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The Inadvertent Influence of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations on Ghana's Armed Forces

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ABSTRACT

Ghana's Armed Forces (GAF) have demonstrated an aptitude for tackling insecurity, professionalism, and the capacity to contribute to and support United Nations-led Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and African Peace Support Operations (PSOs). Displaying its preparedness to deal with emerging challenges during these missions has gained GAF recognition as an active African force involved in peace and security matters and, more broadly, peacekeeping and PSOs across the African continent. However, Ghana and, more specifically, the GAF face numerous evolving threats, ranging from transnational non-state actors and violent extremism to domestic insurgencies. This paper argues that while GAFs have built a wealth of knowledge in peacekeeping, this expertise is not reflected in a similar ability to tackle Ghana's emerging threats since GAFs' development has focused primarily on capabilities gained from PKOs and PSOs, impacting the forces approach when dealing with new internal threats.

KEYWORDS

Ghana armed forces;
Peacekeeping Operations;
Peace Support Operations;
African armies; Security
Threats

Introduction

Over the last two-three decades, the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Community or Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) have significantly improved the efficiency of their Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and Peace Support Operations (PSOs) across the African continent. Arguably, the combination of effort(s) by the UN, AU and RECs/RMs since the early 1990s has facilitated a decline in the number and intensity of armed conflicts, but equally, over recent decades, there has been an expansion of PKOs and PSOs across Africa.^{1,2,3} Undoubtedly, AU and RECs/RMs member states have gained considerable experience in PKOs and PSOs, expediting their greater contributions to international peace and security matters.^{4,5}

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The substantive experience and expertise acquired by AU and RECs/RMs have significantly influenced their involvement in setting up and overseeing African-led PSOs.^{6,7} Their interactions with PKOs and PSOs across the continent and fragile regions has enabled African military forces and their respective states to advance their military doctrines.⁸ While their support has immeasurably grown, Africa's military forces have also enjoyed growing status as influential actors in shaping PKOs and PSOs operations across the continent – including the number of contributions by African forces.⁹

Responding to emerging conflicts, the AU and RECs/RMs deployed or authorized new international interventions to protect populations from aggressors and stop persecution by states.¹⁰ These operations differed from existing peacekeeping doctrine in essential ways. First, it was no longer a requirement that operations be deployed only with the consent of the conflicting parties following a ceasefire or peace agreement; consent was now required only from the host state. Second, the principle that operations be conducted with impartiality was abandoned, as they were deployed to protect states and their people against identified aggressors – and in some cases, legitimized the states' actions. Finally, the use of force was no longer restricted to self-defense in the face of imminent danger or in the wake of attacks as the protection of civilians and the state became paramount. These last changes facilitated a proactive operational strategy, a development that partially accelerated the number of deployments by the two organizations. Furthermore, they have provided for the emergence of clear doctrinal differences between the UN's PKO and the AU or African-led PSO.¹¹ For example, the three principal response mechanisms that emerged during this period were, first, deployments by the AU (with forces generated outside the ASF concept), e.g., AMISOM; second, deployments by Regional Economic Communities, e.g., ECOWAS in the Gambia, ECCAS in CAR and SADC in Lesotho and Mozambique, and third, ad hoc security initiatives by affected member states, but across different RECs/regional mechanisms, e.g., the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in Lake Chad, the G5 Sahel force in the Sahel and the African Union Regional Task Force against Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA).¹² These principal response mechanisms demonstrate an African-led desire and contributions to building the capacity of African armies as they modify their engagements and scale up their capacity to respond rapidly to the changing nature and demands of conflict(s) across the continent.¹³

However, the rise of groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province, Allied Democratic Forces, Salafist-jihadists, and other non-state armed groups, has seen African armies increasingly face conflicts that are theoretically and mechanically dissimilar from their engagements in PKOs, PSOs, and their general doctrinal and operational training and experience.¹⁴ Conflicts surfacing in these regions result from a complex configuration of

historical, governance, and socioeconomic developmental difficulties, often emerging in the periphery areas of the nation, where the state plays a minimalist role in supporting these marginalized communities.^{15,16} These multifaceted challenges have resulted in noticeable shifts away from PKOs and PSOs, to new forms of “coalitions of the willing” outside the formation of the AU African Standby Force and RECs/RMs arrangements – military assistance and political missions, which are deployed as tools for instability and election monitoring to engage in more direct conflict with terrorists and violent extremists – with the Gambia, the Comoros and Lesotho being the exceptions.^{17,18}

The strategic shifts have resulted in the delivery of security assistance to African states who are increasingly preoccupied with dealing with insecurity or viewing these challenges from a counterterrorism lens or operations, subcontracting private forces to deal with the insecurity, or receiving bilateral military assistance.^{19,20} The shifts may impact Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) like Ghana – which, since the 1960s, have developed their approach to insecurity through interactions with colonialism, coups, and PKOs and PSOs experiences.^{21,22} Furthermore, the guiding doctrine of many African armies’ has been established and evolved from the concept of intended or potential interactions with external states, as suggested by Ouedraogo (2014):

For many African armed forces, the guiding doctrine of the military is still founded upon the defence of the nation from a foreign enemy. Nevertheless, there have been fewer interstate conflicts in Africa, particularly over the last several decades, and Africa’s treats are nearly entirely domestic.²³

Ouedraogo (2014) rightly suggests that conflict between African states is rare and is more likely to be internal; even more challenging is that some non-state armed groups are better equipped and have more intimate knowledge of the topography than state forces. This advantage translates into adaptive mobility,²⁴ leaving many African armies unprepared to respond to non-traditional security threats at home during times of crisis.

The paper examines the evolution of GAFs and its participation in PKOs and PSOs. It argues that their development has contributed to military discipline and shaped GAF responses in UN PKO and African-led PSOs. However, this acquired experience is unsuitable for emerging threats sweeping the West African region. As a result, the focus on UN PKO and African-led PSO and bilateral operations between Ghana and its neighboring states has left the GAFs ill-equipped to deal with interactions with potential local terrorists. It also suggests that this focus on PKO and PSO experience and the political economy of PKO by some African states as recent research demonstrates — international package or brokerage — can impact the ways in which these armies respond. For example, governments can reduce part of the bottom-up demands for increased military spending (i.e., salaries and allowances) and outsource critical

resources that help it to meet military organizational priorities (i.e., training, weapons, perks for the military elite, etc).²⁵ In essence, “civil – military resource substitution” has become an established way to pay for salaries and sustain the army but has also left the GAFs ill-equipped to deal with challenges such as the rise of terrorism and local terrorists activities that could arise if regional or local terrorist groups gain a footing in the country. The paper draws on a database of UN PKOs composed by D’Orazio (2019), which compiles the total contribution to UN PKO, other Intergovernmental organizations, peacekeeping operations and state led PKOs. The data draws on contributions from Police, Troops and other missions from 1970 to 2010.²⁶ The selected data related to GAF troop deployment supports the analysis linked to the rise in GAF contribution to UN PKO. Additionally, the paper’s analytical lens is based on understanding relational and contextualized agency, where structures and agency are continuously reproduced over time. As a result, the paper draws on previous theoretically informed empirical analysis to examine the impact of UN PKO and African-led PSO on the GAFs and to understand how the GAF have evolved and how its focus on PKO and PSO may hinder its ability locally to adequately respond to the contextual realities experienced if insecurity occurs. Thus, the paper’s analytical lens explores how the GAFs’ experience of and from PKO may be constrained by local context under specific conditions, which could produce differently expected outcomes.

The paper is structured as follows; section one briefly reviews existing literature and identifies gaps in scholarship before outlining the historical development of Ghana’s military. The section then expands the discussion on the database used to support the analysis. Section two discusses the coups that took place under the leadership of Jerry John Rawlings and examine how his control over the state helped reform GAFs. The next section provides a brief overview of Ghana’s PKOs and PSOs’ experience(s), demonstrating how their involvement in these peacekeeping and security operations has supported professionalizing Ghana’s military forces while restraining their capacity to “meddle” in state affairs. Section three outlines internal threats faced by states’ administrators and suggests some challenges that could hinder the GAFs related to the evolutionary nature of current conflicts, especially its training and doctrine. Arguably, these emerging challenges need to be aligned with the training and doctrinal support of GAFs and should be a concern for the GAFs, because the current challenges will require a deviation from their PKOs and PSOs’ experiences. The final section provides further considerations for Ghana’s evolving encounter with terrorism and offers suggestions for an adaptive stabilization approach.

Peacekeeping and peace support operations

Research on peacekeeping has expanded considerably, with comparative examinations of UN and non-UN-peacekeeping, and the effectiveness and success of PKOs.^{27,28,29} Some researchers have focused on the UN PKOs positive role in the prevention of conflict recurrence, and on how UN PKOs decrease violence during conflict.^{30,31} Recent literature concludes that PKOs mandates are increasingly advocating stabilization to counter asymmetric threats, and that the most robust and sustainable peacekeeping operations are those that subscribe to stabilization logics.^{32,33} However, the nature of contemporary conflicts and the rise of terrorist activity has inspired debates about whether peacekeepers and PKOs should be deployed to deal with terrorist groups. The High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) report, released in June 2015, observes a growing gap between what is expected of peace operations and what they have delivered.³⁴

In the UN context, these new PKOs were framed as stabilization operations and often deployed with a mandate designed to enforce forms of stability. These stabilization operations or peace enforcement missions were characterized by a lack of strategic consent from conflict actors or conflicting parties. They were designed to primarily use force designed to defeat or neutralize an armed actor. These two aspects distinguish it from peacekeeping, where there is strategic level consent for a deployment and military action, including the use of force, is taken primarily for other purposes, e.g. to protect civilians and deter actors that undermine peace processes.³⁵ While there have been discussions about whether or not the term “peace enforcement” should be used for operations that are not linked to a peace process, e.g. counter-terrorism or counterinsurgency operations with no political engagement or strategy, i.e. no “peace” to enforce, this distinction is still not been made clear by the UN or the AU.

This facilitated the emergence of African-led PSOs in the AU, RECs/RMs or African states context. However, African-led PSOs were grounded in different peacekeeping principles that characterized UN PKOs. Instead, their operations followed the same evolutionary trajectory as the peace-seeking goals pursued in Darfur and Burundi, that is, achieving stability. Such missions included deployments to the Central Africa Republic, the Lake Chad Basin region, Mali, Mozambique, the broader Sahel region and Somalia. Thus, the thrust of these African-led and UN operations shifted from pursuing and consolidating peace agreements to disrupting and degrading the military advantage and capability of insurgent groups, who were often embedded amongst civilian populations.³⁶ This led to both UN PKOs and AU PSOs adopting enemy-centric counterinsurgency doctrines and tactics at the mission level, whilst the official doctrine and training maintained a peacekeeping

and peace support doctrine position. In practice, this meant that the peacekeeping and PSOs became military-heavy and adopted enemy-centric counterinsurgency methods designed to deal with conventional and non-conventional violence against civilians.

Karlsrud (2017) concludes that “UN peacekeeping neither is nor will be ready operationally, doctrinally or politically to take on counterterrorism tasks,” warning of the dangers of replacing the political agenda of conflict resolution with counterterrorism strategies.³⁷ Similarly, the seminal HIPPO report explicitly directed UN troops to abstain from military counterterrorism operations.³⁸ However, the UN Security Council continued with what it called “stabilisation operations,” which take components of counterinsurgency operations and integrate them into a military approach to insecurity.³⁹ Despite the HIPPO’s recommendations, the then-incumbent UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson offered an unparalleled view to the Security Council in 2016, emphasizing that “terrorism and violent extremism are a reality in many contemporary conflicts, a reality which has to be dealt with.”⁴⁰

In fact, ongoing conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Somalia, and Mali demonstrate that it requires combat forces rather than ordinary peacekeepers to stop and prevent further large-scale killings. This is reflected in Danso and Aning’s (2022) recent work, which posits that, for the most part, international relations theory has tended to be Western in focus, which has resulted in support that undermines and misses critical local structures and understanding of local conflict dynamics. For Danso and Aning (2022) security policies in most African states are enacted by “multiple orders” that claim to provide security at different levels and work as part of the solution.⁴¹ However, these Western actors are not fully aware of the local context and often import Western models that do not fit the realities of most African security challenges. Adding that, often Western perspective is seen as universal and crucial to a body of knowledge that sees the Western standard and knowledge as key, but this neglects the African experience and, in part, has contributed to an ongoing cycle of support which has left many African states unprepared for current realities.⁴²

If Karlsrud’s (2017) and Danson and Aning’s (2022) conclusions are accurate, it suggests that GAFs with PKOs and PSOs experience may be at risk “doctrinally and operationally” when responding to emerging security challenges at home and at the local level mainly because western perspectives and training have influenced the responses that African state sees as a solution to the problem. It illuminates a need to examine further the points that Danson and Aning (2022) highlight from their work and the literature more broadly, which this paper sets out to explore through the case study of GAFS. Specifically, the paper explores whether PKOs and PSOs’ experience(s)

deteriorate or improve GAFs' ability to respond to internal threats. The analysis in the paper draws on previous empirical work, gray literature and desk research to explore the evolution of Ghana's military history. It draws on this literature to trace and examine the mechanisms at hand and finds diagnostic evidence that provides the basis for descriptive and causal inference. Finally, the paper summarizes UN PKO deployment data from 1970–2010 to supplement the analysis.⁴³

Military formation of Ghana Armed Forces

During the colonial era, most African armies functioned primarily as civilian police units, built and equipped to deal with local and internal matters aligned with the interests of the colonial administration.⁴⁴ Fundamentally, many African armies operated as small, undeveloped combat units. As Gutteridge (1970) argues, the dearth of African men in the armed forces suggests a “willingness to operate locally on a very narrow margin of safety to any security crisis.” Local colonial military forces were created to serve imperial, rather than local, strategic interests.⁴⁵ Colonial forces often recruited personnel from minority, marginalized or disadvantaged social groups, a tactic that deliberately promoted intra-group strife, thus forestalling the possibility of internal rebellion. Lee (1969) and Killingray (1983) both suggest that Africans were prevented from joining African armies to avert the spread of nationalist ideology.^{46,47} For Mazrui (1976), training West African military personnel at British colleges, universities, and Sandhurst (the royal military officer training college) encouraged a pro-British cultural influence over West Africa's civilian and military arenas. Mazrui offers as evidence the prevalence of Sandhurst-trained officers among the leaders of the first two Ghanaian coups. In succeeding coups, however, Ghanaian officers with British military training assumed less prominent roles.^{48,49}

While most conventional Western armies developed their military doctrine over decades and through engagement in warfare, Ghana and most of anglo-phone West Africa adopted their military doctrines from British colonizers.⁵⁰ As Welch (1970) argues, “The armies of contemporary Africa are the direct descendants of forces created by the colonial administration.”⁵¹ At Ghana's independence in March 1957, Africans represented merely 10% of her army officers.⁵²

From the Gold Coast to Black Star

Under President Nkrumah, Ghana's Armed Forces (GAFs) developed a fusion of homegrown and British colonial philosophical principles and structures to direct their conduct. During the early post-independence era, and for some periods of Nkrumah's presidency, GAFs doctrine was influenced by Ghana's

search for a new national identity while defining her future role in African political affairs and how this would align with broader Pan-Africanist ideology. To a degree, Pan-African philosophy underlies the guiding principles of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – now the African Union (AU) – and was a cornerstone of Ghana’s independence.⁵³ As Nkrumah stressed:

The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African Continent.⁵⁴

Kwame Nkrumah, March 6th, 1959

Nkrumah envisioned the complete transformation of continental Africa, starting with Ghana. As he declared, for the first time, “the voice of the new African in the world.”⁵⁵ was going to be heard.⁵⁶ His vision was put into motion during the early 1960s when Ghanaian forces – who accounted for roughly 30% of UN troops – were deployed for PKO to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁵⁷ Nkrumah believed that creating stable states was crucial for Africa to progress as a continent, and the decision to deploy GAFs to the DRC was understood as an imperative for stability – regarded as a prerequisite for the liberation of the African continent – to be achieved.⁵⁸ Nkrumah’s philosophical approach to nation-building was the foundation of Ghana’s post-independence foreign policy objectives, and, to some extent, influenced GAFs’ direction.^{59,60,61} Though GAFs were transformed into a new military force, they had not yet fully developed as Nkrumah envisaged since their organization and operational strategies were still modeled on existing British military doctrine; Nkrumah even retained a British Chief of staff for more than four years after independence.⁶²

By 1960, plans to strengthen Ghana’s security sector had been developed. One step in this process included ensuring that the Ghana Military Academy (GMA) was fully operational with the capacity to produce highly trained military officers. Conscious efforts were made to inculcate the Sandhurst tradition into the new military academy, although it quickly developed its Ghanaian idiosyncrasies, and friction remained between the old and new.⁶³

Nkrumah’s vision for broader security control included a civilian-police component mandated to maintain law and order within Ghana’s borders. Paliwal (2021) states that Nkrumah had requested India, another former British colony, to create a “Code and Cypher section” to secure Ghana’s secret communications. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru responded positively to Nkrumah’s request for assistance and sent a communique to Nkrumah via India’s acting commissioner in Accra, detailing how Delhi had dealt with internal security following India’s independence.⁶⁴ Nehru later invited Ghanaian officers to Delhi to be trained by cypher experts. Nkrumah wanted an Indian official as the new Head of the Service to “lay down the foundation of the organisation.”⁶⁵ India partially accepted Nkrumah’s request but refused overt leadership of Ghana’s security

service.⁶⁶ Both nations relied on policing structures created by British colonial administrators, which they maintained in the post-independence era, despite their nationalist foreign policy objectives.⁶⁷ Paliwal (2021) argues that in May 1958, Nkrumah went as far as appointing a committee comprised of British, Canadian and Pakistani officers to deal with national security matters.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Nkrumah's autocratic tendencies, his relationship with Moscow, the gradual retreat from a nation grounded on political liberty toward a one-party state in 1964, and cutbacks in military expenditure left GAF officials feeling disgruntled. As early as 1960, Nkrumah had already converted his security apparatus into the President's Own Guard Regiment (POGR), arming them with superior equipment and deliberately provoking rivalry between them and the GAFs.⁶⁹ These moves aggravated Major General Emmanuel Kwasi Kotoka, a graduate of Eaton Hall Officer Cadet School – and later, after the coup, head of the National Liberation Council (NLC) – and incited his 1966 overthrow of Nkrumah. Kotoka's NLC led the Ghanaian government from 1966 to 1969. Ironically, some of these military officers were Sandhurst-trained officials who had grown disgruntled with the UN mission to Congo.

From coup d'états to democracy, solidification of GAFs doctrine

Between 1960 and 2021, Ghana endured five successful coups and five attempted overthrows.⁷⁰ During the First to Third Republics, Ghana withstood several internal efforts to destabilize the government, either through coups led by the GAFs, or with the support of leaders who instigated coups for their interests. Gradually, the GAFs' support of these destabilizing interventions declined, and Ghana's leadership increased the GAFs' participation in PKOs and PSOs.

In 1969, the NLC transferred power to Dr Kofi Abrefa Busia, giving rise to the Second Republic. Busia was overthrown in 1972 by Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, who was succeeded by another military government in 1978. Between the Second and Third Republics, Ghanaians experienced military rule, resulting in the breakdown of civilian-military relations. Notwithstanding the military takeover, Acheampong's regime contributed troops to the Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) beginning in 1974. General F. W. K. Akuffo's regime was overthrown in 1979 by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in a coup led by a junior officer, Jerry John Rawlings, who later became Ghana's President under the Fourth Republic. The AFRC retained power for roughly four months before ceding to a civilian government. However, in 1981, Rawlings toppled the Third Republic under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), which ruled until 1992, before holding multiparty elections which ushered in the Fourth Republic.

Rawlings and the Third Republic

Rawlings became prominent in 1979 when, as a junior officer, he led the AFRC in a coup d'état. The AFRC consisted of a 15-member committee charged with responsibility for maintaining socio-political continuity; at the center of the AFRC was Rawlings, who held the rank of Chairman, presiding over a carefully selected balance of junior and middle-ranking military officers.⁷¹ Under Rawlings, the ARC introduced extra-legal institutions such as public and special military tribunals.⁷²

The AFRC decided that parliamentary and presidential elections would proceed as scheduled on June 18 1979, though the transition of power was postponed for three months until October 01 1979. The delay was to allow the AFRC time to expose and address internal party corruption and abuses of power via ad hoc purges and investigations of senior military officers and state officials.⁷³ Rawlings and the AFRC performed public executions of former heads of state and senior officers without trial.⁷⁴ Scheduled elections went ahead as planned, and on July 08 1979, the People's National Party (PNP), led by Nkrumah loyalist Dr Hilla Limann, began the transfer of power.⁷⁵ The handover ceremony, which marked the transition to the Third Republic, was memorialized by Rawling's departing words: "*...never lose sight of the new consciousness of the Ghanaian people.*"

The new government continued the anti-corruption purge. Eight senior army, air force and naval officers – including three former Heads of State – were executed for "crimes against the state," and hundreds of "corrupt" officers and civilians were handed lengthy prison sentences. Several senior civil servants and police officers were dismissed, which shook the petty-bourgeois power base. However, the economic problems that bedeviled the military regimes during 1972–1979 contributed to the challenges of the Limann PNP government. Economic growth was negative, and gross domestic product per capita declined by over 3% per year. Limann and the PNP government confronted enormous challenges and had to contain continued military violence against the police and the public. It tried to deal with the AFRC leadership and Rawlings by encouraging them to leave for overseas assignments, but Rawlings refused to take up an assignment abroad.

Rawlings returned to his post in the Air Force, rejecting many offers of diplomatic positions and international scholarships, which would have removed him from the domestic scene. He was later forcefully retired from the Air Force, which only heightened the prospects of further coups. However, the failure of the two successive military governments to resolve Ghana's economic challenges paved the way for Rawling's return.⁷⁶ The December 31, 1981, revolution saw the ousting of Limann's administration by Rawlings, delivering a heavy blow to Ghana's nascent democracy. Under his leadership, the PNDC seized power and pursued a program of revolutionary

change. Once again, Rawlings announced the suspension of the Third Republic Constitution of 1979, dismissed the PNP government, ordered the closure of parliament, and banned political parties.⁷⁷ He encouraged the creation of thousands of workplaces based on the People's Defence Committees (PDCs) and Workers Defense Committees, a bottom-up approach focused on genuine political and social revolution, as he declared:

We are asking for nothing more than the power to organise this country in such a way that nothing will be done from the Castle without the consent and authority of the people. In other words, the people, the farmers, the police, the soldiers, the workers you - the guardians- rich or poor, should be part of the decision-making process of this country.⁷⁸

Rawlings' Second Coming paved the way for the restructuring of the state through the legitimacy of the people. However, it also instigated purges within the military and eventually created new civil-military relations. In the process, it shaped military doctrine, a renewed approach to civilians, and the imperative to further the professionalization forces and contribute to GAFs doctrine. From the outset, Rawlings sought to impose control over the military, wary of further attempted coups, and strategically purged the army of dissidents. Arguably, his bottom-up approach resulted in promulgating the 1992 Constitution, forming political parties, elections in 1992 and 1996, and building a rural grassroots political base.⁷⁹ Under the auspices of a committee headed by Kwesi Botchwey, the government submitted a four-year Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in 1983.⁸⁰

However, with a fragmented military and further factions forming, Rawlings needed a strategy to secure control. For example, Sergeant Akata-Pore's during major confrontation on October 28–29, 1982, led to an attempted coup on November 23, 1982, by Brigadier Nunoo-Mensah, which was suppressed after some fighting. Akata-Pore's support base among northern Ghanaian military personnel encouraged his challenge to Rawlings and the PNDC. To consolidate his authority, Rawlings reformed the regime, ensuring the military comprised of ad-hoc Rawlings factions, who were also increasingly divided amongst themselves.⁸¹ Unfortunately, these ad hoc factions were part of a powerful, violence-prone military whose coercive propensities alienated some Ghanaians.

In late 1982, public trials began for those accused of corruption; those found guilty were sentenced either to long years of work in night soil (excrement) collection or communal labor. Nonetheless, the PNDC government survived. Rawlings saw his leadership role as that of a "watchdog" for ordinary people, and he addressed problems of bureaucratic incompetence, injustice, corruption, and in a gesture toward inclusiveness, reached out to many ethnic constituencies, including the Ewes, Adangbes, Ashantis, and Brongs.^{82,83}

GAFs under Rawlings

As observed from [Figure 1](#) below, Rawlings ensured the scope of GAFs' contributory roles to PKOs and PSOs increased, including supporting ECOWAS operations in Liberia (1990), UNTAC in Cambodia (1992), UNAMIR in Rwanda (1993) and UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone (1998).⁸⁴ His successful push for GAFs to serve as members in PKOs or PSOs provided critical learning opportunities and helped consolidate its military doctrine.

During this period, the GAFs consolidation was aligned with Ghana's plans to redefine and assert her strength as a regional player. This era also saw a push toward mending fractured civil-military relations and politics through "subjective" or "political" armies, where the military reflects and is part of broader politics. Among the most significant outcomes of the redefinition of Ghana's role was competition with Nigeria in the form of increased contributions to regional PSOs and UN PKOs, and the political decision to embrace capitalism.⁸⁵ Security sector reforms – which started in the early 1980s but only began to flourish a decade later – underlined parliamentary control, and civilian oversight was given impetus in the 1992 constitution of Ghana.⁸⁶ PKOs and PSOs kept the GAFs occupied and diverted forces' attention from political tensions at home.⁸⁷ This strategy kept the troops "on track", far removed from potential domestic mutinies; it also indicated Ghana's modified military doctrine, influenced by the experiences of GAFs serving in PKOs and PSOs.

Evidence of the influence of PKO norms over GAFs is visible in Ghana's recent increase of female troops to United Nations PKOs, resulting in Ghana being one of the few TCCs to deploy between 13–15% of women to UN PKOs globally.⁸⁸ While this influence commenced under Rawlings, it has primarily

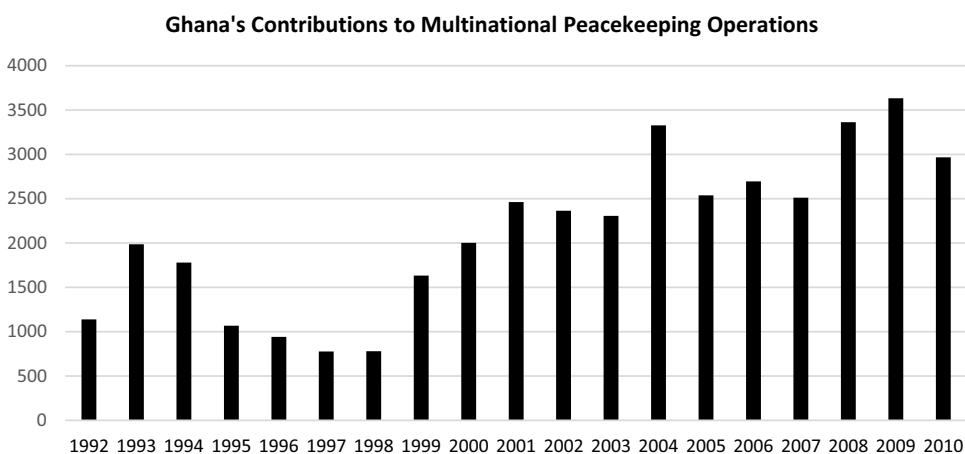


Figure 1. Total contribution UN PKO, other IGO PKOs, and state-led PKOs (police, troops and other missions) 1970–2010; source: dr Vita D'Orazio, <https://www.vitodorazio.com/data.html>.

increased under the previous and current governments. Ghana's involvement in PKOs and PSOs, coupled with its strong commitment to liberal democracy, renewed its emphasis toward the UN Security Council resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace, and security (WPS), helping to supplement the GAFs approach to insecurity abroad, and its doctrine back home.⁸⁹ Ghana's focus on WPS through increased deployments of female troops makes Ghana one of the largest contributing countries serving in UNIFIL, where it has over eight hundred and fifty troops. Of this number, one hundred and fifteen are female, making Ghana the largest contingent with the highest number of female peacekeepers. Ghana was also accredited with having trained the first female officer pilots in 1965 in the sub-region.

This period was significant not only for the increase in PSO/PKO deployments but for the reform of the military. In the post-Rawlings era, other reforms, such as the defense review, ushered in substantial changes to the army.

Democracy restored

After Rawlings's time in power, he succeeded power to President John Kufour. Kufour was advised by his party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), to proceed slowly with orchestrating the fragmentation of Rawling's support; this stealthy undermining, it was argued, would keep Rawlings' supporters within the GAFs under control, and democracy in Ghana could continue. These concerns, alongside "... the country's record with coups", led Kufour to appoint his brother Addo Kufuor as defense minister.⁹⁰ Kufuor would go on to scatter and redeploy the Forces Reserve Battalion, the so-called 64-battalion regiment, popularly known in Ghana as the Commandos and considered Rawlings' most trusted unit.^{91,92} Kufour deployed many of the commandos on various PKOs' responsibilities, with others rotated to different units of the GAF.⁹³ Further reforms and transitions to democracy were implemented during this period.

With this extensive experience, GAFs contributed substantively to the establishment of the Military Academy and Training Schools and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, all based in Ghana. This demonstrates how deliberate institution-building played a role in the professionalization of the GAFs, grounded in their service with PKOs and PSOs. Over the years, this wealth of experience and knowledge encouraged Ghana's military institutions to open their doors to other African forces, to support collaboration and harmonize joint efforts in PKOs. Nevertheless, despite GAFs' continued success – partly due to how the construction of the GAFs was visioned post-independence – the GAFs depend on the exploitation of PKOs and PSOs to attract external support and funding. The political economy of missions as revenue for TCCs has left the GAFs structurally and

financially constrained toward peace operations as a revenue stream for its troops. This could open the GAFs to potential misconduct if they engaged in intense battles when deployed for internal counterterrorism operations. For example, General Emmanuel Erskine stated that prolonged deployment of peacekeepers in Lebanon precisely because their presence at home would likely complicate the tumultuous political situation in Accra.⁹⁴ The training and doctrine of the GAFs must be reviewed to reflect contemporary threats, including terrorism, drug trafficking, piracy and armed robbery at sea, among others.⁹⁵ Thus, the switch from PKOs and PSOs deployments to internal deployment may lead to the supplementary loss of earnings from PKOs – for particular units – which boosted relatively low salaries and, by extension, impacted the GAFs’ performance.

Challenges facing the GAFs

During the early 2000s, scholars warned of potential risks to Ghana, such as outbreaks of conflict and violence and an array of internal challenges. Sosuh’s (2011) research on border security reveals how Ghana was beset with myriad challenges, including transnational terrorism, which threatened the nation’s security and stability.⁹⁶ While Ghana has a specific anti-terrorism center and a somewhat healthy democracy (considering the problems with Ghana’s Electoral Commission and its chairperson), gaps in inclusive governance, socioeconomic development, and social cohesion perpetuate fragility in many regions.^{97,98} Furthermore, the interplay of localized grievances, cross-border flows of people and resources, and vested external political interests amplify the complexities of developing coherent and sustainable multilateral responses. For example, in 2018, Ghanaian officials revealed that fertilizer, an ingredient intended for farming but which can be used for improvised explosive devices, was smuggled into Burkina Faso, between border towns such as Hamile, Kulungugu, and Namori. Similarly, operations in Ouagadougou traced large quantities of electric cord used in improvised explosive devices to northern Ghana.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, instability in Libya, which has attracted significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters as part of a wave of global jihadism, still poses a risk to Ghana. Research found that West Africa had approximately 250–700 fighters from Chad, Ghana, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Mauritania, and Nigeria, demonstrating a growing threat to Ghana’s stability and the interconnectivity of jihadist groups.¹⁰⁰

Internal threats have resulted in “the GAFs delivering military assistance to the civil authority with the police as the lead, and GAF supporting”.¹⁰¹ GAFs had mobilized over 2000 forces from the navy and air force to support the police, with many diverted from PKOs and PSOs obligations. These operations include *Operation Conquered Fist*, designed to counter terrorist activities in Ghana’s northern sector.¹⁰² *Operation Eagle Claw*, in the Upper West

Region along the Ghana – Togo and Ghana – Burkina Faso borders, originated as an anti-terrorism operation intended to improve training and to test troops' skills in air operations, in cooperation with the Ghana Air Force, Police, Immigration, Customs Division, and the Bureau of National Investigations.¹⁰³ Additionally, collaboration with regional states includes joint security operations under the Accra Initiative, (Now intended to be a Multination Joint Task Force) such as Operation *Koudalgou I*, launched in May 2018 and conducted with Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Togo in their border areas. Operation *Koudalgou II* involved Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in November 2018, and *Koudalgou III* was formed to prevent terrorist activities, illegal resource extraction, drug trafficking, dealing in illicit arms and smuggling, leading to the arrest of over a hundred suspected terrorists.¹⁰⁴ Despite this extensive training, in 2020, during the lead-up to voter registration in Banda, GAFs were deployed to maintain order after violence erupted as some civilians gathered to register their vote, and the state moved to avert what it perceived as threats to Ghana's electoral process.¹⁰⁵ Some CSOs and former presidents protested the overreaction to the handling of the situation. Later that year, forty military officers from the 66 Artillery regiment rounded up twenty-one people in Western Togoland, a sub-region in the east of Ghana, after the group declared the region a sovereign state and seized control of a local police point; several of the demonstrators were later released.^{106,107} In both situations, the state quickly deployed the GAFs to deal with a perceived threat(s).

Training and doctrinal mismatch with reality

Principally, the GAFs have striven to become a force equipped and able to deal with challenges that emerge during PKOs and PSOs, and this success must be acknowledged. The engagement of GAFs in UN, AU, and RECs/RMs PKOs and PSOs facilitated the GAFs' refinement of its peacekeeping contingents, doctrine, training and operational capacity, and by extension, positively impacted the professionalism and discipline of the GAFs. Mission-specific training and numerous global deployments have helped bring the GAFs in line with international best practices on peacekeeping. However, GAFs were set up to fight conventional warfare, where rival states are the potential adversaries. At the same time, threats of conflict between African states have reduced – primarily due to regional integration and economic interdependencies. Internal civil wars and terrorism are now the most pressing problems for states like Ghana. While the GAFs have made significant progress since independence, these advances are limited to doctrinal and training policy, focusing on PKOs, PSOs, and conventional warfare between two states.

In contrast, efforts to adjust the GAFs' capacity by providing bilateral training from the United Kingdom and other states have been limited and

primarily focused on increasing troops to affected areas instead of approaching potential challenges from an adaptive stabilization strategy. A broader stabilization approach that is people-centered, holistic, and agile in its approach to internal security threats should be adopted, and supplemented with the promotion of good governance, strengthening of the rule of law, addressing social injustices and vulnerabilities such as poverty, marginalization, illiteracy, and unemployment, especially among youth and women.

The changing nature of threats, e.g., the emergence of terrorism in West Africa, will continually require the reorientation of the GAFs; establishing the Special Forces (SF) as one of the responses to these new threats is welcomed, but the SF are neither as adequately resourced nor as rapidly deployable as the GAFs. Consequently, in any situation where a perceived threat is indicated, such as communal violence, the states' preference will invariably be to deploy the GAFs and the SF over the police. While Ghana's neighboring states combat terrorism, international support prioritizes military assistance to African states. Like Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger, the reluctance to use traditional leaders, civil society groups, women, and youth and religious groups to intervene in and mediate potential threats must not assume prominence in Ghana's approach to internal insecurity. If GAFs are to be effective during sustained counterterrorism operations, it will depend on the state's ability not only to deploy them but the quality of intelligence, a people-aligned focus, cooperation with additional security elements and local civilians, and reducing external security influence.

Conclusion

Drawing on Ghana as an example, this paper has argued that the training and military doctrines of Africa's armies must also consider broader implications of PKOs and PSOs' experience of troops back home. It has been argued that the GAFs with PKOs and PSOs experience may be at risk "doctrinally and operationally" when responding to emerging security challenges at home. It is further argued that this risk is partly due to GAFs building its military doctrine off PKOs and PSOs interactions, colonial structures and liberal peace regimes. While PKO and PSO exposure has uplifted the GAF professionalism, these capacities do not convert into tangible approaches to dealing with structural issues like poor governance, weak implementation of the rule of law, and economic development. In states like Ghana, which have adopted elements of peacekeeping doctrine to create national military doctrine, the GAFs risk gaining knowledge from PKOs and PSOs that could harm their interactions with civilians back home. Finally, Ghana has a set of historical ingredients influenced by civil-military relations, consistent experience of PSOs and democratic foundations, which differ from other African states and their

formation processes. Elements of this setup exist elsewhere (Kenya and Tanzania have some similarities). However, it raises a broader question of the impact of PSOs and PKOs on other African states, more specifically: what has been the impact on other African armies like Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda, who are influenced doctrinally by PKOs and PSOs but who also have significant other national military experience?

Notes

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