exist. There is little research on why the phenomenon has not spread to relatively peaceful Ghana despite factors that have thrown other countries in the same region into an insurgency. Additionally, the available literature does not capture suitable strategies to prevent the phenomenon in Ghana. I examine why Ghana has not been affected by the insurgency and how best Ghana could protect its territorial integrity from Islamist insurgent forces.

C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section focuses on theories on insurgency and revolution to a broader extent. Using the views of famous revolutionary theorists helps to conceptualize and analyze the phenomenon. The discussion will center on class theory, the theory of revolution, and religious social movement theory.

1. Class Theory

Marxian class theory emphasizes that the role played by individuals in the production process determines their position within a class hierarchy.⁴⁴ Marx believed that political and ideological consciousness establishes class position. He perceives a class as a group with intrinsic tendencies and interests. The group shares common economic interests and engages in collective action, which advances those interests. In the capitalist system, class representation centers on the dominant, intermediate, working, and lumpenproletariat classes.⁴⁵

The dominant/ruling class who are also called the bourgeoisie represents those in control of the society's economic and political powers. They possess wealth and own the means of production. Their position in society enables them to control and direct the affairs

⁴⁴ Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*, 3. [Nachdr.] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

⁴⁵ Ayodeji Ogunrotifa, "Class Theory of Terrorism: A Study of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences Vol 3* (February 1, 2013): 27–59.

of a state.⁴⁶ The intermediate or middle class comprises the main state governing administration structures.⁴⁷ The working class comprises individuals who lack ownership of production resources and have no affiliation with the governing institutions of the state. The lumpenproletariat lacks class consciousness. They are the marginalized in society who feed on the work of the other classes.⁴⁸

The interests of the various groups differ from one another within society. This forms the basis of a fundamental class conflict, such as political tension and economic antagonism in society because of socioeconomic competition among the social classes or between the rich and poor.⁴⁹ Marx believed that conflict is the key driving force of history and the primary determinant of social trajectories, which arises from a unified class interest. The conflicting class dynamics that occur between the dominant and marginalized often result in tension within societies.

The theory is relevant to this study as it relates to the rationale behind the formation of insurgent groups. The socioeconomic conditions in West Africa have led to class conflicts in many of the states.⁵⁰ The differences in economic opportunities and the absence of essential infrastructure have contributed to the feeling of neglect in certain parts of the states. The class of people in the societies who do not form part of the ruling class appropriate their concerns through rebellion.⁵¹ The situation in the region could, hence, be attributed to the class relations within individual states, which are being taken advantage of by violent extremist groups.

The socioeconomic development situation in Ghana is no different from other West African countries. The wide gap in economic opportunities and infrastructure development

⁴⁶ Ogunrotifa.

⁴⁷ Ogunrotifa.

⁴⁸ Ogunrotifa.

⁴⁹ Edward Andrew, "Class in Itself and Class Against Capital: Karl Marx and His Classifiers," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 16, no. 3 (September 1983): 577–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423900023994>.

⁵⁰ Ogunrotifa, "Class Theory of Terrorism."

⁵¹ Ronald Aminzade, *Silence, and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

between Ghana's northern and southern sectors has resulted in high poverty levels, poor health, and increased mortality rates among the population. The class differences, particularly in the north, often led to conflicts that could degenerate into insurgency.

2. Theory of Revolution

The phenomenon of insurgency and, in a much broader sense, revolution and other violent phenomena of political instability are contextually specific. Chalmers Johnson's revolutionary change theory posits that social organization restricts or minimizes violence amongst united people in a community. This is consistent with Thomas Hobbes' assertion that individuals must forsake violence to reap the benefits of collaboration and the specialization of labor, which are lacking in the "state of nature." The restriction on violence in a society is done purposefully through conscious policies by community members and functionally through specialization of labor.⁵² The revolutionary changes concern a broader political unrest and societal transformation. This is better understood when the rationale behind the breaching of societal constraints on violence is known.⁵³

Ortega y Gasset theorizes that humans have always had recourse to violence. Violence is the means they resort to when they have exhausted all other means to defend the right of justice they possess.⁵⁴ Individuals or groups are likely to assail others when they are frustrated. Aristotle made a similar claim:

The universal and chief cause of revolutionary feeling is the desire for equality when people think that they are equal to others who have more than themselves; or, again, the desire for inequality and superiority, when conceiving themselves to be superior they think they have not more but the same or less than their inferiors; pretensions which may and may not be just.⁵⁵

⁵² Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 2nd ed (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982).

⁵³ Johnson.

⁵⁴ José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, vol. 21 (London: Routledge, 2021).

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*.

However, individual or group reaction to rebellion is after a cost and benefit analysis.⁵⁶ Discontent in the social structure may influence an individual or a group's likelihood of upheaval. However, government controls may serve as a check on individuals and groups entertaining rebellion.⁵⁷

A strong government exercising control over social structures may prevent a revolution from occurring. A weak government will give those who are discontent the opportunity to induce rebellion among the people seeking change.⁵⁸ The theory emphasizes the notion that revolutionary situations occur when a weak state does not fulfill the requirements of the citizenry. I use this theory to conceptualize the background and emergence of insurgency in West Africa. The states involved in the Islamist insurgency shared numerous characteristics that made them ripe for revolution.⁵⁹ The region's problems include unrestrained corruption, mass inequality, authoritarian tendencies, economic turmoil, and ineffectual governments.

3. Religious Social Movement Theory

Religion has been influential in the mobilization of societies globally. Examples of radical religious mobilization for political purposes include the 1970s Iranian Islamic revolution and the Muslim Brotherhood political mobilizations in Egypt.⁶⁰ Religious social movement theory (SMT) is a distinct form of recruitment for political goals. It is characterized by conflict and widespread mobilizations rooted in religious assets.⁶¹ Sometimes, the movement's goals include the establishment of a caliphate. McAdam et al.

⁵⁶ Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*.

⁵⁷ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–41, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2777934>.

⁵⁸ Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*.

⁵⁹ Johnson.

⁶⁰ Joe Devine, Graham K. Brown, and Séverine Deneulin, "Contesting the Boundaries of Religion in Social Mobilization," *Journal of South Asian Development* 10, no. 1 (April 2015): 22–47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174115569035>.

⁶¹ Heather Selma Gregg, "Three Theories of Religious Activism and Violence: Social Movements, Fundamentalists, and Apocalyptic Warriors," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 2 (March 14, 2016): 338–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2014.918879>.

identified three factors that scholars of SMT emphasize as essential circumstances for social movements to emerge: “political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes.”⁶² The rise and achievement of social movements are influenced by the existence of political opportunities, which examines the limitations and openings within institutional politics. The framing process encompasses a moral structure that followers can connect with, encourage group unity, and nurture a shared identity.⁶³ Mobilizing structures refers to both formal and informal collective mechanisms that facilitate people’s mobilization and participation in collective endeavors.⁶⁴ The available mobilization courses of action do not exclude one another, and groups can alter their strategies over time or in response to shifts in their observation of threats.

The causal argument within the SMT presents a range of objectives in the realm of religious activism. The viewpoints span from questioning societal norms and government guidelines associated with religion to safeguarding particular understandings and customs of the belief system.⁶⁵ Earlier proponents of SMT did not discern the difference between religion and political groups. According to Le Bon, beliefs characterized by an absence of tolerance and extreme dedication are the distinctive features of religious faith and political upheavals.⁶⁶ However, not all religious activism uses violence to reassert itself into public life.⁶⁷

The theory explains why Islamist insurgents in West Africa use Islam as a vehicle for mobilization to advance their cause in the region. West African states have a large number of its population being Muslims. The presence of political openings, organizational frameworks, and narrative techniques creates a favorable environment for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. For example, approximately 20% of Ghana’s

⁶² McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.

⁶³ McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald.

⁶⁴ Gregg, “Three Theories of Religious Activism and Violence.”

⁶⁵ Gregg.

⁶⁶ John A. Hannigan, “Social Movement Theory and the Sociology of Religion: Toward a New Synthesis,” *Sociological Analysis* 52, no. 4 (1991): 311, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3710849>.

⁶⁷ McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.

population belongs to the Islamic faith.⁶⁸ The Muslim communities in Ghana are predominant in the northern sector of the country, where conflicts abound. Islamist insurgents could use religion to mobilize the Muslim communities for their cause.

D. RESEARCH APPROACH

This section encompasses the research framework, geographical scope, approach to data gathering, validation procedures, and analytical methods. The discussions focused on identifying a framework and action plan to prevent the expansion of Islamist insurgency in West Africa to the territorial integrity of Ghana.

1. Study Design

I selected Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Niger as areas of study due to the ongoing Islamist insurgencies, affiliation of the insurgent groups to terrorist organizations, and the international cross-border nature of the phenomenon in these countries. I trace and identify specific societal and political conditions in those nations that led to insurgencies. Dominant insurgent groups in the selected countries were reviewed to determine their background, modus operandi, measures in place to stop the spread of the phenomenon, and why those measures are not working.

The study adopts secondary data on the escalation of Islamist insurgency in West Africa and how to prevent the spread of the phenomenon to Ghana. The utilization of qualitative data collection and analysis enabled the research to grasp the intricate nature of insurgency in West Africa. It also helps produce strategic and policy options to prevent the spread of the phenomenon to Ghana.

The flexibility and appropriateness informed the choice of qualitative nature of the design for exploratory studies.⁶⁹ The flexible qualitative research design allows the study not to impose prior categories or hypotheses. The study design seeks to comprehend the

⁶⁸ United States Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana*.

⁶⁹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 1990).

phenomena within field settings by permitting the constant formulation of new questions.⁷⁰ Qualitative research elicits more data than a structured and predetermined formal method. The human element in insurgency and the social aspect of the phenomenon makes the qualitative approach ideal for the research questions.⁷¹ The approach explores the totality of the situation by gathering information from different sources.

2. Data Collection Methods

Case studies will include the Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria insurgency phenomena. The study uses secondary data from official Ghana government websites, books, peer-reviewed journals, and news media on Islamist insurgency in West Africa. The qualitative data collected will ensure that the information in Chapters II and III of the study reflects the nature of the threat and its spread to Ghana.

3. Data Validation

Data validation aims to create consistent, accurate, and complete data to prevent errors in a study. Secondary source data requires verification because researchers obtain information on events from someone else. Data validation could be through external criticism or internal criticism.⁷² External criticism verifies whether the evidence under consideration is authentic. The study checks the genuineness or validity of the source and confirms the credibility of the information and whether the data can be admissible as evidence.⁷³ On the other hand, internal criticism verifies and authenticates the data's source. The study confirms whether the authorities are accurate and whether the writer or creator is competent, honest, and unbiased.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Strauss and Corbin.

⁷¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014).

⁷² Del Siegle, "Historical Research," June 11, 2015, https://researchbasics.education.uconn.edu/historical_research/.

⁷³ Creswell, *Research Design*.

⁷⁴ Siegle, "Historical Research."

4. Data Analysis

The analysis of information obtained from newspapers, books, and the Internet will give a holistic assessment of the insurgencies in West Africa and the possibility of the phenomenon spreading to Ghana. The study uses thematic analysis in examining the qualitative data. Organizing the data into themes helps maintain focus on the purpose of the research.⁷⁵ It will help in understanding the themes present in the data. The analysis will produce findings that will answer the research questions. Employing thematic analysis will enhance the structure and analytical robustness of the research.⁷⁶

5. Organization of the Study

The research consists of four sections. Chapter I serves as the introductory section. It will provide the background to the problem and the research question. It also discusses the significance of the study, literature review, sources of data, and data analysis. Chapter II offers an overview of Islamist insurgency in West Africa. It analyzes the emergence of insurgency in West Africa, the mobilization of insurgent groups, and state security in West Africa. It also probes into the concerns of counteracting insurgency in West Africa and explores the reason behind the ineffectiveness of these measures. The relevance of this chapter is to trace the background of Islamist insurgency in West Africa and its contemporary spread across international borders. Chapter III will analyze the threat of Islamist insurgency and Ghana's COIN strategies. It discusses the conditions indicating Ghana's vulnerability to insurgency, strategies currently in place to prevent insurgency, and measures to reinforce existing strategies. The chapter's relevance is that it identifies challenges within the current action plan to avert Islamist insurgency and improve existing strategies. Chapter IV summarizes the thesis' findings and provides recommendations.

⁷⁵ Charles Vanover, Paul Mihas, and Johnny Saldaña, eds., *Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Research: After the Interview* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2022).

⁷⁶ Andrea Bingham and Patty Witkowsky, *Qualitative Analysis: Deductive and Inductive Approaches*, eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications., 2022, <https://www.andreaingham.com/resources-tips-and-tricks/deductive-and-inductive-approaches-to-qualitative-analysis>).

6. Benefits of the Study

Available knowledge defines the limitations in military operational capability and the general preparedness of societies. This study will add to existing knowledge and reveal factors attracting insurgency to peaceful West African nations. It draws lessons from the crisis in Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Mali, to develop an appropriate strategy for Ghana. This strategy will be vital in building the readiness to prevent insurgency from spreading to relatively peaceful nations like Ghana.

E. CONCLUSION

The menace of insurgency in West Africa is progressively evolving into a security issue that affects the entire region, as evidenced by the operations of Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), AQIM, and other Islamist insurgents that extend beyond national boundaries in the area.⁷⁷ West Africa requires an effective strategy that can deter or force the threat of insurgency from gaining roots. The ability of West African nations to effectively address the threat of insurgency will largely hinge on the extent to which these countries cooperate. A viable strategy to prevent an uprising cannot ignore the implications of ethnicity and religious identity. These are primarily the central elements around which individuals unite to implement rebellious doctrine. These variables, amongst others, exist in Ghana, making the relatively peaceful country attractive to insurgency in the region. The phenomenon could affect Ghana's national security if not addressed.

⁷⁷ Global Conflict Tracker, "Violent Extremism in the Sahel," accessed October 20, 2023, <https://cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>.

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II. OVERVIEW OF ISLAMIST INSURGENCY IN WEST AFRICA

A. INTRODUCTION

The shift from domestic insurgencies to cross-border insurgencies in the West African region has affected several of its states' security.⁷⁸ The instability in the region's security environment is partly associated with the disintegration of the Libyan government in 2011, resulting in the widespread distribution of weaponry and the emergence of armed combatants in the region.⁷⁹ The region has, hence, seen an upsurge in the character of Islamic insurgency in the last two decades. Al-Qaeda and IS-linked groups have exploited wars and geopolitical upheaval in West Africa to gain new footholds.⁸⁰ This chapter traces the contemporary emergence of the Islamist insurgency in West Africa. It also discusses the mobilization of insurgent groups and states' security in West Africa. The chapter will further discuss the rationale behind the success of insurgency, insurgents' modus operandi, and means of mitigating insurgency in West Africa.⁸¹

B. BACKGROUND

The Islamic insurgency in West Africa emerged because of phenomena occurring on a worldwide and community scale. At the global level, jihadism ideology, which Islamic activists have conceptualized is established and spread.⁸² The conceptualization is a specific interpretation of Islam and the difficulties confronting modern Muslim communities.⁸³ Muslim activists appropriate jihadist ideologies to formulate a discourse

⁷⁸ Nancy Annan, "Violent Conflicts and Civil Strife in West Africa: Causes, Challenges and Prospects" *Stability International Journal of Security & Development* 3, no. 1 (January 28, 2014): Art. 3, <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.da>.

⁷⁹ Global Conflict Tracker, "Violent Extremism in the Sahel."

⁸⁰ International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder: Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State," March 14, 2016. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-islamic-state>.

⁸¹ World Reliefweb, "Global Terrorism Index 2022," March 2, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2022>.

⁸² Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, "The Wave of Jihadist Insurgency in West Africa: Global Ideology, Local Context, Individual Motivations," *West African Papers*, no.7, OECD Publishing, Paris (July 28, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1787/eb95c0a9-en>.

⁸³ Ibrahim.

for the mobilization of followers. At the local level, people enroll in jihadist groups for various reasons, including ideological, situational, and strategic motivations.⁸⁴ The Sahel area of West Africa became the new epicenter for insurgencies after the military conquest of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Most insurgent groups in West Africa have consequently affiliated themselves with fleeing terrorist organizations, including ISIS and Al-Qaeda, for support. Figure 1 shows active militant Islamist groups in Africa.

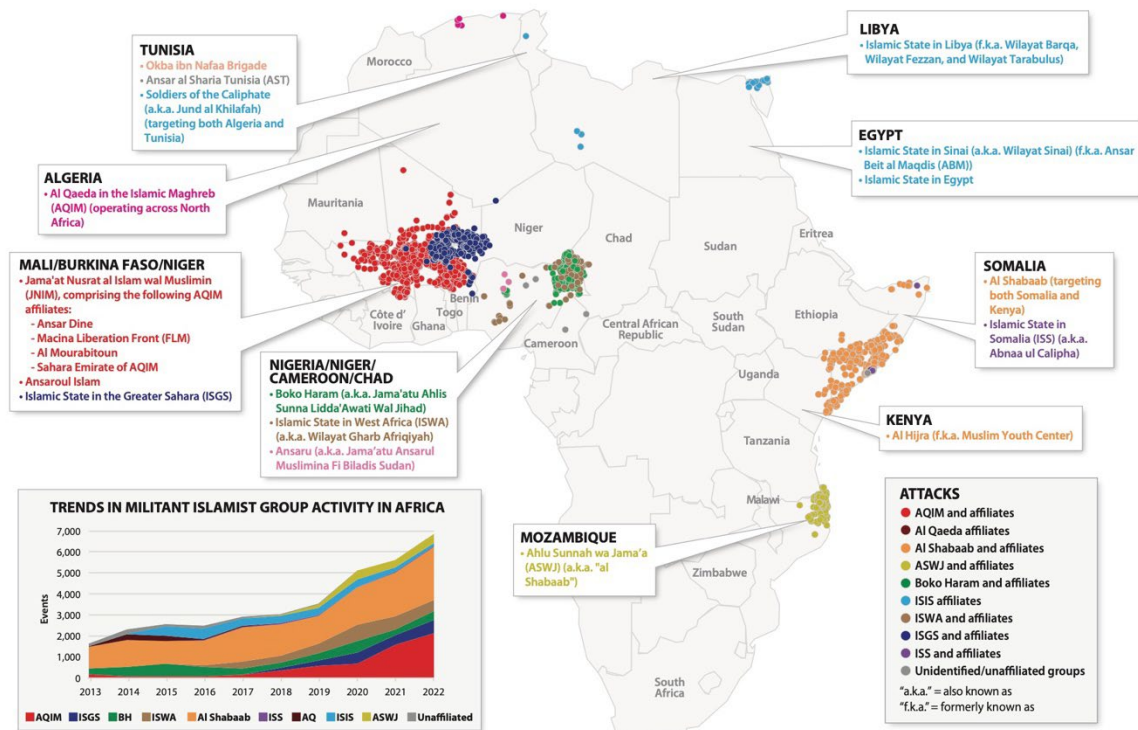


Figure 1. Map of Africa's Active Militant Islamist Group, January 2023⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibrahim.

⁸⁵ "Source: Fatalities from Islamist Violence in Africa Up Nearly 50%," *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* (blog), accessed July 10, 2023, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/fatalities-from-militant-islamist-violence-in-africa-surge-by-nearly-50-percent/>.

In Burkina Faso, the disparity between the economic prospects of the northern region and its deficient infrastructure fuels a feeling of neglect among its inhabitants.⁸⁶ Similarly, some local communities feel marginalized in Mali and think the government does not care about their plight.⁸⁷ Security forces' brutalities have reinforced the perceived state marginalization in some local communities. The communities affected by state security forces' brutalities are often reluctant to cooperate with state officials.⁸⁸ The unsociable relationship between these countries' state and population fuels the insurgency.

Ansarul Islam capitalizes on social issues, including poverty, unemployment, lack of health facilities, and security force brutalities in northern Burkina Faso and Mali to conduct activities in the region.⁸⁹ Unlike other jihadist movements, Ansarul Islam is less critical of modernity issues and rejects traditions it believes are archaic. The leader of Ansarul Islam has preached equality among the social classes for years. He has questioned traditional leaders' dominance and corrupt religious leaders' monopolization of religious authority.⁹⁰ The insurgent groups' activities became a social response to unethical practices and deviant Islamic traditions. The group appropriated the grievances of the populace who did not hold political power or religious authority and used Islam as a means to define its resistance to the established social order.⁹¹

For years, the northern part of Nigeria has felt neglected by successive governments. Since its inception in 2002, Boko Haram has tapped into the populace's grievances over disenfranchisement, poverty, unemployment, and frustration with the government.⁹² Its initial objective was to campaign against Western-style education;

⁸⁶ International Crisis Group, "The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North," October 12, 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/burkina-faso/254-social-roots-jihadist-violence-burkina-faso-north>.

⁸⁷ Morten Bøås, *The Sahel Crisis and the Need for International Support* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2019).

⁸⁸ International Crisis Group, "The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North."

⁸⁹ International Crisis Group.

⁹⁰ International Crisis Group.

⁹¹ International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder."

⁹² United States Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana*.

hence, its name, Boko Haram, meaning “Western Education is forbidden.” In 2009, the group undertook a military offensive in pursuance of an Islamic state. Recent years have seen the group graduating from more minor rudimentary attacks to full-scale assaults.⁹³ Boko Haram’s activities are now at the heart of a broader regional crisis. The insurgent group has, over the years, expanded its operations into neighboring countries, including Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Since 2014, these countries have increasingly been subjected to attacks by it, and in 2015, it pledged allegiance to ISIS and rebranded itself as ISWAP.⁹⁴

In Mali, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was formed by the Tuareg people, estimated to be about 10% of the Malian population. The group pursued an autonomous state in northern Mali by affiliating itself with several known terrorist groups, including Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), AQIM, and Ansar Dine, to push government forces out of the North.⁹⁵ The frequent overthrow of governments in Mali has led to the breakdown of state institutions in the North, making it easy for MNLA to capture the regional capital of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu. The group subsequently declared independence for the state of Azward in northern Mali. The MNLA and its affiliates expanded their control by capturing Konna in Mali and spreading into neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso.⁹⁶

The spread of Islamist insurgencies across international borders in West Africa is essentially an extension of conflicts in other countries. The phenomenon spread from one country to another due to local ties. The strengthening of the Islamist violent extremist groups across the territory is an indication that the socio-political and historical makeup of West African countries is not entirely different from the other when looking at conditions that give rise to the insurgency. The insurgent groups, encouraged by their regional successes, appear to seek new grounds in their expansion agenda. The Islamist insurgents’ motivation to expand across West Africa emphasizes the need for coastal countries not

⁹³ United States Department of State.

⁹⁴ United States Department of State.

⁹⁵ Global Conflict Tracker, “Violent Extremism in the Sahel.”

⁹⁶ Global Conflict Tracker.

affected by the phenomenon to put in stringent measures to prevent the escalation in their territorial integrity.

C. MOBILIZATION OF INSURGENT GROUPS

West African insurgent groups have been very successful in recruiting followers amongst the local populace as well as spreading jihadist ideology. The groups often start their operations in rural areas of affected countries. The insurgents initially seek to persuade the local people to join them through friendly interactions and do not disclose information about their activities to the government.⁹⁷ They are mainly formed on ethnic lines because “ethnic groups are more prone to be aggrieved, more accessible to mobilize, and more likely to face complex bargaining challenges than other groups.”⁹⁸ These circumstances result from the historical allocation of political authority based on ethnicity and geographical position.⁹⁹ Regional insurgent groups, including JNIM and Ansaroul Islam, have been exploiting the ethnic disaffection between the Fulani and Tuareg communities to propagate violence and unrest.¹⁰⁰ The social ties within sub-ethnic communities define the capacity of the larger ethnic group to organize collective action.¹⁰¹

Religion shapes the radical ideas and practices of insurgent groups. Religious beliefs provide “a vision of reality that transcends temporal and terrestrial life and inspires people to make the ultimate sacrifice.”¹⁰² The insurgents use religious belief to muster support and harness enthusiasm for victory in the insurgency fight. The groups garner support by inciting widespread government crackdowns or radicalizing their followers through alienating particular segments of society.

⁹⁷ Janet I. Lewis, *How Insurgency Begins: Rebel Group Formation in Uganda and Beyond* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁹⁸ Denny and Walter, “Ethnicity and Civil War.”

⁹⁹ Denny and Walter.

¹⁰⁰ Judd Devermont, “How Fraym Explains Extremist Violence in Burkina Faso,” *Fraym* (blog), accessed September 20, 2023, <https://fraym.io/blog/violence-in-burkina-faso/>.

¹⁰¹ Anoop Sarbahi, “The Structure of Religion, Ethnicity, and Insurgent Mobilization: Evidence from India,” *World Politics* 73, no. 1 (January 2021): 82–127, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887120000222>.

¹⁰² “The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding.”

Successful mobilization provides active and passive support for the insurgency's programs, operations, and goals. At the national level, mobilization grows out of dissatisfaction by some elite members with existing political, economic, or social conditions. At the regional level, members of an elite have become marginalized (that is, they have become psychologically alienated from the system), and have established links with followers by bringing them into the counter state.¹⁰³

The marginalization of ethnic or religious groups makes messages of insurgent groups attractive to the target communities. An all-inclusive government devoid of oppression and marginalization of religious and ethnic groups by politicians will dissuade the local populace from joining the insurgent groups.

D. INSURGENCY AND THE SECURITY OF STATES IN WEST AFRICA

The Islamist insurgents in West Africa have conquered and administered territories in the region despite states' efforts to fight them over the past decade.¹⁰⁴ The violence has killed thousands and displaced more than 2.7 million across the Sahel. Approximately "1.5 million Internally Displaced People [IDP] and 365,000 refugees have escaped their countries in the Sahel Region" due to violence.¹⁰⁵ Several factors combine to place the nations along the West African coast in a precarious position, with the potential for political instability.¹⁰⁶

The idea of an implicit agreement between governments and their citizens posited by Thomas Hopps in social contract theory has little salience in West Africa as governments continue to react poorly to local security conditions.¹⁰⁷ The decline in security within Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria is increasingly jeopardizing the

¹⁰³ Headquarters, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *Field Manual—Interim 3–07.22—Counterinsurgency Operations*, 2004, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/3-07-22/>.

¹⁰⁴ Boris Cheshirkov, "UNHCR Warns of Mounting Needs in Sahel as Forced Displacement Intensifies," UNHCR, October 16, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-warns-mounting-needs-sahel-forced-displacement-intensifies>.

¹⁰⁵ Cheshirkov.

¹⁰⁶ Eric Silla, "Preventing Conflict in Coastal West Africa," Council on Foreign Relations, August 25, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/report/preventing-conflict-coastal-west-africa>.

¹⁰⁷ Silla.

stability of nations along the West African Coast.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, the successive governments overthrown in the region since August 2020 raise concerns over security strategies and the whole system of intervention in the area.

The civilian fatalities reported in the Central Sahel in 2022 increased in contrast to the prior year. More than 2,300 civilians died in the conflict.¹⁰⁹ Since March 2022, factions affiliated with the IS have persistently initiated assaults in the northern part of Mali.¹¹⁰ Hundreds of people have died and thousands have fled.¹¹¹ The main roads linking Niamey and Ouagadougou, which also serve as connections to and from the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, are no longer secure. The political and material isolation of the populations has made them prone to recruitment by insurgent movements.¹¹²

The situation in Burkina Faso is no different. About 1 million people reside in regions subjected to blockades and are confronted with daily risk of violence and terrible humanitarian conditions.¹¹³ The town of Djibo, in Soum province, has particularly faced a dreadful situation since February 2022 when an al-Qaeda-affiliated armed group imposed a blockade to isolate an estimated 300,000 residents. Tilláberi in Niger faced thousands forcibly displaced following threats, ultimatums, and abuses by armed Islamist groups.¹¹⁴ Table 1 shows some insurgencies in West Africa and their estimated fatalities.

¹⁰⁸ Silla.

¹⁰⁹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, “Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger),” August 31, 2023, <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/mali/>.

¹¹⁰ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

¹¹¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

¹¹² Claire Meyer, “Insurgency Threatens to Spill Across the Sahel, Ghanaian President Warns,” Security Management, November 23, 2022, <http://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/latest-news/today-in-security/2022/november/insurgency-in-sahel-risks/>.

¹¹³ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, “Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger).”

¹¹⁴ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Table 1. Estimated Fatalities of Selected Insurgencies in West Africa¹¹⁵

Name of Conflict	Country	Years	Fatalities (estimate)
Tuareg Rebellion	Mali	1990–1995	N/A
Niger Delta Conflict	Nigeria	2004–2009	2,500–4,000
Tuareg Rebellion	Niger	2007–2009	270–400
Boko Haram Uprising	Nigeria	2009–present	350,000
Conflict in Northern Mali	Mali	2012–2013	1,270
Burkina Faso Islamist Insurgency	Burkina Faso	2015–present	2,000
Niger Islamist Insurgency	Niger	2015–present	16,000
Mali Islamist Insurgency	Mali	2012–present	11,000

The populace is constantly targeted and persecuted because of its ethnic or religious identity. Even though countries in the region face distinct challenges, the various countries likewise have a common history of inherent weaknesses, such as fragile governance, restricted state influence, and permeable borders. Additionally, the conflict environment favors insurgents. The advantage gained by the insurgents is due to the various ungoverned spaces in the region, which makes combating insurgencies very difficult. However, governments of West African states must continue to manage the situation and not relent in their effort. Reliable cooperation amongst countries in countering the intensification of insurgency in the territory as well as tackling the underlying reasons for insurgency is vital to finding a way forward.

E. RATIONALE BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF INSURGENCIES IN WEST AFRICA

The reasons behind the successes achieved by the Islamist insurgencies in West Africa are complex and cannot be attributed to a single factor. Most states in the region have weak institutions and cannot provide the needed security for their citizens. Violent extremist groups exploit the security gap to gain support and legitimacy.¹¹⁶ Insurgent groups that lack popular support tend to perform poorly. They, therefore, strive to obtain the population’s support to do well. The state must break the connection between the insurgents and the people for the state

¹¹⁵ Source: Marc Alexandre, Neelam Verjee, and Stephen Mogaka, “Responding to the Challenge of Fragility and Security in West Africa” (Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Group. World Bank, January 2015), http://cega.berkeley.edu/assets/miscellaneous_files/85-ABCA_-_Responding_to_the_Challenge_of_Fragility_and_Security_in_West_Africa_ABCA_entry.pdf.

¹¹⁶ International Crisis Group, “Exploiting Disorder.”

to win. The central role of popular support in sustaining an insurgency and pressing an uprising toward victory against a regime cannot be over-emphasized.

The ties between West African insurgent groups and violent extremist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda go beyond religious ideology. After ISIS suffered a significant defeat in Iraq and Syria, the violent extremist organization is attempting a resurgence in Africa. They are trying to spread their ideology to ensure its operational relevance.¹¹⁷ The relationship between the international violent extremist groups and insurgent groups in West Africa has led to their rapid expansion in the Sahel region.¹¹⁸

Neighboring state support to insurgents has an excellent impact on the effectiveness of insurgent movements. State support of an insurgency is largely driven by geopolitical factors rather than ideology, ethnic connections, or religious emotions.¹¹⁹ The assistance states offer to insurgent groups is often in the form of arms, equipment, and diplomatic support, which includes aiding them to engage with influential nations.¹²⁰ Without nearby safe havens and backing from the international community, insurgent factions lack a dependable way to find refuge and resources in their struggle against the government.¹²¹ West African states could use diplomacy in dealing with external support offered by neighboring states, including reporting the issue to international organizations such as the United Nations to handle it amicably.

Most West African states adjoining the Sahel region have populations with closer ties to inhabitants across national borders than their governments in the mostly coastal capitals. The

¹¹⁷ Daniel L. Byman, “Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets,” *Brookings* (blog), April 29, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/>.

¹¹⁸ United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2019*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, 2019), <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/>.

¹¹⁹ Daniel Byman, ed., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001).

¹²⁰ Byman.

¹²¹ William H. Miller, “Insurgency Theory and the Conflict in Algeria: A Theoretical Analysis,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 1 (March 2000): 60–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550008427550>.

Tuareg in Algeria have closer ties to the Tuareg in Mali than to the political elite in Algiers.¹²² The interconnectedness of the conditions in the region coupled with the porous borders makes states vulnerable to spillover effects of conflicts in neighboring countries. Where nations are either reluctant or incapable of guaranteeing security, the peripheral populations assume these roles in their place.¹²³ The lack of governmental control and local ties across national borders underscores the need for bilateral agreements amongst West African states in combating insurgency and violent extremist groups.

F. INSURGENTS' MODUS OPERANDI

Insurgents use guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political mobilizations to wane regimes' influence and acceptability while growing their authority and legitimacy.¹²⁴ The objective of an armed group "differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations, whose goals do not include the creation of an alternative government capable of controlling a given area of the country."¹²⁵ Boko Haram insurgents abducted hundreds of civilians, including at least 200 young schoolgirls.¹²⁶ The group invaded several police stations and military bases in Nigeria, seizing their arms and ammunition, including armored personnel carriers, for their operations. Islamist insurgent group uses explosives, mostly crafted from readily available local resources.¹²⁷

Al-Qaeda and ISIS militants in West Africa mainly target Westerners. The regional al-Qaeda affiliated group claimed responsibility for the November 2015 siege in Mali and the January 2016 raids in Burkina Faso. A web post by an al-Qaeda-linked extremist franchise indicated that the deadly assaults were revenge on France, the former colonial power in

¹²² Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber, "Jihadism in Africa: Local Causes, Regional Expansion, International Alliances," n.d.

¹²³ Steinberg and Weber.

¹²⁴ Daniel L. Byman, "Friends like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 79–115.

¹²⁵ Byman.

¹²⁶ "Islamic State 'accepts' Boko Haram's Allegiance Pledge," *BBC News*, March 12, 2015, sec. Middle East, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31862992>.

¹²⁷ "Boko Haram Crisis: How Have Nigeria's Militants Become so Strong," *BBC News*, January 26, 2015, sec. Africa, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30933860>.

Burkina Faso and Mali.¹²⁸ The actions of these violent extremist groups are shaped by the situation in their home country rather than their ideological claims. The situation in their home country mainly includes solidarity with the Muslim community and shared objectives such as the liberation of Palestine.¹²⁹ Figure 2 depicts the trends of ISIS attacks against civilians in West Africa, 2017–2020.

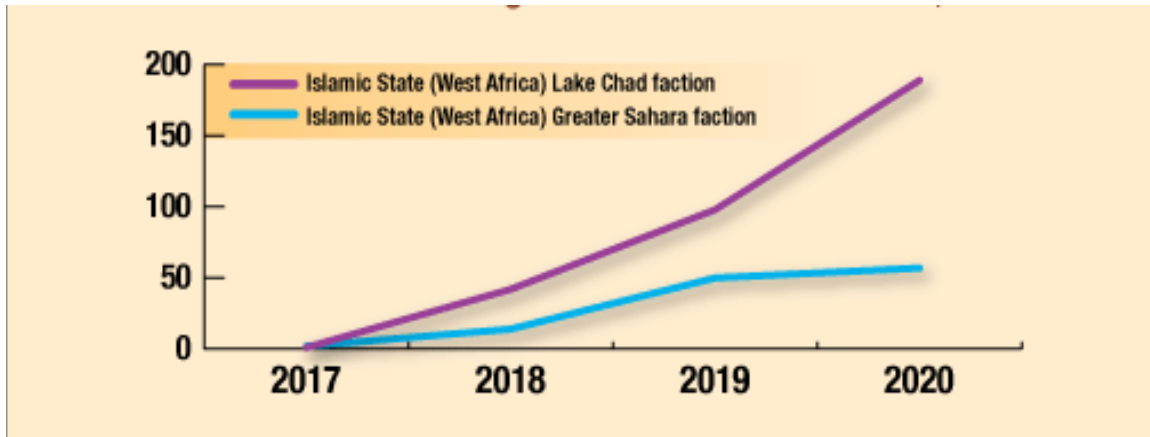


Figure 2. Trends of ISIS Abduction and Attacks Against Civilians in West Africa, 2017–2020¹³⁰

Islamist militants have taken control of valuable, resource-endowed areas, including gold-mining zones in Burkina Faso. They have also been focusing on artisanal gold mining activities in Niger and Mali to finance their cause.¹³¹ Furthermore, violent extremist groups engage in money laundering, arms trafficking, and narcotic drugs to

¹²⁸ Ofeibea Quist-Arcton, “Al-Qaida Militants Target Westerners in West Africa,” *NPR*, January 24, 2016, sec. Africa, <https://www.npr.org/2016/01/24/464180297/al-qaida-militants-target-westerners-in-west-africa>.

¹²⁹ Steinberg and Weber, “Jihadism in Africa: Local Causes, Regional Expansion, International Alliances.”

¹³⁰ Daniel Muraga, “ISIS in Africa,” *CQ Researcher* 31, no. 37 (October 22, 2021): 1–18, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre2021102202>.

¹³¹ Muraga.

finance their activities.¹³² The effects of insurgent modus operandi on states and citizens underscore the need to overturn the gains of the insurgent groups. States must avoid mistakes that empower the rise of insurgencies. Security forces must not inflame passions in the ousting of militants. However, it is prudent for the state to defuse the conflicts that fuel insurgencies and prevent new ones from arising using dialogue and responding to extremism with force where the need be.

G. MITIGATING INSURGENCY IN WEST AFRICA

ECOWAS has established diverse frameworks and protocols to control the growing menace of insurgency in West Africa. The Protocol for “Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999)” is one of the initiatives that ECOWAS has in place to curb the spread of violent extremist groups.¹³³ Article 3(4) of the Protocol “calls for strengthening cooperation in peacekeeping operations, early warning, countering cross-border crime, international terrorism, and the proliferation of small arms and anti-personnel mines.”¹³⁴ ECOWAS member states appear to have restricted coordination of COIN measures in the region to states actively fighting insurgency. Member states’ apathy led to the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force. It is prudent for member states to participate actively in COIN initiatives to halt the spread of Islamist insurgencies within the region. Proper coordination amongst West African states will help isolate and destroy the insurgents.

In 2013, ECOWAS member states adopted the Counterterrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan.¹³⁵ It uses a three-pillar prevention, pursuance, and reconstruction methodology to counter terrorism. The prevent pillar proposes that “member states adopt and implement effective legal regimes, eliminate root causes of terrorism, enhance early

¹³² UN Press, “Speakers Warn Security Council Terrorism Spreading Across Africa at Alarming Rate, Call for Greater Support, Enhanced International, Regional Cooperation,” UN Press, March 28, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15245.doc.htm>.

¹³³ Osei Baffour Frimpong, “Violent Extremism in West Africa: Are Current Responses Enough?” 21st Century Diplomacy, n.d., <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/microsite/5/node/93131>.

¹³⁴ Frimpong.

¹³⁵ Frimpong, “Violent Extremism in West Africa,”.

warning systems and operational intelligence, counter extremism and radicalization, and promote democratic values and human rights.”¹³⁶ The “pursue pillar” encourages member states to undertake rapid action against terrorist organizations in the region. The “reconstruct pillar” aims to rebuild societies damaged by terrorism.¹³⁷ The ECOWAS Counterterrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan contains important principles that could have restrained the spread of Islamist insurgency in West Africa but lacked the requisite resources and financial support. Most of the countries in the region are impoverished and cannot support the implementation of the strategy.

In 2013, France set up a 3000-strong force to root out violent extremist organizations in Mali. The operation known as “Operation Serval” was initiated at the request of the interim president of Mali for France’s intervention. This force was later transformed into “Operation Barkhane” in January 2014.¹³⁸ France expanded the troops’ mandate to include the fight against Boko Haram. It advanced its security agenda mainly through capacity building by training, sharing information, and providing equipment to support counterinsurgency operations of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the MNJTF.¹³⁹ The task force included troops from Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad.

With the support of France, the troops contributing countries raised a 5,000-counterterrorism force with a mandate to cross international borders in their operations.¹⁴⁰ Establishing the G5 joint force was an essential step toward greater regional cooperation in addressing the escalation of the threat. Sustainment and proper coordination amongst member states could have resolved the challenge of violent extremists evading pursuit by slipping across national boundaries.

¹³⁶ Global Conflict Tracker, “Violent Extremism in the Sahel.”

¹³⁷ Global Conflict Tracker.

¹³⁸ Global Conflict Tracker.

¹³⁹ Jennifer G. Cooke, Boris Toucas, and Katrin Heger, “Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security,” November 15, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-g5-sahel-joint-force-fighting-terror-building-regional-security>.

¹⁴⁰ Global Conflict Tracker, “Violent Extremism in the Sahel.”

In March 2020, the European Union (EU) responded to France's call to increase troop deployment in West Africa with Task Force Takuba. The task force's mandate stretched beyond training and support to the indigenous military. It was to accompany the Malian Armed Forces in coordination with the G5 Sahel partners and other international actors on the ground.¹⁴¹ The United States of America has also deployed approximately 1,500 troops to the region in addition to the drone base in Niger.¹⁴² The American forces in the area mainly train partner nations to increase their capacity to stop the spread of al-Qaeda and ISIS into their countries.¹⁴³

Multilateral partnerships are crucial in counterterrorism. Emphasis could be on intergovernmental organizations such as the ECOWAS and the United Nations in mitigating threats across international borders. Actors must acknowledge the different political settings and not impose a universal logic on local contexts. There are peculiarities in every insurgency situation, and it requires a tailored approach to addressing the phenomenon. These peculiarities include societal grievances harnessed to challenge the ruling order, feelings of insecurity through marginalization and political exclusion, historical ties among ethnic groups, and religious extremism.

H. WHY MITIGATING MEASURES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INSURGENCY ARE NOT WORKING IN WEST AFRICA

Despite several ECOWAS protocols and multilateral partnerships by some West African countries with the Western world, jihadi terrorism and insurgency continue to gain deep roots in the region. ECOWAS member states cannot mitigate the uprising in the area with their increased use of military force to the detriment of other solutions to the phenomenon's root causes. It is, however, difficult to see a way forward that does not rely on military intervention.¹⁴⁴ Human rights violations by security forces in Mali, Chad, and

¹⁴¹ Campbell John, "EU Task Force Takuba in Mali," Council on Foreign Relations, December 8, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/eu-task-force-takuba-mali>.

¹⁴² Nick Turse, "The U.S. Is Building a Drone Base in Niger That Will Cost More than \$280 Million by 2024," *The Intercept*, August 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/08/21/us-drone-base-niger-africa/>.

¹⁴³ Jeff Schogol, "U.S. Troops Are Quietly Helping Fight ISIS, al-Qaida in West Africa," *Task & Purpose* (blog), April 3, 2023, <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/us-military-west-africa/>.

¹⁴⁴ John, "EU Task Force Takuba in Mali."

Nigeria have undermined regional and national efforts. Additionally, several ECOWAS states struggle to prioritize COIN strategies in their national security strategy.

Furthermore, there are concerns about limited space for local community participation in Mali and Burkina Faso peace and security processes. Local grievances are the fundamental causes of political extremism.¹⁴⁵ It is incumbent on the governments of West African countries to not only defeat insurgencies with the military instrument of power but also strive to resolve the conditions that produce the phenomenon.

International partners' support to help curb the insurgency has not exhibited a clear strategy for fighting the insurgencies. The United States lacks a clear plan to counter the spread of Islamic insurgency in the Sahel region of West Africa. The U.S. 2022 National Security Strategy lists priorities for the Sahel region in its Africa Strategy rather than a concrete action plan.¹⁴⁶ The strategy emphasizes supporting African-led efforts to work towards a political solution to conflicts. The lack of clarity in the current strategy increases the chance of outdated assumptions and programs in the area.¹⁴⁷

Even though the U.S. drone strikes have been instrumental in the fight against violent extremist organizations in the West Africa region, the attacks have led to numerous civilian casualties, the displacement of communities, and the devastation of people's means of earning a living.¹⁴⁸ The operations have driven resentment amongst the communities in the area opposing military operations by foreign forces. Furthermore, questions have arisen regarding the United States military dedication to the region, especially in light of internal discussions in Washington about potentially reducing the U.S. military presence following attacks on American soldiers deployed in the Sahel.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Suleiman, "How Coastal West Africa Can Stem the Jihadist Wave."

¹⁴⁶ The White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, October 2022), <https://nps.edu/web/slamr/-/new-national-security-strategy-issued>.

¹⁴⁷ Alex Thurston, *An Alternative Approach to U.S. Sahel Policy* (Washington, DC: Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, November 7, 2022), <https://quincyinst.org/report/an-alternative-approach-to-u-s-sahel-policy/>.

¹⁴⁸ Frimpong, "Violent Extremism in West Africa: Are Current Responses Enough?"

¹⁴⁹ Frimpong.

Human rights issues have influenced terrorist activities in West Africa and impeded effective counterterrorism policies and programs.¹⁵⁰ Human rights abuses include unlawful and arbitrary killings, unjustified arrests of journalists, and arbitrary detentions. Additionally, there is frequently a disruption of the right to engage in peaceful assembly and the freedom to associate with others. Furthermore, states' restrictions on religious freedom and acts of violence against religious minorities influence the behavior of the religious group.¹⁵¹

Countering insurgency has been unsuccessful in recent years primarily due to the mechanization of modern militaries. State militaries historically lacked a long logistical tail, which devolved the supply of armies into the field and necessitated the practice of foraging for supplies.¹⁵² Soldiers hence interacted more with the local populace and obtained information about the insurgents and familiarity with the area in their quest for material supplies for the army locally. The interactions with the local populations assisted state armed forces in finding and destroying insurgents.¹⁵³ COIN strategy without adequate information often leads to indiscriminate violence against the local population. The indiscriminate violence creates grievances that the insurgents exploit in their mobilization efforts.¹⁵⁴ Security services and agencies must interact more with the local populace in the fight against insurgencies and violent extremist groups. The interactions with the local populations will enable them to gather the needed intelligence to cut the insurgents off the people.

The challenges confronting COIN and violent extremist groups are evolving and require a drastic solution. Building on existing best practices developed against violent

¹⁵⁰ United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2019*.

¹⁵¹ United States Department of State.

¹⁵² Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, "Rage against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (2009): 67–106.

¹⁵³ Lyall and Wilson.

¹⁵⁴ United States, ed., *The United States Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: United States Army FM No. 3–24: Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3–33.5*, University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/50585/1/290.pdf>.

extremist organizations and insurgency appears to be the way forward. However, military campaigns against insurgency may work in a place like Iraq but not necessarily in the West Africa region. Similarly, coastal West African countries may not necessarily need the same prevention measures as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Figure 3 shows West African countries that stand the risk of the spread of Islamist insurgencies. The multifaceted nature of West African uprisings emphasizes the need to identify favorable strategies that provide a more holistic approach to preventing insurgency and violent extremist organizations from individual countries. Including local community participation in the fight against insurgency could win the hearts and minds of the population.



Figure 3. Coastal West African Countries¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Source: Eric Silla, “Preventing Conflict in Coastal West Africa.”

I. CONCLUSION

Islamic Insurgencies and the activities of violent extremist organizations in West Africa have made the region unstable. Despite the measures established by ECOWAS and other international bodies, the crisis continues to escalate, possibly spreading to the relatively peaceful coastal countries. The mitigating measures appear not to be working because of inadequate coordination of COIN strategies and mechanisms amongst stakeholders. Additionally, some member states lack the political will to enforce bilateral security initiatives and protocols developed by ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), and other supporting international bodies.

In their fight against insurgency, governments of West African countries must ensure that they do not only resort to military means in their strategy. The states must also review their COIN frameworks to reflect international standards. Emphasis could be on legality and proportionality, as well as the involvement of local authorities to find a lasting solution. COIN strategies will not succeed if states continue perpetuating the denial and destruction of human rights. Approaches primarily centered on security, as opposed to those grounded in human rights, can unintentionally foster marginalization and exclusion.

III. THE THREAT OF ISLAMIST INSURGENCY AND GHANA'S COIN STRATEGIES

A. INTRODUCTION

The spread of Islamist insurgents in West Africa threatens Ghana's security. An analysis of the Islamist insurgency in other West African countries indicates that violent extremist groups exploit the socio-cultural vulnerabilities of states to launch their attacks. Ghana has not experienced violent extremism, even though the security situation in the country suggests Ghana is vulnerable to insurgency.¹⁵⁶ In this chapter, I discuss factors indicating Ghana's vulnerability to the spread of Islamist insurgency in West Africa. I further deliberate on measures in place to prevent Islamist insurgency in Ghana and approaches to improve existing strategies in countering the threat.

B. CONDITIONS INDICATING GHANA'S VULNERABILITY TO INSURGENCY

This section identifies factors that indicate Ghana's vulnerability to the spread of Islamist insurgency. It discusses the implications of the conflict between Islamic sects in Ghana, the inequalities in economic and infrastructure development in Ghana, and the inadequacy of state control in Ghana. Additionally, it deliberates on Ghana's proximity to violent extremist groups, recurring ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts, and the uprising of separatist movements.

1. Conflict Among Islamic Sects in Ghana

The Muslim communities in Ghana include the Sunnis, Ahmadiyya, Shia, and Sufis (Tijaniyyah and Qadriyya orders). These Islamic sects' criticism of each other's interpretation of the Quran has often led to violent conflicts. Hostilities have increased among the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah (Sunni) and Al-tijaniyya (Sufi). The Ahlus Sunna

¹⁵⁶ Philip Attuquayefio and Osei Baffour Frimpong, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism in Ghana—Projecting the Utility of Citizens' Engagement," *African Journal of Terrorism and Insurgency Research* 3, no. 1 (2022): 31.

Wal Jama'ah sect revives true Islamic belief and practice.¹⁵⁷ Contrarily, the Al-tijaniyya sect sees Wahhābiyyah (Sunni) as a deviant Islamic sect that has bred heretical movements since early Islam. The Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah (Sunni) and Al-tijaniyya (Sufi) sects have also criticized the Ahmadiyya sect, a less dominant faction.¹⁵⁸ The Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah and Al-tijaniyya sects see the Ahmadiyya sect as non-Muslim because the Ahmadiyya sect considers Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, to be the promised Mahdi and Messiah awaited by Muslims.¹⁵⁹

The Ahmadiyya and Ahlus Sunna Wal Jama'ah sects in Ghana receive external support from sponsoring states, which play a vital role in radicalizing the Islamic sects.¹⁶⁰ Sponsoring states include Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, and Kuwait. A report released in 2023 by the European Parliament revealed that Wahhabi (a reformist movement within Sunni) and Salafi groups were involved in supporting and supplying arms to rebel groups worldwide.¹⁶¹ The reformist movements aim to terrorize their opponents to arouse the admiration of their supporters. Consequently, there have been reports of Ghanaians joining ISIS in the Middle East region and some young Muslim students embracing extremist ideologies.¹⁶² The situation underscores the need for the government of Ghana to scrutinize all foreign donations and support received by the Islamic sects.

The Islamic sects all over Ghana firmly hold their theological views and interpretations. The denominations have established Islamic schools and vocational

¹⁵⁷ Abdussalam Adam, "The Conflict Between Ahlus-Sunnah and Tijāniyya Muslims in Ghana: The Conflict Between Ahlus-Sunnah and Tijāniyya Muslims in Ghana," *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 75–101, <https://doi.org/10.47963/ojorhv.v5i1.340>.

¹⁵⁸ Aning and Abdallah, "Islamic Radicalization and Violence in Ghana."

¹⁵⁹ Neha Sahgal, "In Pakistan, Most Say Ahmadis Are Not Muslim," *Pew Research Center* (blog), September 10, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2013/09/10/in-pakistan-most-say-ahmadis-are-not-muslim/>.

¹⁶⁰ Aning and Abdallah, "Islamic Radicalization and Violence in Ghana."

¹⁶¹ European Parliament. Directorate General for External Policies of the Union., *The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism in the Support and Supply of Arms to Rebel Groups around the World*. (LU: Publications Office, 2013), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/21042>.

¹⁶² Yunus Dumbe and George M. Bob-Milliar, "Unregulated Religious Spaces in Public Universities in Ghana: Evidence of the Radicalisation of Young Muslim Students," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 40, no. 4 (October 2, 2022): 463–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2022.2121808>.

institutions with the support of some foreign Islamic states. As part of their academic and vocational training, the sects offer religious teachings to the youth. The teachings of sectarian doctrines in the schools and other institutions bring to the fore the need for the National Security Apparatus (NSA) to monitor the schools and vocational institutions established by various Islamic sects. Strictly observing the schools and vocational institutions will ensure that their establishments' teachings and organizational policies are not detrimental to Ghana's national security. The MNS must also sensitize the youth to the implications of radicalization and violent extremism on Ghana's national security.

The northern sector of Ghana has the majority of the Muslim population, where the conflict between the sects is rampant. Other regions with minority Muslims in the southern sector also experience revivalism and radicalization. These regions include the Brong-Ahafo and Ashanti regions.¹⁶³ The sects' views and doctrinal interpretations give them their Muslim identity.¹⁶⁴ The Islamic identity of Muslims supersedes all other differences, including ethnicity. Insurgent recruiters could capitalize on the conflicts between the sects to frame an Islamic identity of marginalization within the Ghanaian communities. The crafted Islamic identity would create the required motivation to drive the marginalized population toward insurgency. Figure 4 shows the Muslim people's distribution and locations in Ghana.

¹⁶³ Aning and Abdallah, "Islamic Radicalization and Violence in Ghana."

¹⁶⁴ Fathima Azmiya Badurdeen, "How Do Individuals Join the Al-Shabaab? An Ethnographic Insight into Recruitment Models for the Al-Shabaab Network in Kenya," *African Security* 14, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 239–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1963926>.

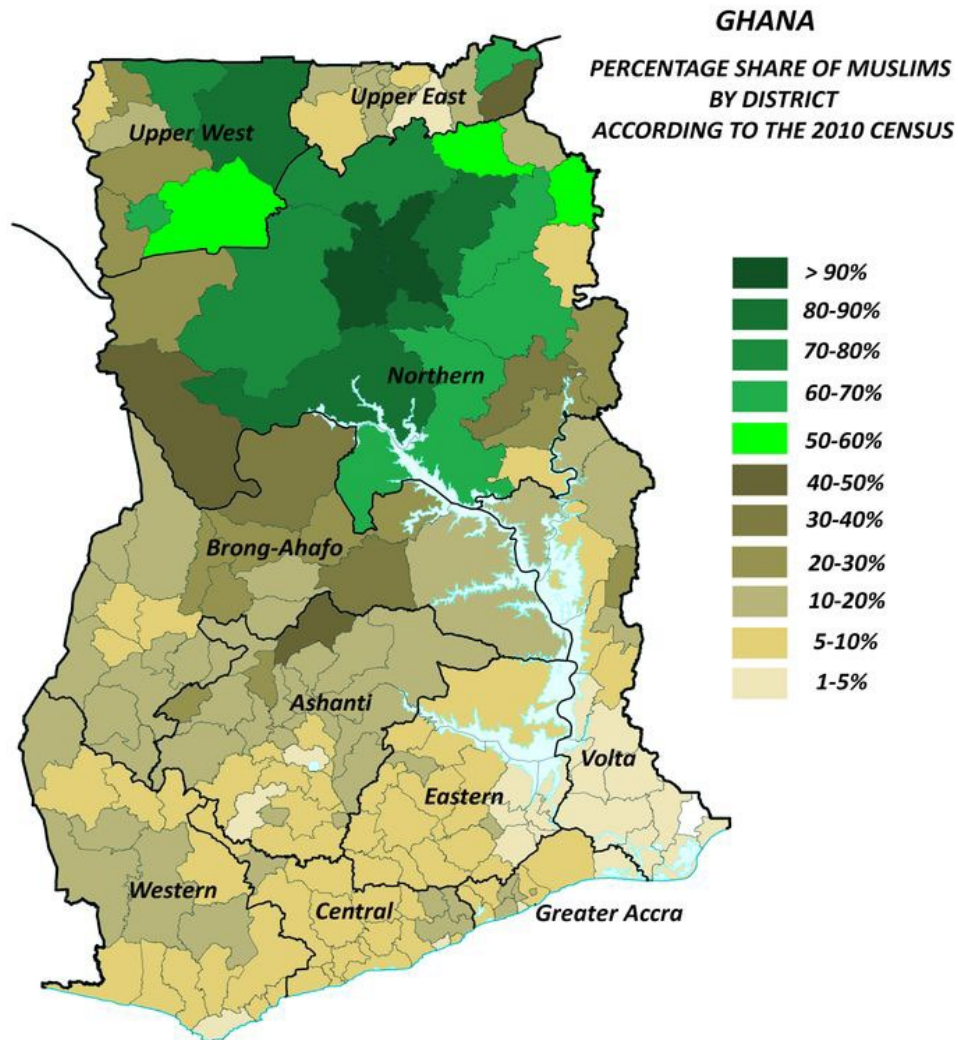


Figure 4. Map of Ghana's Muslim Population by Location¹⁶⁵

2. Inequalities in Economic and Infrastructure Development

Studies have revealed inequalities in economic, infrastructure development, and quality of life between Ghana's northern and southern sectors. The British colonial masters established a hierarchical relationship in the southern region and held economic and political dominance over northern Ghana. The north sector was seen as a source of labor, thereby

¹⁶⁵ Source: "Pin by Mosalmaid on Mosalmaid Maps | Ghana, Time for Africa, Africa," Pinterest, accessed July 1, 2023, <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/856528422871465251/>.

reducing government investment in the area.¹⁶⁶ The poverty rate in the northern sector of Ghana is vast compared to the southern sector. The population in the north sector is estimated to be 17% of the total Ghanaian population; however, it constitutes 40% of the poorest people in Ghana.¹⁶⁷ The financial instability of the Ghanaian economy has further worsened development and growth in the northern sector.¹⁶⁸

Unemployment in the north has been high, leading to people migrating south for greener pastures. Additionally, the literacy level amongst the people in the northern sector is low, reflecting the poverty in the area.¹⁶⁹ According to Brian Levin, founder of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, people with weak attachments to extremist views could turn violent in the right circumstances.¹⁷⁰ Jihadists try to weaponize grievances rooted in the problems of societies to attract recruits. The above-mentioned social issues in Ghana underscore the need for proactive measures to tackle the root causes of grievances that lead to insurgency. Underprivileged and susceptible people in Ghana's societies must have equal access to financial resources and basic facilities such as schools, hospitals, potable water, and electricity.

3. Inadequate State Control

There are inadequate police and other security organizations in the northern sector of Ghana. A survey on the availability of police stations in Ghana indicated that 38.4% of urban localities had police stations as of 2021, while rural communities had only 3.5% access to police stations.¹⁷¹ The northern regions in Ghana had facilities with the least police presence.

¹⁶⁶ Aning and Abdallah, "Islamic Radicalization and Violence in Ghana."

¹⁶⁷ James Courtright, "In Ghana, Local Problems Threaten Regional Security—ICWA," Institute of Current World Affairs, July 22, 2022, <https://www.icwa.org/ghana-regional-insecurity/>.

¹⁶⁸ Nana Abena Antwiwaa Atuahene, Ernest Kay Bakpa, and Xu Yuanwang, "Poverty and Health Issues in the Northern Part of Ghana," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.9, no. 8 (April 30, 2019), <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.7176/RHSS>.

¹⁶⁹ Atuahene, Bakpa, and Yuanwang.

¹⁷⁰ Rachel Weiner, Spencer S. Hsu, Tom Jackman, and Sahana Jayaraman, "Desperate, Angry, Destructive: How Americans Morphed into a Mob," *Washington Post*, November 9, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/11/09/rioters-charges-arrests-jan-6-insurrection/>.

¹⁷¹ Doris Dokua Sasu, "Ghana: Availability of Police Stations by Area 2021," Statista, January 20, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1278839/availability-of-police-stations-in-ghana-by-area/>.

Additionally, logistics support has been a major challenge, making it difficult for the police commands to patrol the vast landmass of northern Ghana.¹⁷² The presence of other NSA in the North is similar to that of the Ghana Police Service (GPS).¹⁷³

The lack of control and, to some extent, the nonexistence of state presence or the state's inability to monitor events in remote communities provides openings for Islamist insurgent groups to recruit people and spread jihadist narratives for their mission. There is a need for MNS to beef up the NSA presence in rural communities. Interagency coordination should also be encouraged to facilitate the interest of state agencies and administrations with competing goals into a productive collaborative process. These measures will bridge the security agencies' presence in rural areas challenges.

4. Ghana's Proximity to Violent Extremist Groups

Ghana sits insecurely at the border of possible jihadist violence expansion. Its proximity to Islamist insurgency groups in the Sahel region makes it vulnerable to their expansion activities. Studies have shown that violent extremist groups do not have boundaries.¹⁷⁴ Ghana's border with Burkina Faso has more than 189 informal crossing points.¹⁷⁵ Ghana's proximity to Burkina Faso has made it accessible to groups like Islamic State in the Greater Sahel (ISGS) and Ansarul, which have operated in the region for an extended period and established a presence. The proximity has raised concerns about possible cross-border incursions by Islamist insurgent groups.

The Islamist insurgent groups operating in West African countries could provide a haven for recruiting and training insurgents to invade Ghana. Islamist insurgent groups support

¹⁷² "Northern Regional Police Command Complain of Lack of Personnel," Modern Ghana, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/347546/northern-regional-police-command-complain-of-lack-of-personn.html>.

¹⁷³ Paschal Anayenle Badong, "Security Provision in Ghana: What Is the Role and Impact of Non-State Actors," African Leadership Centre, August 2009, <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/21725/21725.pdf>.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations, "International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and When Conducive to Terrorism" (United Nations), accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/prevention-extremism-when-conducive-terrorism-day>.

¹⁷⁵ "The Jihadist Threat in Northern Ghana and Togo," kas.de, April 6, 2022, <https://www.kas.de/en/single-title/-/content/the-jihadist-threat-in-northern-ghana-and-togo-2>.

affiliated insurgent groups' activities in neighboring countries because of geopolitical considerations, particularly when ethnicity and culture play a role.¹⁷⁶ The ethnic ties between Ghana and Burkina Faso also make Ghana susceptible to Islamist insurgent groups.¹⁷⁷ The sanctuary a neighboring state provides to insurgent organizations would support guerrilla hit-and-run tactics and ultimately aid their growth with time. The circumstance highlights the need for Ghana to collaborate with its neighboring countries in the fight against insurgency, including the sharing of intelligence, joint operations, and training.

5. Recurring Ethnic and Chieftaincy Conflicts

The northern sector of Ghana is overwhelmed with several recurring ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts that harm the population. The conflicts include the Bawku, Bolga, Bimbila, and Bole chieftaincy disputes based on historical or ethnic rivalries. The intensity of violence in these conflicts varies across the northern sector.¹⁷⁸ The political elite and local politicians often manipulate these conflicts for their interests. Chiefs are essential allies in winning elections, even though they are supposed to be non-partisan. Personalities vying for disputed chieftaincy titles rely on the backing of politicians and national leaders to help them in their quest to ascend their thrones.¹⁷⁹ The Bawku conflict highlights the manipulations politics and external intrigues play in fueling the conflicts. The ethnic conflict between the Kusasi and Mamprusi people has led to the death of “more than 30 people between December 2022 and April 2023.”¹⁸⁰ According to Ghana police reports, Burkinabe combatants are in the

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Ameyaw-Brobbe, “Pampering Insurgency: Ghana’s Path to State-Failure or Building Africa’s Newest Conflict,” *Global Policy Journal*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/25/02/2021/pampering-insurgency-ghanas-path-state-failure-or-building-africas-newest-conflict>.

¹⁷⁷ Paa Kwesi Wolseley Prah and Timothy Chanimbe, “Ghana’s Readiness to Combat Terrorism: Strategies of Security Institutions,” *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs* 23, no. 3 (September 2, 2021): 367–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23800992.2021.1968582>.

¹⁷⁸ Patrick Osei-Kufuor, “Conflict, Peace, and Development: A Spatio-Thematic Analysis of Violent Conflicts in Northern Ghana between 2007 and 2013,” *Conflict & Communication Online* 15, no. 2 (2016).

¹⁷⁹ Kaderi Noagah Bukari, Patrick Osei-Kufuor, and Shaibu Bukari, “Chieftaincy Conflicts in Ghana Are Mixed up with Politics: What’s at Risk,” *The Conversation*, September 5, 2021, <http://theconversation.com/chieftaincy-conflicts-in-ghana-are-mixed-up-with-politics-whats-at-risk-166602>.

¹⁸⁰ Bukari, Osei-Kufuor, and Bukari.

local conflict.¹⁸¹ Intelligence also indicates some youth from Bawku are also in Burkina Faso fighting alongside jihadists.¹⁸²

Islamist insurgency in the West African region spread through grievances and conflicts. The situation in Bawku brings issues of national security interest to the fore as jihadist insurgents in Burkina Faso and other West African countries who appear to be moving South toward Ghana could exploit these local divisions. The government of Ghana must find a lasting solution devoid of political biases to the conflict before the jihadist infiltrates to take advantage of the situation. The government could use traditional leaders and youth groups to find an amicable solution to the conflict. The involvement of the youth groups and traditional leaders would prevent violence after settling disputes and secure harmonious, peaceful living and community resilience.

6. Uprising of Separatist Movements

Ghana is currently facing separatist movements by the Homeland Study Group Foundation (HSGF) and a campaign splinter group, the Western Togoland Restoration Front (WTRF), who are threatening to break away from the Western Togoland area (see Figure 5).¹⁸³ The WTRF, since it declared sovereignty in September 2020, has undertaken violent activities in the area, intending to increase tensions to force the government of Ghana to a negotiation table.¹⁸⁴ The HSGF attacked police stations in Aveyime and Mepe in the Volta Region. The group made away with an unspecified number of firearms and munitions and kidnapped three police officers.¹⁸⁵ The group also blocked roads leading to the Volta Region

¹⁸¹ Kent Mensah, "Ghana Beefs Up Security Near Burkina Border as Ethnic War Attracts Terrorists," VOA, April 7, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/ghana-beefs-up-security-near-burkina-border-as-ethnic-war-attracts-terrorists-/7041209.html>.

¹⁸² James Courtright, "A Small Town in Ghana Erupted in Violence. Were Jihadists Fueling the Fight?" *New Lines Magazine* (blog), January 25, 2023, <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/a-small-town-in-ghana-erupted-in-violence-were-jihadists-fueling-the-fight/>.

¹⁸³ "These Are the Demands of the 'Western Togoland' Separatist Group," GhanaWeb, September 25, 2020, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/These-are-the-demands-of-the-Western-Togoland-separatist-group-1069117>.

¹⁸⁴ Ameyaw-Brobbe, "Pampering Insurgency."

¹⁸⁵ "Ghana: Separatists Block Roads, Attack Police Stations, in Volta Region September 25," Crisis24, accessed August 21, 2023, <https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2020/09/ghana-separatists-block-roads-attack-police-stations-in-volta-region-september-25>.

to prevent people from accessing the area from other parts of Ghana by road. In September 2020, some members of the separatist groups attacked the State Transport Corporation (STC) terminal in the Volta Region, beating up drivers and setting some buses ablaze.¹⁸⁶



Figure 5. Map of Ghana showing the Contested Area of Western Togoland¹⁸⁷

Ghana's government accommodating the demands of these insurgent groups would confirm the state's weak resolve and lead to other aggrieved people demanding to stake claims. Persecuting those with separatist beliefs could also lead to resentment and instability, as in the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria and Ansaru in Burkina Faso. Even though the separative movements are not explicitly Islamist, the possibility exists of the

¹⁸⁶ "Two New Secessionist Groups Identified—Kan Dapaah," *Modern Ghana*, accessed August 21, 2023, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1040849/two-new-secessionist-groups-identified-kan-dapaa.html>.

¹⁸⁷ Source: "Rebels Declare Sovereignty in East Ghana," *Africa Defense Forum* (blog), October 21, 2020, <https://adf-magazine.com/2020/10/rebels-declare-sovereignty-in-east-ghana/>.

groups affiliating themselves with violent extremist groups for support. The separative groups are in their formative stages and are yet to gain root or help from an external actor/country. The state could defeat the separative groups with little resistance in their weak and formative form. The chances of the state defeating the insurgents reduce with time while the insurgents' likelihood of achieving a favorable outcome or obtaining concession increases.¹⁸⁸ The situation underscores the need for the Ghana government to consider the separative movements' early repression and defeat.

C. MEASURES IN PLACE TO PREVENT ISLAMIST INSURGENCY IN GHANA

Ghana has taken measures to prevent the threat of Islamist insurgency in West Africa to its territory. The measures include the Accra Initiative, the counter-violent extremism/terrorism framework and action plan, deepening engagement with the Ghanaian public, equipping the security services and disaster response agencies, and joint training with partner states.

1. The Accra Initiative

Ghana has intensified its efforts toward combating the threat of violent extremist groups, mainly from the Sahel area of the West Africa region. The Accra Initiative is a cooperation and collaborative security mechanism between Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁸⁹ The COIN initiative aims to prevent the spillover of Islamist insurgency from the Sahel to member states. Ghana has also hosted several conferences as a follow-up to the Accra Initiative to deliberate how to halt the threat.¹⁹⁰ The forums include seminars by heads of state, meetings by Ministerial appointments, and conferences by Chiefs of Intelligence Agencies of concerned states. The Accra Initiative hinges on training security and intelligence personnel, information and intelligence sharing, and

¹⁸⁸ Ameyaw-Brobbe, "Pampering Insurgency."

¹⁸⁹ Sampson Kwakye, Jeannine Ella Abatan, and Michael Matongbada, "Can the Accra Initiative Prevent Terrorism in the West African Coastal States?" ISS Africa, September 30, 2019, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/can-the-accra-initiative-prevent-terrorism-in-west-african-coastal-states>.

¹⁹⁰ Kwakye, Abatan, and Matongbada.

conducting joint cross-border military operations.¹⁹¹ In May 2018, member states launched Operation Koudanlgou. The operations involved swoops, border and highway patrols, cordon and search, and anti-illegal mining exercises to ward off violent extremism in member states.¹⁹²

The initiative favors military-oriented responses to the threat of Islamist insurgency. Military operations only temporarily stop activities and movements of violent extremist groups and do not ensure continuity. The situations could relapse between operations. Besides that, member states have limited intelligence-gathering capabilities. The gap in the initiative underscores the need for a nonmilitary solution to halt the threat. Military operations could, however, be randomized and increased in intensity to limit insurgent activities.

2. Ghana's Counter-Violent Extremism/Terrorism Framework and Action Plan

Ghana's Ministry of National Security (MNS) has instituted a framework and action plan to prevent and counter violent extremism. The National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET) stands on four main pillars, which are mutually reinforcing.¹⁹³ The Prevent Pillar seeks to tackle the root causes of violent extremism by reducing susceptibility and enhancing the capacity to withstand challenges.¹⁹⁴ The Pre-empt Pillar proposes measures to identify and discourage the risk of radical violence. The Protect Pillar encompasses activities that safeguard susceptible structures and areas, while the Respond Pillar pursues efforts that alleviate the impact and recovery from terrorist incidents.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Kwakye, Abatan, and Matongbada.

¹⁹² Emmanuel Mensah-Abludo, "Operation Koudanlgou IV: National Security Calls for Public Cooperation," November 29, 2021, <https://www.gbcbghanaonline.com/general/operation-koudanlgou-iv-national-security-calls-for-public-cooperation/2021/>.

¹⁹³ Prah and Chanimbe, "Ghana's Readiness to Combat Terrorism."

¹⁹⁴ Prah and Chanimbe.

¹⁹⁵ National Peace Council, Ghana, *National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Ghana*, 2019, <https://www.peacecouncil.gov.gh/storage/2019/09/NAFPCVET-Documents-29-Jan-2020.pdf>.

The NAFPCVET is a comprehensive document that adopts an all-inclusive approach for successful implementation. Unfortunately, some of the measures outlined in the strategies face implementation challenges and do not reflect practices. Efforts to tackle the root causes of violent extremism have been slow, mainly in Ghana's northern sector. The use of military and other security services approaches is essentially the focus of the State in preventing the threat of Islamist insurgency. The military approach is evident in the recent establishment of new Army units in the northern sector to ward off the threat of insurgency coming from the Sahel region of West Africa. However, lessons from countries affected by Islamist insurgency have shown that the threat does not spread through conventional warfare. The MNS must enforce measures outlined under the framework's four pillars and action plan to counter violent extremism and terrorism successfully.

3. Deepening Engagement with the Ghanaian Public

Intelligence agencies increasingly report the involvement of Ghanaians in jihadist acts in the Sahel region.¹⁹⁶ The situation is an indication that Islamist insurgency could spread to Ghana. The government of Ghana has, hence, deepened its engagement with the public to increase awareness of the threat.¹⁹⁷ The "See Something, Say Something" campaign is a collaborative effort by the MNS and the Ministry of Information.¹⁹⁸ The citizens are empowered through further education emphasizing the effects of violent extremism and terrorism on the country's security. The citizens are, hence, to alert authorities about actions that may jeopardize the security of the state.¹⁹⁹ The MNS subsequently created a 999 hotline for reporting suspicious activities.

Community engagement is crucial in addressing local vulnerabilities that trigger extremist threats. The sensitization campaign will likely face challenges if targeted

¹⁹⁶ Festus Kofi Aubyn, "The Risk of Violent Extremism and Terrorism in the Coastal States of West Africa," *ACCORD* (blog), December 10, 2021, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-risk-of-violent-extremism-and-terrorism-in-the-coastal-states-of-west-africa/>.

¹⁹⁷ Kojo Oppong Nkrumah and Edward Kweku Asomani, "Ghana Steps Up Measures to Combat Terrorism," Ministry of Information, Ghana, May 23, 2022, <https://moi.gov.gh/newsroom/2022/05/ghana-steps-up-measures-to-combat-terrorism/>.

¹⁹⁸ Nkrumah and Asomani.

¹⁹⁹ Nkrumah and Asomani.

communities lack basic infrastructure. Additionally, aggrieved people in the deprived communities whom the insurgent organization could recruit are not likely to report suspicious activities. The northern part of Ghana, which is most vulnerable to violent extremist movements, has a poor telecommunication network.²⁰⁰ The message of the sensitization campaign may not get to the targeted audience.

Furthermore, those with information about suspicious people may be unable to report it due to disruptions in means of communication. The electricity supply to the northern sector of Ghana, particularly the rural areas, is unsuitable. Less than 20% of each supposedly electrified community is connected to the national electricity grid.²⁰¹ It is worth emphasizing that the lack of basic infrastructure for citizens is one of the remote causes of radicalization. The situation highlights the need for the government of Ghana to provide equal infrastructural development across the country to give fair opportunities to the citizens.

4. Equipping the Security Services and Disaster Response Agencies

Ghana is expanding its armed forces and retooling the various security services to enable it to counter the threat of violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations. About 15 new forward operating bases (FOB) are being constructed in the northern part of the country and are at various stages of completion.²⁰² The Ghana Navy has procured additional vessels to secure the country's maritime domain. There are plans also to procure some air platforms to support the Special Forces operations. The proposed aircraft to be purchased include six Ground Fighter aircraft, Maritime Patrol aircraft, and Military Airlift Helicopters.²⁰³ The government will also procure VIP Transport Helicopters and four

²⁰⁰ Abraham Njonaan Nlenkiba, "Poor Telcos Network Affects Communication in Most Parts of Northern Ghana," *Awake News* (blog), June 13, 2017, <https://awakenewsroom.com/poor-telcos-network-affects-communication-parts-northern-ghana-2/>.

²⁰¹ Albert Don-Chebe, "The Illusion of Electricity in Northern Ghana," GhanaWeb, January 15, 2023, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/The-illusion-of-electricity-in-Northern-Ghana-1695611>.

²⁰² "Ghana Safety and Security Market," International Trade Administration, accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/ghana-safety-and-security-market>.

²⁰³ "Ghana Safety and Security Market."

Reconnaissance Light Attack helicopters for the Air Force.²⁰⁴ The GPS has also received its fair share of the equipment for countering violent extremism and terrorism—1,500 motorbikes have been delivered to GPS to improve service delivery. The equipment is in addition to the three helicopters and more than 300 vehicles procured for the establishment in the last three years.²⁰⁵

The expansion and retooling of the Security Services is a positive step forward. It shows Ghana's preparedness to counter violent extremist organizations and terrorist groups. The equipment will enable the security services to dominate remote areas where insurgency mostly starts. It will also boost the morale and confidence of the security personnel to carry out their duties. The government of Ghana needs to consider a proactive strategy capable of addressing the evolving threat landscape in the expansion and retooling of the Security Services. The strategy should be a comprehensive approach that combines intelligence, collaboration, technology, and community engagement.

5. Joint Training with Partner States

The security agencies in Ghana have conducted periodic joint training and exercises with some foreign partner states. These training and exercises boost the technical capabilities of the security services and agencies in advancing terrorist attack response mechanisms. The foreign partner states include the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Israel.²⁰⁶ The counterterror doctrines and experiences of the foreign partner states are the guidelines for joint training and exercises. These exercises include Exercise Flintlock, African Lion, Eagle Claws, and Exercise Cambrian Patrol. The exercises aim to strengthen the special operations force of the Ghana Security Services and other African allies.²⁰⁷ They also promote cooperation, understanding, and interoperability between African

²⁰⁴ "Ghana Safety and Security Market."

²⁰⁵ Guy Martin, "Ghana's Police Get Marauder APCs, Helicopters," *defenceWeb* (blog), March 8, 2023, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/ghanas-police-get-marauder-apcs-helicopters/>.

²⁰⁶ Maya Mynster Christensen and Fiifi Edu-Afful, "Ghana's Response to the Threat of Terrorism Requires Enhanced Interoperability," 2019.

²⁰⁷ Christensen and Edu-Afful.

partner nations. The joint training mostly starts with theoretical preparations before moving into a command post and tactical exercises.²⁰⁸

The partnership in the joint exercises provides Ghana with guidance and mentorship in countering the threat of violent extremism approaching its doorsteps. Proper coordination will help in avoiding duplication of effort. Emphasis could be on promoting lasting cooperation between agencies in addressing the interplay of crime and terrorism, customized to the operational requirements of existing preventive measures.

D. STRATEGIES AND MODELS TO REINFORCE EXISTING COIN MEASURES

Ghana's strategies for preventing the spread of Islamist insurgency to its territory have some gaps that require pragmatic solutions to enhance the strategies' effectiveness. This section discusses strategies and models to tackle Ghana's COIN strategy gaps. Specifically, it discusses surveillance and intelligence gathering, cooperation among the security agencies, McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model, and the Comprehensive Defense Strategy.

1. Surveillance and Intelligence Gathering

To prevent strategic surprises to a country's national security, intelligence organizations must monitor threats, forces, occurrences, and developments that potentially jeopardize a nation's survival.²⁰⁹ Ghana has surveillance and intelligence gathering (SIG) agencies that are mandated to gather intelligence on potential enemies for the State. The agencies include the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the National Investigation Bureau (NIB), and the Defense Intelligence (DI). These agencies and departments gather information to secure the state's frontiers against terrorism, violent extremism, and insurgency. The intelligence collection is mainly through Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT). However, Ghana's SIG's effectiveness is

²⁰⁸ United States Department of State, "Digital Press Briefing on Exercise Flintlock in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire," March 13, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/digital-press-briefing-on-exercise-flintlock-in-ghana-and-cote-divoire-2/>.

²⁰⁹ Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*, Ninth edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2023).

declining due to limited human resources, technological capabilities, and intended target diversity.²¹⁰

Strong intelligence capabilities will allow the NSA to understand the menace confronting the state. The intelligence proficiencies help the agencies to prevent, mitigate, and better respond to attacks and recover from them when they occur. The MNS could employ emerging technologies and techniques to improve understanding of COIN and terrorism environments. The technological improvement will aid practical information sharing as the central front in COIN warfare. The MNS could internally employ research and development (R&D) to engage better the NSA, the private sector, and academia to understand emerging threats. The MNS could partner with the technology sector to develop modern technology to help the state avoid technological surprises related to terrorist techniques and means of attack.²¹¹

2. Cooperation Among the Security Agencies

Ghana's COIN policy and strategy focuses on inter-agency collaboration, which promotes information sharing, intelligence, and joint strategy formulation.²¹² However, cooperation among the security agencies is in its initial phase due to the recent emergence of the threat of Islamist insurgency in Ghana. Security analysts have contended that inter-agency reveries have hindered the smooth operationalization of the current COIN policy and strategies. There have been inter-agency infractions and hostility among security agencies during operations. The limited resource allocations in COIN operations have fueled competition and turf wars among the agencies.²¹³ The situation has rendered the security agencies less effective in their operations and presented them as disorganized bodies, which is an embarrassment to the nation.

²¹⁰ Prah and Chanimbe, "Ghana's Readiness to Combat Terrorism."

²¹¹ United States Department of Homeland Security, *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence* (Washington, DC: DHS, September 2019), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0920_plec_strategic-framework-countering-terrorism-targeted-violence.pdf.

²¹² Christensen and Edu-Afful, "Ghana's Response to the Threat of Terrorism Requires Enhanced Interoperability."

²¹³ Christensen and Edu-Afful.

The key to success in the COIN strategy is organizational cooperation and coordination. Translating inter-agency procedures and policies into operational practice requires openness and commitment from institutions. Applying these principles will change the agencies from bureaucratic to fostering collaboration for united effort and response mechanism. The MNS must continue the joint training of the security agencies to ensure reciprocity of capacity building. The joint exercise will enhance mutual understanding of the procedural processes in COIN strategies. It is also essential for the MNS to streamline overlapping responsibilities amongst the security agencies to focus them on individual agency responsibilities. The NSA's focus on respective roles will eliminate rivalry and promote professionalism.

3. McCormick Mystic Diamond Model

The trend in the spread of Islamist insurgencies within the West Africa region shows a pattern of internal mobilization to start the phenomenon. The uprisings in Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso confirm the mobilization trend for insurgency in the region. The goal of the Islamist insurgents is to grow with time and be able to destroy the state's control mechanisms. Their growth in strength will ultimately help them to create an Islamic caliphate. McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model provides avenues for interactions between governments, insurgents, societies, and transnational sponsors.²¹⁴ The model can help strategists develop a practical approach to removing Islamist insurgents from their bases and isolating or capturing their members/leaders. Strategists understanding the advantages and disadvantages of the insurgency playing field would help them develop a practical COIN framework.²¹⁵

The state has the advantage of controlling the NSA and using it against the insurgents but cannot distinguish them from the rest of the population. Conversely, the insurgent possesses a strategic edge due to their widespread presence among the civilian population. The dispersal of the insurgents among the people makes it difficult for the NSA

²¹⁴ Gordon McCormick, "McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model" (Presentation at Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, November 16, 2022).

²¹⁵ McCormick.

to detect and target them. The insurgents can, however, observe and target the NSA and state infrastructure but are often too weak to engage them decisively. In a zero-sum game, the state's strategy is to rectify the information disadvantage to locate and capture the insurgents. Conversely, the insurgent aims to strengthen and threaten the NSA and state infrastructure.²¹⁶ Additionally, the insurgents have the advantage of time because their goal is achieved by persisting and wearing down the government's initiatives and the collective political will of the state.

As Mao asserts, the insurgents' military operations become more prominent and deadlier over time due to more locals joining the combat operations.²¹⁷ Hence, the indigenous population determines who will win and becomes the center of gravity. McCormick's Diamond Model, shown in Figure 6, illustrates a sequential approach within the insurgency and COIN operational environment.

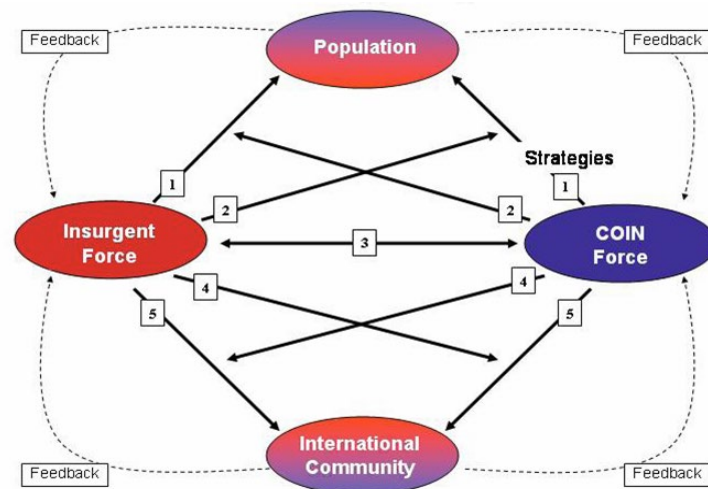


Figure 6. Graphical Representation of Dr. McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model²¹⁸

²¹⁶ McCormick.

²¹⁷ "The Three Stages of Mao's Revolutionary Warfare," *Parallel Narratives* (blog), March 26, 2011, <https://parallelnarratives.com/the-three-stages-of-maos-revolutionary-warfare/>.

²¹⁸ Source: Wikipedia, s.v. "McCormick Mystic Diamond Model," last modified November 7, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=McCormick_Magic_Diamond&oldid=1120522968.

The five phases are “(1) gaining the support of the population, (2) disrupting the opponent’s control over the population, (3) direct action against the opponent, (4) disrupting the opponent’s relations with the international community, and (5) establishing a relationship with the international community.”²¹⁹

A state under the threat of insurgency must first strive to influence and control the populace. The control of the people will enable the NSA to see things in the operational area that might threaten security.²²⁰ Human intelligence and strengthening relationships with the populace could enhance the desired state dominance and sway over the population. The state needs to focus on the socioeconomic and security needs of the people to degrade insurgents’ influence on them. Degrading insurgents’ influence will prepare the environment for the second phase of the sequential strategy. The security agencies undertake activities such as cordon and search, rural and urban patrols, checkpoints, and essential installation protection to disrupt insurgent control mechanisms and isolate them.

The intelligence gathered in the pursuit of influence and control over the populace and operations to cut off the insurgents will enable the NSA to identify and locate the insurgents’ bases. In the third phase, military operations aim to destroy or capture the insurgents. The fourth phase of the strategy is activated when an external sponsor becomes involved in the conflict. The NSA targets financial flow and other resource supplies from external sources to the insurgents. The state could also use diplomatic means to halt the assistance offered to the insurgents by foreign sponsors. The final phase recommends the involvement of international bodies to gain support and resources for COIN operations. International bodies could place diplomatic sanctions on foreign sponsors to influence their behavior.²²¹

The model’s initial strategy of preventing insurgents from getting access to the local population for influence and recruitment of insurgents aligns with Ghana’s national security objective of preventing Islamist insurgency in its territory. Ghana’s government

²¹⁹ McCormick, “McCormick’s Mystic Diamond Model.”

²²⁰ McCormick.

²²¹ McCormick.

must address the root causes of insurgency and establish a cordial relationship with the local population for natural control over the people. The control of the populations will help the NSA get feedback on insurgent activities, leading to early apprehension of insurgents. The model is not overly reliant on a military approach to preventing insurgency as Ghana currently does. The NSA plays different roles in each phase of the insurgency phenomenon. The model will solve the overlapping functions among the NSA, which often leads to inter-agency rivalry and bureaucracies. The other strategies of the model will be applicable in countering the Islamist insurgencies if the situation goes beyond the influence and control phase.

4. Comprehensive Defense Strategy

Existing strategies for countering insurgency in West Africa to the territorial integrity of Ghana focus on terrorism or violent extremism. However, terrorism is a means that social agents (individuals, states, and non-state agents) could use as a tactic in actual or imagined conflict.²²² The Islamist insurgents could use other means apart from terrorism to achieve their primary objective of establishing a caliphate. Nonetheless, the adversary's actions will likely lie outside the accepted norms of international relations. A strategy capable of deterring, defending, and resisting the insurgents is needed to successfully prevent the spread of Islamist insurgency to the territorial integrity of Ghana.

A comprehensive defense strategy centers on enabling an entire country through a whole-of-society, whole-of-country deterrent, and defensive approach.²²³ According to LTG(R) Eric Wendt, lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School, Comprehensive Defense increases deterrence and defense against external threats. The concept develops neighborhood watch network capability that improves domestic counterterrorism reporting

²²² Arie W. Kruglanski and Shira Fishman, "The Psychology of Terrorism: 'Syndrome' Versus 'Tool' Perspectives," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 2 (July 2006): 193–215, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550600570119>.

²²³ NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Comprehensive Defense Handbook, Vol 1* (NSHQ Publication, December 1, 2020), <https://www.nshq.nato.int/Library/DownloadFile/e8a86ab2-cbf4-900e-3fcc-c3daa451c067>.

to government agencies.²²⁴ A comprehensive defense strategy relies on trust, cohesion, and motivation among society or nation. Both public and private sectors have distinct functions in ensuring the strategy’s effectiveness. Figure 7 illustrates the conditions for setting up a comprehensive defense strategy.

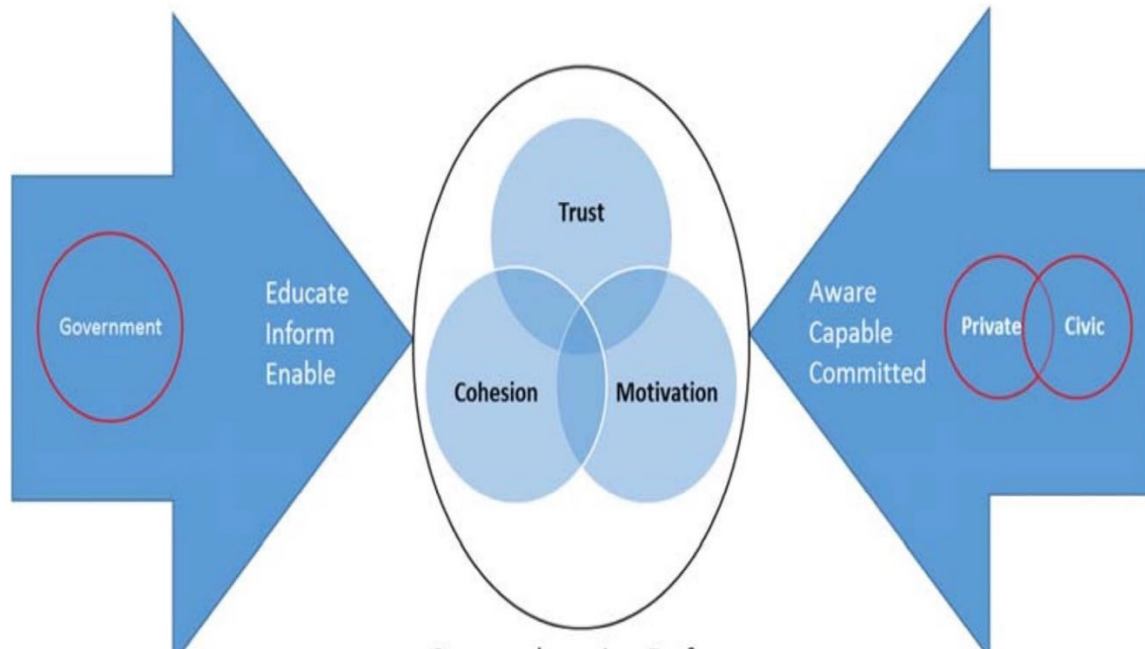


Figure 7. Setting the Conditions for Comprehensive Defense Diagram²²⁵

The public sector, headed by the country’s government, must ensure that agencies can effectively interoperate in a crisis and provide the necessary tools for comprehensive defense.²²⁶ On the other hand, the private/civic sector needs to be conscious of conditions that may impact the nation’s fortifications by building the skills necessary to contribute to the comprehensive defense strategy and actively participating in prevention, preparation,

²²⁴ Eric Wendt, “Comprehensive Defense Presentation” (Special Topic in Strategic Analysis [Command and Leadership], Naval Postgraduate School, April 4, 2023).

²²⁵ Source: NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Comprehensive Defense Handbook, Vol 1*.

²²⁶ NATO Special Operations Headquarters.

and responses to recovery from malicious events.²²⁷ The involvement of the private and public sectors would set the right conditions for the action plan to address the threat of insurgency. A comprehensive defense strategy operates on six pillars (see Figure 8).

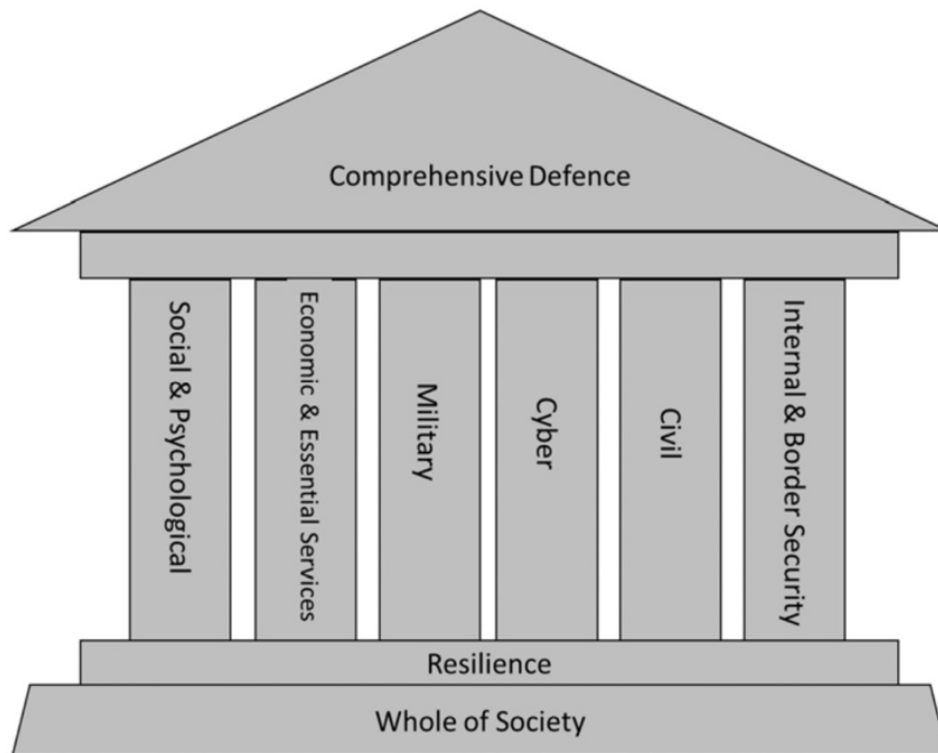


Figure 8. Graphical Representation of the Comprehensive Defense Framework²²⁸

The pillars clarify the functioning and actions needed to avert, address, and rebound from crises. The pillars complement each other by building bonds of harmony that reinforce national integration amongst the diverse population. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to sustain a strong economy capable of making critical infrastructure and supporting economic challenges during national emergencies. Furthermore, the pillars account for civil protection, domestic intelligence, and border security. The framework and

²²⁷ NATO Special Operations Headquarters.

²²⁸ Source: NATO Special Operations Headquarters.

action plan also emphasizes increased cyber security and resilience as malicious cyber operations become more sophisticated.²²⁹

The numerous insurgent groups' differing ideologies, tactics, and territorial ambitions make it challenging to develop a unified approach to the threat. Using the Comprehensive Defense Strategy alongside Ghana's existing COIN strategies will fill in the loopholes the insurgent groups may want to exploit. The strategy covers some critical areas that Ghana's NAFPCVET does not cover. The NAFPCVET does not emphasize a deradicalization program for former combatants and online recruitment of citizens. The involvement of the whole society in the Comprehensive Defense Strategy will prepare Ghana for any type of warfare that the Islamist insurgents may want to wage against the nation.

E. CONCLUSION

The absence of Islamist insurgency activities in Ghana cannot be attributed to sheer luck. Ghana has in place strategies for countering the threat. The Islamist insurgents who are no respecter of boundaries will do anything to achieve their aim. Insurgents could exploit some gaps in the existing strategies to their advantage. The MNS must, hence, reinforce the strategy to prevent the spread of Islamist insurgency to its territory.

The NAFPCVET, Ghana's primary strategy for countering insurgency, has some implementation challenges. These challenges are mainly due to a lack of resources and coordination. The NSA working through the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) also presents some challenges. The process takes the initiative from the NSA and becomes bureaucratic. Additionally, the NAFPCVET does not spell out responsibilities to the NSA, which often leads to turf wars among agencies. The review of the NAFPCVET to include strategies, such as the Comprehensive Defense strategy and McCormick's Diamond Model, will make the COIN strategy efficient. Furthermore, when reviewed, all stakeholders should adhere to the framework and action plan to make its implementation effective.

²²⁹ NATO Special Operations Headquarters.

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IV. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

The chapter discusses findings and conclusions from previous chapters, comparing them to existing body of research works. It summarizes the salient findings of the research and recommends solutions to the challenges identified.

B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This thesis analysis found that insurgencies mostly start in rural areas or ungoverned spaces and then grow with time. The affiliation of West African insurgent groups to violent extremist organizations, such as AQIM and IS, motivates them to expand their objectives to include the creation of a caliphate. Islamist insurgencies commence with extremist Islamic teachings and subsequently escalate to uprisings. The founders of both Boko Haram and Ansarul Islam started with widespread extreme instructions in smaller social circles and on various media outlets, which ultimately paved the way for the formation of the insurgent factions. Charismatic leaders usually take advantage of grievances among the populace to mobilize individuals and motivate insurgencies where governments fail to provide infrastructure, job opportunities, and good governance or discriminate against ethnic or religious groups. Individuals and organizations also use hyper-nationalism, religion, or other types of rhetoric to mobilize the populace for insurgencies.

Most West African states adjoining the Sahel region have populations with closer ties to inhabitants across international borders than their governments in the mostly coastal capitals. These ties, coupled with the porous borders in West Africa, influence the cross-border nature of the Islamist insurgencies in West Africa. Where adjoining states are unable to safeguard their territory, the peripheral populations assume these roles in their place. Some Ghanaian citizens have joined jihadist groups in neighboring Burkina Faso, where jihadist organizations have gained a foothold. There is, however, no comprehensive plan to deradicalize former combatants who have returned to Ghana after their involvement in

jihadism or after entertaining jihadist ideology. These returnees involved in jihadism could act as sleeper cells to be activated someday by the Islamist insurgent organizations.

The insurgents use guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political mobilizations to diminish the authority and credibility of the government while enhancing their authority and credibility among the populace. They mostly target Westerners in the region and kidnap them for ransom. Additionally, they seize resource-rich territories, such as gold mines, to finance their activities. Furthermore, the insurgent groups engage in money laundering, narcotic drugs, and arms trafficking to finance their activities.

The Islamic sects in Ghana hold their ideological views and doctrinal interpretation firmly, making them prone to violence. Financial support received by the Islamic sects has encouraged them in their sectarian activities. Countries including Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, and Kuwait fund the denominations. Violent extremist groups could take advantage of the financial support to the sect and recruit or indoctrinate the sects to engage in insurgency. A reformist movement within the Sunni sect, for example, is known to be involved in supporting and supplying arms to rebel groups worldwide.²³⁰

There are inequalities in economic and infrastructure development and the quality of life between Ghana's northern and southern sectors. The presence of GPS and other security agencies in the North of the country is also inadequate for state control. Additionally, the North is overwhelmed with ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts that harm the population. Ghana also faces a secession situation where separatist movements threaten to break away from the nation. These factors indicate Ghana's vulnerability to the spread of Islamist insurgency.

Despite the vulnerabilities identified above, Ghana has not been attacked by Islamist insurgent groups or experienced any terrorist attack. The success in preventing Islamist insurgencies in Ghana is because of the COIN measures it has in place. However, Ghana's COIN strategy has gaps that the Islamist insurgents could exploit. The Accra Initiative favors only military-oriented responses to the threat even though it is a laudable

²³⁰ European Parliament. Directorate General for External Policies of the Union., *The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism in the Support and Supply of Arms to Rebel Groups around the World*.

COIN strategy. Military operations temporarily stop activities and movements of insurgent groups and do not ensure continuity. Ghana's framework and action plan, the NAFPCVET, is comprehensive but has some unaddressed issues, such as measures to tackle the root causes of the insurgencies and implementation challenges. Ghana's SIG's effectiveness is declining due to limited human resources, technological capabilities, and intended target diversity. Inter-agency rivalries among the agencies have also hindered the smooth operationalization of the current COIN policy and strategies.

C. CONCLUSIONS

Ghana's COIN strategies have prevented terrorism, violent extremism, and the broader Islamist insurgency to some extent. The external support received from international partners in the form of joint training, exercises, and intelligence sharing has been of immense help. The persistence and determination of the Islamist insurgent groups require states at risk of insurgency to strengthen their strategy for preventing the spread of the phenomenon to their territorial integrity. Ghana's COIN strategy has some flaws that require attention. The NSA encounters challenges when attempting to collaborate on joint activities. The overlapping functions between agencies, mistrust among agencies, and politicization of intelligence hamper the smooth collaborations of the NSA.

Additionally, the concentration of COIN strategies is geared toward military solutions to the threat of insurgency, leaving out the phenomenon's root causes. Furthermore, the NAFPCVET has some implementation challenges, mainly due to a lack of resources. The Islamist insurgents could exploit these flaws in Ghana's COIN strategies in their expansion mission.

A military solution alone cannot prevent the insurgency threat to the territory of Ghana. The strategy should be all-encompassing to include stopping the causation of insurgency. The review of the NAFPCVET to address the mentioned flaws in the COIN strategies will make the framework and action plan more effective in preventing the escalation of the Islamist insurgencies in West Africa to the territorial integrity of Ghana. Ghana's government should structure its COIN strategy on the peculiarities of its challenges and not based on a universal approach that foreign partners impose in the form

of assistance. The government of Ghana needs to consider factors such as ethnic ties across international borders, cultural norms, and democratic reforms in tailoring COIN strategies.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations will improve existing COIN strategies and operational options:

- The government of Ghana should provide equal access to financial resources and infrastructural development across the country. Such provisions will give fair opportunities to all citizens and prevent them from harboring grievances that insurgent groups could exploit. The MNS should employ nonmilitary solutions, such as using traditional leaders and youth groups, in finding amicable solutions to ethnic conflicts that the Islamist insurgents could influence.
- The MNS should review the NAFPCVET to streamline grey areas that cause inter-agency rivalry and bureaucracies. Facilitating overlapping responsibilities amongst the security agencies will focus them on individual agency responsibilities and improve interagency cooperation.
- The joint training among the security agencies should be continued to ensure reciprocity of capacity building and mutual understanding of the procedural processes in COIN strategies.
- The MNS should review measures outlined under the four pillars of the NAFPCVET to make the framework more effective in countering violent extremism and related terrorist activities successfully. Models such as the Comprehensive Defense Strategy and McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model could be used alongside existing measures to fill the gaps.
- The MNS should employ emerging technologies and techniques to improve understanding of COIN and terrorism environments. The ministry should partner with the technology sector to develop modern technology to help

the state avoid technological surprises related to terrorist techniques and means of attack.

- The NSA should prioritize available resources for preventive efforts. The priority should include building competencies within the domain of intelligence-driven law enforcement to be more effective in countering extremism and terrorism.
- The NSA should strive to identify insurgents in their formative stages and capture them before they receive external support and begin to grow. The NSAs must intensify their activities, including joint operations, to restrain the spread of Islamist insurgency in Ghana.
- The MNS should coordinate foreign nations' COIN assistance to Ghana and focus them on prioritized COIN measures to avoid wastage and duplication of effort. The help should be tailored to Ghana's situation to achieve maximum benefit.
- The NSA should monitor the schools and other institutions established by religious movements. Stern monitoring of the institutions will ensure that the teachings and organizational policies in their establishments are not detrimental to the national security of Ghana.
- The MNS should conduct a comprehensive deradicalization program for former combatants and citizens exposed to jihadist groups. The deradicalization program will help the ex-combatants and citizens exposed to jihadist groups to abandon extremist views and rehabilitate into society.

E. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Future research could concentrate on either tailoring foreign security assistance to the preventive needs of Ghana's COIN strategies or deradicalization programs for former jihadist combatants and people with extremist views.

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