

## Improving Citizen Security Education and Awareness in West Africa – A Ghanaian Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

Globally, expenditure in defence and security has been rising for the past two decades. Many reasons account for this phenomenon. Among them are increasing threats, and economic and geopolitical competitions. In Africa, not a day passes without security incidents which often results in heavy casualties leading to loss of lives and properties. Security has become a huge developmental challenge on the checklist of almost all countries in the world and this is no different in Africa in general and West Africa in particular. Every year countries in Africa invest billions of dollars in security to ensure that lives and properties are protected. These investments are in the procurement of new equipment, training and capacity building, maintenance and materiel, administration and operations. These expenditures are recurrent and often do not yield direct benefits to the country's Gross Domestic Product as often expressed by the citizenry. Some have argued that though these huge recurrent expenditure on security are worthwhile, concerns have been expressed about the low level of citizen security education in West Africa. This is because some believe that when the citizens are well informed enough about the security threats and what they should do, incidents of security will be reduced. The paper focuses on the roles of government in citizen security education and awareness and explores the ways that citizen security education and awareness can be improved to reduce security threats and harm to the people.

### Keywords:

Awareness, citizen, education, security.

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## 1. Introduction

All over the world governments are responsible for the security, safety and protection of its citizens. This responsibility has become a huge challenge due to growing global insecurity emanating from political, social and economic and geopolitical competitions. The definition of security has evolved so is the ways and means of addressing today's security challenges. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines security as first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression, second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development (UNDP, 1994). From the definition, it is evident that security is no longer only the preparedness of the police or other security agencies and their related apparatus to provide physical security. This could be termed as 'hard' security issues. The others which could be classified as 'soft' security issues exist as a result of poor human rights, famine and pandemics such as Covid 19. These challenges call for proactive and inclusive leadership, trained and adequately equipped security personnel and local, regional and international collaboration.

Countries in the West African sub-region has common security challenges due to cross border movement, common socio-economic and political systems. Regional grouping such as ECOWAS also facilitate the free movement of people and businesses, and this creates a fertile ground for cross border crimes (Lavergne, 1996). The political systems and security architecture of most of the countries in the sub-region are similar. Therefore, issues such as weak democratic institutions, institutional corruption, political violence and high mistrust for political leadership are highly pervasive. Crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, abductions, murder, fraud, youth and political vigilantism, human and arms trafficking, money laundering continue to dominate media headlines in West Africa.

Governments are continuously exploring both 'hard' and 'soft' options in addressing the security challenges but the situation does not seem to improve. However, one of the 'soft' security measures which has not been well explored and exploited is the deliberate citizen security education and awareness creation and its likely impact on improving security in West Africa. It is good to acknowledge that citizen security education and awareness alone will not drastically address a country's security challenges. Ghana has been praised as a peaceful country compared to its neighbours. However, though Ghanaians agree with this assertion, recent events such as armed robberies, arson, murder and kidnappings have raised concerns of insecurity among the citizens. Some think that a deliberate citizen security education can help reduce some of the security incidents and to a large extent the sense of insecurity among the citizenry. The purpose of this paper is to explore the potential of citizen security education and awareness in addressing insecurity in Ghana. The paper will be in four parts. The first part will discuss the citizenry, security education and awareness, the second part will

discuss the responsibility to educate and create awareness. The third part will discuss the impact of poor citizen security education and awareness. The last part of the paper will discuss how citizen security education and awareness can be explored and exploited to address some of the security challenges of Ghana.

## ***2. The Citizenry, Security Education and Awareness – Missing Links, Relationships and Gaps***

The relationship between the state and its citizen's regarding security is complex. On one occasion, you hear that the state is responsible for the safety, protection and security of its citizens and on another occasion, you hear, that the individual is responsible for their security. A close examination of the definition of democracy as given by the former US President Abraham Lincoln 'Government of, by and for the people' puts a huge responsibility on the government. However, without the support of the citizens, the state will fail in its protection responsibility. No effective protection can be successfully carried out without reliable intelligence and the citizens are an important stakeholder in the intelligence space. This assertion confirms the complicated state and citizen relationship. This calls for a deliberate effort by the state to build a framework of citizen security education and awareness. Reliable data on the level of security awareness among Ghanaians is limited. However, open-source information available indicates that Ghana has a huge security and education and awareness deficit.

## ***3. National, Regional and International Policy Framework***

### ***3.1. Economic Community of West Africa State***

States and regional bodies have developed several protocols and mechanisms to improve and fight violent crimes and cross border organised crimes in Africa. Such mechanisms and regional bodies include ECOWAS, SADC and EADC and many others including the AU. To address the challenge of terrorist financing and money laundering across West Africa, heads of states and governments of member states of ECOWAS urged member states in 2016 to enact laws in line with the revised Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating of the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) (GIABA, 2006). Similarly, ECOWAS has multilateral working agreements and relations with AU, EU, UN and the World Bank both internationally and across Africa. For example, ECOWAS is a regional partner of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee. This committee was created by the UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) aimed at strengthening the capacity of UN member states to prevent terrorist acts within their countries and across borders. Multilateral alliances and cooperation among member states have achieved considerable results regarding 'hard' and 'soft' security.

### **3.2. Africa Union**

The Africa Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (Afripol) was established by statute and was adopted in 2017 (Afripol). Afripol is a policy framework mechanism developed by AU to advance its crime-fighting efforts. Its objectives include operational and strategic level police cooperation among member state. Afripol is institutionalised in character, and it has its General Assembly, Steering Committee and Secretariat. Members are by national legislation required to set up an Afripol Liaison Offices to coordinate Afripol activities for effective and efficient coordination with little conflict of interest with other organisations.

In 1996 and member states were urged to establish drug control units in their Ministry of Police and State Security. Additionally, member states were to design their national Drug Master Plan with technical assistance from AU Commission and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Control (UNODC) and other international partners. Substantial progress was made in its implementation due to other regional efforts by ECOWAS, SADC, EADC and EADC. However, there were some challenges due to decreased funding from supporting partners. The drug use and the drug trade is complex, expensive and dangerous and it changes very fast as the drug enforcement agencies change strategies and their approach.

### **3.3. United Nations**

There are many conventions the UN has championed to address crime. One of them is the UN Drug Convention. This framework requires all member states who are signatories to criminalise money laundering, tighten banking regulations and provide mutual legal assistance. This Convention has necessitated an international emergence of money laundering regime and world leaders have become more conscious about the dangers and the extent of the phenomenon (United Nations, 1988). Another crime-fighting framework that the UN has championed is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes. (UNTOC). This is a very important document because organised crime is complex, therefore no country can fight it alone. Fighting organised demands strong collaboration among state and institutions. As of May 2015, 185 countries had signed and ratified the Convention (Boister, 2016). Much of the work of the convention focuses on procedural matters of cooperation aimed at fighting organised crime.

The procedural aspect includes formal legal assistance to informal police cooperation. There is much focus on the issue of procedure, therefore it appears that the subject of UNTOC is more about procedures instead of criminalization (United Nations, 2015)

## 4. National, Regional and International Policy Framework

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### 4.2. Theory and the Crime Triangle

Crime is a global challenge that every country is grappling with the phenomenon which is becoming more complex every day. Many theories have been developed to understand the problem of crime and its impact on society. One such framework which is widely used by many police and law enforcement institutions is the Crime Triangle.



Figure 1: The Crime Traingle



As seen in Figure 1, the Crime Triangle has three parts namely, target, desire and opportunity. The target is the person who suffers when the crime occurs. The desire is the drive of the criminal to commit the crime which the victim cannot control. The opportunity is the conditions that make it easy for the criminal to commit the crime. A lot of work has been done on how opportunity makes it easy for people to commit crime and how the deliberate reduction of opportunity can help reduce crime. The work of Mayhew et al. in *Crime as Opportunity* was not bold enough to agree that opportunity was a cause of crime. This was because it would have gone contrary to the position of Sutherland, a sociologist who is described as the father of criminology (Mayhew et al., 1976). Sutherland indicated that the challenge with criminology was that it focuses on explaining criminal behaviour instead of the behaviour itself (Sutherland, 1947). This claim was generally accepted by many criminologists who were then sociologists. However, Felson and Clarke in *Opportunity make the Thief* proved to a large extent that indeed opportunity creates the necessary space for crime to be committed (Felson and Clark, 1998). Therefore, an opportunity is important when situational crime prevention is being designed. Crime causes insecurity among people and communities and in countries. The subsequent paragraphs will discuss some of the theories developed by criminologists to aid in understanding why people commit crime.

#### **4.3. The Routine Activity Theory**

According to the routine activity theory, crime occurs because 3 things are available: the offender, a suitable target and unavailability of a suitable guardian. A guardian is any person whose presence will serve or discourage the offender. The absence of the guardian makes the target more susceptible to attack (Felson and Clarke, 1998). The target could be a person or a thing that the offender aims to either harm or take. Therefore, the offender may want to steal a laptop or kill the owner of the laptop. The risk of the target being attacked is influenced by value, inertia, visibility and access. The value of the target will influence the offender to commit the crime. Therefore, the latest iPhone 6 is likely to be stolen than the old Nokia 3310. Inertia is the weight of the item. Therefore, a phone is likely to be stolen more than a 50inch LED TV. Visibility is the exposure of the target. If someone displays money in public, the individual is more likely to be robbed. Access may refer to street designs or patterns and placing items close to the doors. The usual predatory crimes occur because the offender has access to a suitable target that does not have a guardian. Therefore, it is possible for the level of crime to increase because there are many more targets who don't have guardians present.

#### **4.4. Crime Pattern Theory**

The crime pattern theory focuses on the interaction between the offender and their environment, and it is central to what is termed environmental criminology. The theory

is based on three concepts: nodes, paths and edges. Nodes refer to where people travel to and from as is used in the transport industry. These places or their nearby spaces may generate crime. For example, it may be easier for a knife attack to occur at a restaurant than during a boardroom meeting or inside an aircraft which is in flight. Paths refer to the geographical location of the target which includes their activities in time and space and the daily rhythm of the activities. There may be activities with many people along paths and in between nodes that present an opportunity for a crime to occur especially during rush hours or commute flows.

Edges refer to the boundaries of the area where people seek entertainment, work or live. Crime such as racial attacks, shoplifting and robberies often occur more at edges. This is because more people from different locations converge at such places. It is more attractive for offenders to commit a crime in areas far from their neighbourhoods and take refuge in their homes than to commit the crime in their neighbourhoods. Edges have been one of the arguments of crime pattern theorists regarding the design of cities, towns and business premises. This is because the design of a building has huge impact on crime.

#### ***4.5. Rational Choice Perspective***

The rational choice perspective theory concerns the decision-making process of the offenders. Most crimes are deliberate because they are planned, and the offender is aware of the risk if apprehended.

Offenders of crimes have their motivations, goals and benefits they seek to achieve when planning a crime. Offenders are ready to commit a crime if the goals are short-sighted, that is if the benefits are few and the risk is high and the constraints of thinking limit the offender's level of being rational. There is a need to understand crime choices in order to analyse a category of crime. Specificity is important here because every offender has a different purpose and may be influenced by different situational factors. For example, a thief may have different reasons why he or she needs a car. One may steal a car to use it for another crime or may be interested in some parts of the car or the person wanted a car to drive home. Criminals commit crime when the opportunity is created, the risk of being caught is reduced. The same is true when the opportunity is removed or reduced. This assertion informs the saying that 'opportunity makes the thief'.

The three crime prevention theories which have been elaborated reveals many lessons for fighting crime. This is a piece of good evidence that with good and deliberate education and awareness creation among the citizens, crime and therefore insecurity among the populace can be reduced. Regarding the opportunity framework, if the opportunity is removed or reduced, the offender or the criminal may not commit the offence at all or may do further thinking.

## ***5. The Responsibility to Educate and Create Awareness***

### ***5.1. National Commission on Civic Education***

In Ghana, the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) is the body mandated to educate the public. NCCE implement many programmes either independently or with local and international partners. These programmes have helped in many ways to improve the awareness and understanding of Ghanaians on many issues affecting them.

However, the NCCE is saddled with many challenges which affect its work. These challenges are both material and human resources. The subject of security is a technical area and demands some expertise to conduct any meaningful education about it and because the NCCE do not have such expertise, it is not able to educate the public on matters of security effectively. It is not surprising that the citizens understanding of security in Ghana is so poor. This may account for the reasons the citizens keep creating opportunities for thieves instead of working to reduce the opportunities. It must be emphasised that the NCCE has collaborated with security institutions to conduct such security education and awareness many times. But the results from such educational campaigns are yet to be realised.

### ***5.2. The Ghana Police Service***

The Ghana Police Service is a professional institution, and it stands tall among its peers in West Africa. It has performed creditably both in Ghana and in several international assignments especially in UN peacekeeping Missions in Somalia, South Sudan, and Liberia (UN Peacekeeping Resource Statistic, 2016). As part of the mandate of the Ghana Police Service, they are to educate and create security awareness among the public. The purpose of such education is to help the police to fight crime and protect the citizens. This is often achieved through the community policing concepts, TV and radio discussions, social media, press releases and alerts and sometimes when officers are interviewed at crime scenes. These are laudable efforts and they have helped to educate the public and create some level of awareness among the citizens. However, more could be achieved if these activities were deliberately planned, conducted, reviewed, and evaluated. The deployment of the police in Ghana places the police better to educate the people and create the necessary awareness. This is because police posts or stations are dotted in most communities across Ghana.

### ***5.3. Civil Society Organisations***

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are no longer a mere collection or group of NGOs, but more resilient, vibrant and organised or unorganised groups who often overstep their boundaries. Some of the contemporary operations of CSOs include awareness on societal issues, conflict prevention and resolution, peace education, emergency response, providing expert knowledge to policy formulation and citizen engagement



(Fowler, 2000). The role of CSOs in Ghana is no different as enumerated. Many of them are in conflict prevention and resolution especially in the northern parts of Ghana. The role of CSOs has been instrumental in managing numbers of the conflict because the people see CSOs as more neutral than government. The impact of conflict is often devastating, and this causes insecurity. Though these CSOs may not be directly engaged in security education and awareness creation, their work contributes to reducing the sense of insecurity that some Ghanaian experience. There is a plethora of security specialists, analysts, institutions and Think Tanks who work directly or indirectly in educating and creating public awareness about issues concerning security. Though sometimes some of their analysis lack depth, they have contributed in raising the security awareness of the citizens in many ways. What is yet to be exploited is strong collaboration between these security-focused CSOs, and government or state security institutions.

#### **5.4. Traditional Authorities**

In Ghana, Chiefs have championed major socio-economic development in their communities. Among the roles of traditional authorities is the mobilisation of their people for socio-economic development which includes security, safety and protection. Chiefs have championed the establishment of community protection groups whose responsibilities include educating their community members about crime and its effect on the safety and security of their people (Crook, 2005). With support to the police, these communities and groups have helped to arrest criminals. On some occasions, these community groups have arrested criminals themselves and handed them over to the police. Chiefs educate and create awareness about issues concerning security and safety and this in many ways have saved people in their communities from falling victims to the activities of the criminals.

#### **5.5. Community Watch Groups**

Community Watch Groups are voluntary and self-help groups that mobilise people in their communities to ensure the security and safety of their communities (Wanjohi, 2014). Some of their activities include patrolling, providing information to the police and sometimes arresting offenders and criminals. They also create security awareness in the communities they operate. However, where they are not trained their messaging could confuse the people in their communities. The Ghana Police Service under its Community Policing project has trained some of these groups and their work has complemented the efforts of the police in fighting crime especially in the Greater Accra Region. This could be an effective approach in addressing information gathering gaps of the of the Ghana Police. Members of the Community Watch Groups understand the peculiarities of their communities such as their routine, language, and culture.



Therefore, they could be an effective tool in citizen security education and awareness if they are given relevant training by the Police Service.

### **5.6. Religious Leaders**

In Africa, churches are involved in many socio-economic activities such as the building of schools, hospitals training centres and several charity works. Citizen security education has been one of the activities of religious leaders. They do it through their sermons and special outreach programmes. This approach has not been very effective because, security is not their core job, therefore, they don't have a better understanding of security and so they may be handicapped in many ways in their efforts at educating their followers. The state security agencies could collaborate with them in order to derive full benefits. This is because there is a multiplicity of religious organisations spread across the length and breadth of Ghana. Therefore, a large number of people could be reached if this is well planned, targeted and implemented.

### **5.7. The Ministry of National Security**

The business of the security and defence of Ghana has always been coordinated by the National Security Secretariat though previous governments have had their policy regarding the issue. However, it was realised that the management of Ghana's national security issues was flouted with many challenges, therefore the National Security Ministry was established under the National Intelligence and Security Act of Parliament.

Article 1(1) of the 1992 Constitution states that “The Sovereignty of Ghana resides in the people of Ghana in whose name and for whose welfare the powers of government are to be exercised in the manner within the limits laid down in this Constitution” (Republic of Ghana, 1992). This recognises the role of the citizens in the management of security in Ghana. The National Security Ministry has the mandate to coordinate all public and private efforts at protecting the people of Ghana. Through the collaboration of the NCCE and many other agencies and institutions, several programmes are rolled out to educate the public to create the needed security awareness.

In June 2021, the Ministry of National Security launched the first National Security Strategy. The national security strategy document in itself is an effort to educate Ghanaians on the need for security awareness. The Ministry also coordinates the conducts of scenario and practical exercises as parts of its efforts to assess standard operations procedures, drills and contingencies of agencies involved the protection and defence of Ghana. As part of such exercises workshops and seminars and are conducted to engage selected stakeholders to educate them on current security threats and what the public can do to prevent likely future incidents.

### **5.8. Ghana Armed Forces**

The GAF has deployed in many parts of Ghana as part of its internal security operations. These operations are in areas where chieftaincy disputes, land disputes, tribal conflicts, and other perceived threats are rife. The tactical commanders of these operations engage the Chiefs and opinion leaders in their area of operation as part of their key leader engagement tasks. These engagements often focus on the need to end those conflicts and disputes and live together in peace. The challenge is that, in most cases, these important engagements are not given as specified tasks for officers who command these operations. Sometimes, for fear of being reported in the news, some of the tactical commanders shy away from these important engagements. There is a need for clear operational guidelines on these engagements because when such engagements are deliberately planned and executed, it will give the troops huge leverage in their operations and enhances the image of GAF. Another way the GAF does citizen security education and awareness creation is through, specific operations, field exercises, visits by commanders, clean up campaigns, press releases and press conferences. The challenge with press releases and conferences are that they are done when there is an incident involving the GAF. The goal of these press releases is not to create citizen security education and awareness, but to explain or clarify the GAF's position on that specific incident and what they expect the public to do in the future. These actions often achieve a double objective by educating the public. Citizen security education and awareness creation has never been the primary role of the GAF. However, the GAF's changing role and the complexity of the internal security space necessitates the establishment of a department responsible for developing civil-military coordination policy and conducting deliberate and long-term civil-military coordination operations.

### **5.9. Other Security Agencies**

Besides the Ghana Police Service and the GAF, other state institutions such as the Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana National Fire Service, Ghana Prisons Service, Customs Division of Ghana Revenue Authority, and National Investigations Bureau, have programmes aimed at educating the citizens and creating security awareness besides their constitutional mandates. The Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) educate people in communities where they deploy and sometime through workshops and seminars. Members of these communities also help staff of the Service by sharing information on suspected activities of individuals. The Ghana National Fire Service is mandated to address all fire-related emergencies in Ghana. The Service conducts several educational and awareness creation programmes. These programmes are focused on fire prevention and the management of fires when they occur. Frequent fire outbreaks are a serious security threat. Every year, many institutions such as schools, churches, and other bodies receive education on the operations and other security-related subjects concerning the Ghana Prison Service. The Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority has its



own programmes tailored to education and the creation of public awareness on a range of issues which include under-invoicing, smuggling and drug trafficking. These efforts by these agencies would have achieved a better impact if they are properly, planned, programmed and implemented.

### ***5.10. Poor Citizen Security Education and Awareness and Its Impact Sense of Insecurity***

Globally, the acts of kidnapping for ransom by criminal groups such as militias, ritualist rebels, gangs, and terrorists are on the rise, and it has become the fastest growing criminal industry with an estimated \$500 million (Stubbert et al., 2015). Incidences such as kidnapping, murder, armed robbery, and human trafficking have become almost a daily occurrence in countries across West Africa. The issue is not different in Ghana. The US State Department assessed the security of Accra as critical in the year 2020 (OSAC, 2020). It is estimated that there are about 1.2 million unregistered small arms in Ghana. The circulation and easy access to these guns makes the planning and commission of violent crimes very easy. In 2019, Ghana experienced isolated kidnapping incidents across the country. The most prominent of these was the kidnapping and killing of three teenage girls in the port city of Takoradi (Doe, 2020). In the same year, two Canadian tourists were kidnapped at a golf course in Kumasi. The involvement of the Canadian government led to the arrest and rescue of the perpetrators and the girls respectively. In 2018, about 70 kidnapping cases were reported in Ghana (Kaledzi, 2019) The deliberate education of citizens and awareness creation would have largely prevented these kidnappings, since the victims would have been educated and better understood the threat to their lives. These strings of kidnappings have heightened the sense of insecurity among the citizens, and this has largely disrupted their freedom of movement as a result of fear. These have often led to pressure on the government, and the frustration of the citizens is expressed in the form of street protests.

In 2015, Ghana recorded 525 and 1397 murders and robbery cases respectively. However, while the robbery cases reduced to 1377, the murder cases increased to 549 in 2016 (Ghana Police, 2016). Another phenomenon which is worrying is highway robberies. The modus operandi of these criminals was that they stop market women passengers, usually at night, and rob them of their cash, mobile phones, and other valuables. There have been occasions where some passengers have been robbed and raped women at gun points. In 2020, the Member of Parliament for Mfantseman East, Honourable Ebo Quansah Hayford, was killed when he was returning from a political campaign in a village in his constituency. The victim of the most recent highway robbery was the killing of Taalay Ahmed, a London-based journalist for Muslim TV Ahmadiyya International, which occurred on 23 August 2021, on the Kintampo-Buipe highway (Fredua, 2021). In February 2016, the Member of Parliament for Abuakwa North, Joseph Boakye Dankwah, was stabbed to death at his residence in East Legon.

Many Ghanaians wondered, if a Member of Parliament who had police protection could be killed in his own home, how could the ordinary Ghanaian feel safe? In the first quarter of 2018, Ghana recorded 124 residential robberies and 964 robbery cases nationwide (Adams, 2018). Banks are being robbed and the most disturbing part is that police personnel who are supposed to protect the citizens have become the victims. In July 2019 and August 2019 alone, five policemen were killed by armed criminals (Nyarko-Yirenky, 2019). The recent killing of a police officer occurred in Jamestown, Accra on 13 August 2021. The police officer was a security escort to a bullion van. These incidents further increase the feeling of a sense of insecurity among Ghanaians. The Ghana Police Service needs to review its operations and consider better force protection for its officers deployed across Ghana. Institutions mandated to educate the public on crime such as the Ghana Police Service and the NCCE need better strategies and resources to conduct sustainable citizen educational programmes and awareness creation.

### ***6. Loss of Trust and Confidence in Security Agencies***

The trust and confidence deficit of security and law enforcement agencies in Ghana, especially the police, is low. The perception of lack of trust in crime fighting institutions across Africa is disturbing. The loss of trust in institutions in West Africa was 45%, the law courts 59%, the police 42%, and the Ghana Police Service was 42% (Wambua, 2015; Tankebe, 2012). The Transparency International year 2020 global Corruption Perception Index painted a gloomy picture. Compared to previous years, most countries made little or no progress in the fight against public sector corruption. Sub-Saharan Africa's average score was 32/100, with Seychelles on top with 66/100 and Somalia and South Sudan at the bottom with 12/100. In West Africa, Guinea ranked 137, Liberia 137, Cote Ivoire 104, Togo 134, Sierra Leone 119, Nigeria 149, and Ghana 75. The 2019 rankings for these countries were Guinea 130, Liberia 137, Cote d'Ivoire 180, Togo 130, Sierra Leone 117, Nigeria 146, and Ghana 80 (Transparency International, 2019). There was marginal improvement for some of the countries, and others did not improve. Recommendations by Transparency International included conflict resolution, controlling political financing, strengthening electoral integrity and empowering citizens. The issue of citizen empowerment needs special attention. You cannot empower citizens without educating them and creating the necessary awareness to help them ask the right questions in order to contribute to the governance of the country. Budgets for crime-fighting institutions in West Africa are woefully inadequate. Therefore, training and education of the staff of these institutions has not been a priority. The focus has been 'hard' security such as equipment and not 'soft' security such as training, education and shaping of the mindsets and orientation of these security personnel. Current complex crimes cannot be addressed with obsolete knowledge? The concern has been attributed to a lack of trust and confidence in police, who are often perceived to be corrupt and have a general poor attitude to fighting crime. There



is the need for a comprehensive effort by law enforcement agencies, public-private partnerships, and local and international organisations.

One way of demonstrating loss of trust in law enforcement and security agencies is through mob justice. In May 2017, a mob action in Denkyira Obuasi led to the death of Major Maxwell Mahama. The military officer was part of a military detachment providing security to a mining company in the community. The Ghana police are generally reactive and slow in responding to crime and their deterrence to crime is only moderate. They often lack equipment, training and the right personnel to respond when called for assistance and other emergencies (OSAC, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that citizen education awareness creation, which has a huge potential to reduce crime, has not been an operational priority of the Ghana Police Service. This does not mean the Ghana Police is not making any attempt to educate the public.

To achieve a more inclusive approach to fighting crime, the Ghana Police Service introduced the Community Policing Unit. Under this unit, the Ghana Police Service organises public forums with community leaders such as Chiefs, Imams, youth leaders, religious leaders, and civil society organisations. It also trains Community Police Assistants who help to strengthen visibility and accessibility of security in their community, and they also serve as liaisons between the police and their communities. The Unit also organises sensitisation programmes in communities and schools. These programmes have been relatively successful. However, it is still on a pilot basis in selected districts (Ghana Police Service, n.d.).

### ***7. Public Misinformation fills the Education and Awareness Gap***

Misinformation, disinformation and fake news are gradually becoming one of the global security threats, and it is especially dangerous in Africa, where illiteracy rates are still high compared to those in the developed world. Fake news is estimated to cost the global economy about \$78 billion annually (Sullivan, 2019). In 2018, the World Economic Forum's analysis ranked the spread of misinformation and fake news among the world's top global risks. With the world's 4.13 billion internet users, the security risk will be even higher (Statista, 2023). As of January 2021, internet penetration rates in Africa and West Africa were 62 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Ghana's internet penetration rate was 50 percent. Policy makers should be worried about the increasing number of internet users. This is because, while this is a business opportunity, it is equally a threat to the security of Ghana. Additionally, the more people use the internet, the more vulnerable they become to cyberattacks. Furthermore, it creates a fertile ground for fake news and disinformation. Social media has made it very easy for anyone with internet data and a mobile device to start communicating with the world. Depending on the subject of discussion, these people soon get thousands of followers and viewers. Security is a sensitive issue, and it affects everyone. Therefore, whenever security is the

subject of discussion, it becomes easy for them to attract many followers. As already indicated, the security and law enforcement agencies mandated to educate the citizens and create the necessary security awareness are not meeting the challenge. Additionally, citizen security education and awareness has not been seen as an operational objective worth pursuing, therefore it has not received the needed human and material resources. One of the most dangerous things that can happen is educating people with the wrong information. There is a new crop of security experts and security consultants in Ghana who have been speaking on security issues as and when they are approached by the media. These people may not have the necessary knowledge on the subject, but many of them are available, ready, and willing to speak to TV and radio stations when approached and interviewed. The messaging and analysis of these individuals may not necessarily reflect the reality and may misinform the people.

## ***8. How to Improve Poor Citizen Security and Awareness***

### ***8.1. A Deliberate Strategic Approach to Citizen Security Education and Awareness***

Strategy is key in achieving organisational objectives. In today's competitive world, companies and institutions have no choice but to craft sustainable strategies that can survive long-term disruptions and shape the attainment of their organizational goals. A deliberate strategy should be fully formulated before its implementation (Max and Majluf, 1986). It must be controlled by top management, deliberately controlled, and well processed. Deliberate strategies are born out of analysis and by taking into consideration internal and external factors which may include opportunities, weaknesses, threats, and strengths. A deliberate strategy is further informed by the values and corporate social responsibility the organization has towards its community (Ansoff, 1980). On the other hand, an emergent strategy develops as a result of learning and responding to external forces (Mintzberg, 1987).

The issue of citizen security education and awareness is too important and critical to be approached haphazardly. As a matter of fact, nothing about the security of a state and its citizens should be handled haphazardly. It needs to be carefully planned and executed like a military operation. In the military, operations are either hasty or deliberate. A hasty defensive operation is one which is planned with little time and the operation itself may not be for a long duration. However, a deliberate defensive operation takes more time and resources in both planning and execution. The National Security Ministry must be deliberate and strategic in its citizen security by taking into consideration the needs of the people, internal and external factors, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Corporations adopt strategic marketing and spend billions of dollars on marketing their products. Each year, marketing departments are given a set of goals to achieve, and these goals include medium-term, short-term, and long-term profit and overall organization growth. Therefore, the inputs and outputs

concerning the objectives of the marketing departments are well planned, closely monitored, measured, and reviewed at the end of every year. If marketing can influence people to change their purchasing habits of their favourite products for it to reflect on the profits of companies, why can't we use messaging to change the mindsets and perceptions of citizens about crime and security education and their role in reducing insecurities? Consumers change their buying habits as a result of marketing messaging. Therefore, with the right messaging, the behaviour of Ghanaians can be changed, and they can play their roles better in fighting crime and improving security. Citizen security education should be approached in a similar manner, if not the same way. Many lessons can be learnt from Ghana's political and electioneering campaign when designing citizen security education and awareness creation programmes. During general election campaigns, all sorts of methods are used to ensure that voters understand and buy into the messages of political parties. These include a combination of print, electronic, and social media. If similar methods could be used in the approach to citizen security education and awareness, many crimes will be prevented, and this will reduce the sense of insecurity often expressed by many Ghanaians.

## ***8.2. The Information Operations Approach***

Today's security space and the complex security threats that nations' states face demand a review of the traditional operational strategies for fighting crimes. Security agencies must go into the minds of criminals, inform the citizens about the modus operandi of criminals, lead the information operations game and degrade the capabilities of criminals with the use of quality intelligence. Information operations should be a component of Ghana's national security strategy, and this must be reflected in all sectors of the economy. This is because it will be extremely difficult to reduce the level of crime when basic services such as water, electricity, healthcare, telecom services, jobs, and basic human rights are not working. These issues belong to the 'soft' security category. If law enforcement agencies focus only on 'hard' security, they will not win the fight against crime. If citizens' concerns, frustrations, and agitations are not addressed, they will become a major security concern for the government. Information operation that is aimed at educating, creating awareness and influencing citizens to change their behaviour in order to help reduce crime must be systemic, deliberate, repetitive and simple. There will be a huge challenge because of the democratisation of the media. The reality is that though the government may have a good intention of educating the citizens and creating the necessary security awareness in order to reduce crime but not everyone may like it and some criminal individuals and groups will work to undermine it. The tools and methods they may employ include false news, disinformation, or the use of false accounts using multiple media platforms. This is complex and a huge security threat in itself. Therefore, it demands an integrated and strategic government effort to fight such threats. One tool which can be employed to achieve a better result is information operations.



Information operations as the integrated employment during military operations of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own. The application of information operations to citizen security education and awareness should be an integrated effort.

This is because the issue of security affects every aspect of a country's economy. An information operation is a deliberate activity, therefore it should be properly planned, prepared, executed, and assessed. The ways, means, and ends of information operations must be properly defined. Information operations demand that the information environment is defined. The information environment consists of individuals, organisations and systems with physical, informational and cognitive dimensions. The physical dimension includes command and control systems, key decision makers, and supporting infrastructure which creates effects. The informational dimension includes how information is collected, processed, stored, disseminated, and protected, and the cognitive dimension is the mind that transmits, receives, and acts on the information. The informational environment is influenced by information-related capabilities, which are tools, techniques, and activities that affect the three physical, informational, and cognitive dimensions. Therefore, the government (means) must employ the information-related capabilities (ways) in order to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the targeted audience (ends). The Ministry of National Security should coordinate all security-related information operational activities. It should be designed to meet the strategic, operational and tactical objectives of the government in all sectors. The targeted audience must be well defined, with specific themes and messages.

### ***8.3. The Role of Private Security Professionals***

Globally, there are more private security guards than state policemen. It is estimated that the private security industry is worth \$180 billion (Provost, 2017). Private security outnumbers the police in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and the United States, and the estimated private security to police ratio is two to one, five to one, and three to one, respectively (Mancini, 2010). Additionally, where the industry is developed, private security could be more reliable than police. This is because private security institutions are there to do business and usually their services are on contract. Therefore, when they deliver poor services, they lose such contracts. In the United States, the escort of prisoners and the protection of many prison facilities are usually done by private security companies. These companies have proven credible over the years and have won the trust of the state. G4S, one of the global private security companies, has been engaged by the US government to protect its border with Mexico. The United Kingdom and Australia also employ the same company to protect their detention centres (Avant, 2005). In Europe, Finmeccanica, an Italian private security company, is also active in border control.



In Africa, the services provided by private security companies include protecting individuals, private properties, and industrial complexes. The companies are usually small and individually owned and operated. However, there is the presence of larger conglomerates such as G4S, which employs 120,400 people in 24 countries (G4S, 2017). According to the Ministry of Interior, Ghana had 176 licensed security companies in 2014. The number of private security companies in Ghana has increased to 248 (Ministry of Interior Republic of Ghana, n.d.).

Regardless of the size of private security companies, the industry keeps growing. In Ghana, private security companies are engaged in many sectors of the economy, and they can be found across the length and breadth of the country. Their services are patronised by both private individuals, institutions and the state. The services cover areas such as man guarding, executive protection, background checks, investigations, facilities protection, and escort of bullion vans. The industry is regulated by the Ghana's Ministry of Interior and supported by the Ghana Police Service. The industry is without challenges. Most of the challenges are poor remuneration, high labour turnover, inefficient regulation and lack of professionalism. However, the private security industry is meeting its increasing clientele demands. With a strong public private partnership, the industry could be exploited to support the government in its citizen education effort. Private security is better placed in educating the citizens on their roles in ensuring that they assist the police and other law enforcement agencies to work to protect the people. The business of private security companies is to provide security, and this puts them in a better position to educate the public about matters of security. After all, that is what they have been trained to do. Additionally, their wide deployment even makes it better. In collaboration with the Ghana Police Service, who are equally widely deployed, they can achieve massive results in their effort to educate the citizens on matters of security and create the necessary awareness.

Private security companies should be encouraged as part of their corporate social responsibilities to focus on citizen security education and awareness creation. This has the potential to produce substantial results because it could be done in many forms, which include many forms including collaboration with relevant security shareholders. The image of private security in Ghana could be enhanced if they took an active part in citizen security education and awareness creation. If it is well embraced, deliberate, properly planned and executed, it will inure to the benefit of the private security companies, the government and the larger society. Though the case of Ghana is completely different, with their professional knowledge, these officers can be given a further boost by the government so that they can be encouraged to educate the people in the areas they operate. If this is properly planned and executed, it will further enhance the confidence the public has in these private security professionals.

## 9. Policy on Security Education and Awareness

In Africa, not many people believe in policies. This is because many feel that not many government decisions in Africa are informed by policy. In governance, and especially in democratic governance, policies are what drive many, if not all, government decisions. The United States has a comprehensive national security policy that is competitive, sustainable, and reflects the character of the country (Mueller et al., 2006). Similarly, the United Kingdom and Australia have national security and defence policies. In June 2021, Ghana launched its national security strategy. The National Security Strategy acknowledges the need to create public awareness among the youth with the objective of inculcating in them the sense of patriotism, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence as tenets of constitutional democracy. A portion of the last paragraph of the executive summary of the document is quoted below:

"Under this NSS, avenues are also to be specifically created through a national agenda on national orientation in the youth and to enhance liaison and cooperation between state security actors and non-state stakeholders at all levels. This is to include independent constitutional and statutory bodies, political institutions, women, youth, civil society organisations (CSOs), traditional authorities and faith-based organisations, and the private sector to create national security awareness among the citizenry and enhance cooperation with state security agencies through reliance on inclusiveness, a joint sense of purpose, joint planning and implementation, and coordination of effort in security matters, especially human security. This national agenda also includes an initiative to commission a research project on national orientation training for the youth of Ghana. This is aimed at inculcating in the youth the love of the country and its related values at an early age (Republic of Ghana, 2020)."

It appears the National Security Strategy thinks the orientation of the youth should be aimed at making them more patriotic instead of educating them on security and what they can do to ensure that they play their role towards the security of Ghana. However, Ghana's National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET) did better work on citizen security education and awareness. The Framework has four pillars which are to prevent, pre-empt, protect, and respond. Under pillar one (prevent), the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Education, educational institutions, religious bodies/traditional institutions, civil society organisations, and the media are expected to play key roles in educating and creating the necessary security awareness (Ministry of National Security Ghana, 2019). After all, the National Security Strategy is a broad document which is aimed at driving the business of security and defence of Ghana. Article 13 of Chapter 5 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution provides for the protection of the right to life. Therefore, the state has the responsibility to protect Ghanaians wherever they live. The state cannot effectively



protect its citizens when their level of security education and awareness is poor. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) also supports the call for citizen security education and awareness. Peace building, justice, and the building of strong institutions is an all-inclusive endeavour. Therefore, when the citizens are educated and have been properly empowered, it will enhance the achievement of this goal. Therefore, this is why citizen security education is paramount. Ghana needs a policy on citizen security education awareness. The policy should be deliberate and comprehensive to cover all aspects of the economy with objectives, principles, monitoring, evaluation, and review. In implementing such a policy, the National Security Council through the National Security Ministry should lead the effort. Security awareness should be taught from primary schools through to tertiary institutions. Regional, Municipal, and District Security Councils should be directed to conduct security education and awareness workshops and seminars for institutions and a second cycle should be conducted in their jurisdiction. All these should be properly monitored, evaluated and reviewed from time to time in order to improve the policy implementation.

## **10. Conclusion**

West Africa continues to experience common security challenges. A combination of old and new threats make it difficult to address these security challenges. Threats such as human and drug trafficking, cybercrime, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, terrorism, money laundering, fake news and many others continue a concern for governments in West Africa.

The results have been a sense of feeling of insecurity and frustrations of the citizens which are often expressed in violent demonstrations, pressure from organised groups and civil society organisations. Ghana is not different regarding these continued insecurities and security threats in West Africa. Several efforts are being made by the government to meet these challenges in the form of 'hard' and 'soft' security measures. Unfortunately, more attention has been given to hard security than soft security, however, research has proven that when opportunities that create crimes are reduced or removed, crime can be reduced to a lesser extent, and this will reduce the sense of insecurities among the populations. One way of removing the opportunity is through citizen security education and awareness creation.

In Ghana, the institutions which conduct these educations include the NCCE, the GAF, Ghana Police Service, religious leaders, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, the National Security Ministry the Customs Division of Ghana Revenue Authority, the Ghana Prisons Service the Ghana Fire Service and many others. However, the impact of these education and awareness creation efforts is yet to be fully harnessed. Therefore, poor security awareness creations have resulted in a sense of insecurity, public misinformation, loss of confidence in security agencies often expressed in mob actions and violent demonstrations. Much could be achieved in citizen security education efforts

if more improved approaches are harnessed, adopted and implemented. The government's citizen security education awareness should be more strategic. With a clear vision, direction identified key players and performance indicators that could be reviewed periodically for better performance. Information operations could also help address Ghana's citizen security education and awareness creation effort. This is because the activities geared toward citizen security education will be deliberately planned, prepared, implemented, and assessed. It will be specifically aimed at influencing, disrupting, and usurping the decision making of the adversary while protecting government-citizen security education efforts.

The private security industry is rich with a lot of resources that government could exploit in citizen security education. The industry is rich in security professionals, widely deployed across Ghana and has a body recognised by the government. Therefore, government could build a strong partnership with the industry and explore and exploit the private security industry advantages in citizen security educations. Government efforts at citizen security education and awareness creation should be policy-driven. Policies drive government actions, aids in continuity and give opportunity for review. With this approach, the necessary human and material resources would be allocated to achieve sustainable results.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The article has not been submitted to any journal for publication.

### ***Notes on Contributor***

Alex Cann is senior military officer in Ghana Army and has extensive experience in national and international peace support operations Africa. He is a Certified Protection Professional (CPP), Certified Professional Trainer (CPT) a member and a subject matter expert for Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP). His research interest includes security sector governance and reforms, conflict-related displacement, peace agreements, armed conflicts, transitional governance, counter-insurgency operations and woman and gender equality. He is a Research Fellow at the Africa Research Institute at the Óbuda University, Hungary. He served as a Directing Staff/Lecturer at the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College and he is currently the Deputy Command Operations Officer at the Headquarters, Southern Command, Ghana Army.



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