

GHANA'S PEACEKEEPING EXPERIENCE: Challenges, impacts and implications for security governance

Benjamin Kusi

October 2026

African Security Sector Network (ASSN)

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For more information, please contact the **ASSN** team by email: **info@africansecuritynetwork.org**

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Article available online at:

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To cite this article:

Author (A.), «*Ghana's peacekeeping experience: challenges, impacts, and implications for security governance.*», ASSN, October 2026.

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I. GHANA'S STRATEGIC POSTURE AND THE EVOLUTION OF ITS PEACEKEEPING DOCTRINE

This analysis establishes the foundational commitment and strategic rationale underpinning Ghana's role as one of Africa's foremost Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCC) since the early 1960s. The decision to prioritise external security missions has profoundly shaped Ghana's foreign policy and military development for over six decades, positioning peacekeeping as a primary instrument of statecraft.

1.1. Historical Anchors: From ONUC to Top-Tier T/PCC Status (1960–Present)

Ghana's long-standing involvement in multilateral security operations began almost immediately following its independence in 1957. The country first deployed troops in 1960 to the turbulent United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), marking the initiation of a nearly 60-year commitment to peace missions. Since that foundational deployment, over 80,000 Ghanaian military, police and civilian personnel have served across more than 30 UN missions. This sustained commitment has ensured Ghana's place as a consistent top 10 troop contributor globally for more than two decades, demonstrating an unwavering dedication to international peace and security efforts.

Ghanaian forces have served in critical global theatres, including the initial ONUC mission, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Beyond the UN, Ghanaian personnel have been integral to regional and sub-regional efforts under the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including the ECOMOG missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) are widely recognised as one of the most disciplined and respected militaries in West Africa, lauded for their adaptability and proficiency in multinational coordination.

Ghana's contemporary deployments are characterised by specialised, high-value capabilities that enhance mission effectiveness. For instance, in MINUSMA, Ghana contributed the sole African Aviation Unit, which successfully provided fixed-wing tactical air transport, crucial logistics support and essential Medical and Casualty Evacuation (MEDEVAC/CASEVAC) services. Furthermore, Ghana's Engineer Company in MINUSMA was responsible for constructing all prefabricated units within the mission's Super Camp in Timbuktu. These specialised contributions, alongside deployments of Formed Police Units (FPUs), military observers and staff officers, illustrate a sophisticated and specialised approach to peacekeeping.

1.2. Institutional Mandates: Alignment with UN, AU and ECOWAS Frameworks

The enduring commitment to peacekeeping is formalised within Ghana's constitutional and strategic frameworks. Ghana's participation in UN peacekeeping is explicitly supported by Article 40(c) and (d) of the 1992 Constitution, which link external security engagement to broader national interests and diplomatic policy goals.

The GAF's high international reputation and consistent leadership in peacekeeping operations provide the nation with significant strategic compensation. Despite Ghana holding a modest overall conventional Military Power Ranking (125th globally in 2025), its proficiency and specialisation in peacekeeping grant it a level of diplomatic recognition and security agency that far surpasses its conventional military strength. Ghana skilfully leverages this external role, maximising its diplomatic returns and influence within major international forums such as the UN and ECOWAS. This indicates that peacekeeping

deployment functions, not merely as a security task, but also as a calculated foreign policy instrument, a strategy for projecting influence as a non-hegemonic state. The deployment policy, therefore, is structurally supported by a dual-benefit doctrine that aims to fulfil external mandates while simultaneously achieving internal political stability and institutional capacity goals.

II. OPERATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES TO MISSION EFFECTIVENESS

While Ghana's reputation for professionalism remains high, its peacekeeping experience has been characterised by notable operational and logistical vulnerabilities that require ongoing risk mitigation and structural support. A thorough examination of challenges uncovers systemic issues related to personnel security, equipment readiness and logistical independence, underscoring the complex operational environment faced by peacekeepers.

2.1. Threats to Peacekeeper Safety and Security and Operational Discipline

The most acute security risks faced by Ghanaian troops are encapsulated in both historical tragedies and ongoing security lapses. The highest number of personnel, weapons and ammunition lost by Ghanaian troops occurred during the initial ONUC deployment, culminating in the catastrophic Port Franqui incident in April 1961, which resulted in the unfortunate massacre of 43 Ghanaian military personnel and two British officers. This event underscores the extreme dangers associated with complex, ambiguous mandates that often require forces to vacillate between traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement roles without appropriate clarity. Indeed, this underscores the statement attributed to the former U.N. Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, that "Peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers, but only soldiers can do it."

Beyond mass casualties, maintaining strict Weapons and Ammunition Safety (WAMS) protocols remains a critical challenge to prevent weapon loss and diversion in volatile operational areas. Operational security lapses, such as the theft of a machine gun from a Ghanaian position in Lebanon because guards had reportedly fallen asleep, illustrate persistent vulnerabilities in maintaining rigorous discipline. In that specific incident, persistent inquiries led to the discovery of the perpetrators, but the battalion ultimately had to 'buy back' the valuable weapon, highlighting the risk of valuable assets falling into hostile hands and the lengths required to retrieve them. These incidents mandate an ongoing focus on rigorous WAMS procedures and personal security protocols.

2.2. Readiness, Equipment and Interoperability Constraints

A major limiting factor for the effectiveness of African peace support operations is the perennial challenge of logistics and equipment readiness. Logistical issues and equipment failures are consistently cited as glaring obstacles for African peace missions. These limitations are aggravated by disparate training and doctrines among multinational forces, which negatively affect the interoperability necessary for successful multi-dimensional operations. These are amply highlighted by experts commenting on the situation:

From a military standpoint, the ECOMOG operation in Liberia started off inauspiciously, beset by problems with military equipment, logistics, training and interoperability, and aggravated by language differences.[1]

This view is corroborated by no less a person than General Shelpidi, the ECOMOG commander at the time, who identified ***"…'differences in language, training, equipment and orientation' as key issues in***

interoperability within ECOMOG, stressing the need for bilingual language training in the region, as well as joint training and standardisation of equipment."[2]

Standardisation was also a thorny issue and this did not escape the observation of some writers: ***"A final issue was the lack of standardisation,…'vast disparities in the levels of peacekeeping skills of the contingents', differences in logistic capabilities and in language (between Francophone and Anglophone forces), and the absence of common standard operating procedures, made interoperability an elusive goal."***[3]

Ghana, despite its large contributions, often exhibits a logistical sovereignty deficit, relying on external partners for strategic deployments and sustainment. For instance, the deployment of Ghanaian contingents to the UN mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) required US support for airlift and logistics. This dependency on donor support for strategic lift means Ghana's sovereign deployment decisions and the ability of regional bodies like ECOWAS to execute rapid interventions remain constrained by the political will and operational timelines of external partners. Furthermore, domestically, the Ministry of Defence acknowledges facing continuous financial and logistical constraints, which directly impact the procurement of equipment and overall readiness required for sustained external missions.

A successful counter-measure utilised by the GAF is the cultivation of strong civil-military relations, primarily through "Quick Impact Projects" (QIPs). These projects are deployed to bridge immediate post-conflict needs and foster cordial relationships between Ghanaian contingents and local communities. This community engagement is demonstrably a critical success factor, enhancing the safety of Ghanaian peacekeepers and supporting post-conflict development. Furthermore, Ghana systematically integrates deep contextual knowledge—including the background history of conflict, culture, religion and local characteristics—into pre-deployment studies for its contingents.

This focus on contextual intelligence acts as a vital risk mitigation strategy, recognising that local understanding is as crucial as military hardware in ensuring peacekeeper safety and mission acceptability. The author can testify to a situation in the former Yugoslavia where knowledge of cultural norms helped to defuse a rather tense situation. The author was sent to a town in Montenegro called Berane, formerly Ivangrad, as an airfield monitor. He took over from a French Team Leader. The first thing the author observed was graffiti on the walls and windows of the Team Site, close to the airport. Upon further investigation, it was realised that because of the arrogance of the French Team Leader, the people had taken a dislike to the team members such that they would break the windscreen of any UN vehicle parked without an attendant. They would equally scribble some graffiti on the windscreen and the side glasses. As soon as the author took over as Team Leader, he asked his landlady to take him to see the Mayor of the town to officially announce his arrival and mission in the town. Interestingly, after the meeting with the Mayor, all hostilities ceased, and there were no more breaking of windscreens and scribbling of graffiti on the walls and windows of the Team Site. This is something, the author believes, every peacekeeper must know so they can always maintain cordial relations with their host communities.

2.3. Adapting to Complex and Non-Traditional Threats

The scope of peacekeeping now demands engagement with threats that extend beyond conventional military conflict. Peacekeepers increasingly confront complex public health emergencies, such as responding to the continuing increase in Ebola virus disease cases in mission areas like the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Responding to outbreaks in volatile regions like Butembo (North

Kivu) requires specialised medical and public health capacity, underscoring the shift toward multi-dimensional mandates that include humanitarian and health security components.

III. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PEACEKEEPING: FINANCIAL RESILIENCE AND VULNERABILITY

Ghana's prolonged commitment to peacekeeping is fundamentally driven by profound economic and fiscal rationales. Peacekeeping revenue serves as a critical economic engine, institutionalising the policy of mass deployment and creating a powerful feedback loop that connects external missions to internal security sector viability.

3.1. Fiscal Importance: Peacekeeping Revenue as a Critical Supplemental Funding Mechanism

Peacekeeping deployment is crucial to the financial health of the GAF and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The revenue generated through UN reimbursements (primarily for contingent-owned equipment (COE) and troop deployment costs) represents a major, highly valued, extra-budgetary supplement to the national defence budget, particularly when military budgets face contraction.

These financial gains are strategically utilised by the GAF to support institutional modernisation and capability enhancement. The funds have been channelled toward major acquisitions, including the purchase of aircraft and other essential military equipment. Crucially, the revenue also supports direct internal security needs, demonstrating the fungibility of these funds across external and internal security spheres. For example, evidence indicates that peacekeeping revenue has been allocated to the construction of Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) along the western and northern borders, vital structures being built to counter terrorist insurgencies and the spillover of violent extremism from the Sahel.

This profound economic reliance on peacekeeping revenue for institutional modernisation and budget supplementation ensures that the policy of mass deployment is structurally entrenched and highly resilient against strategic reorientation toward solely domestic security concerns. Since the military's internal rewards and promotion systems are often tied to peacekeeping deployment, any potential reduction in external missions would simultaneously threaten institutional finances and individual soldier welfare, guaranteeing the continuity of Ghana's commitment. This situation has become more concerning given the fact that the Trump Administration is pushing for a reduction in peacekeeping operations. This has affected the UN mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is expected to wind up soon, operating until the end of 2026 and an " orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal" over the following year (2027). Other UN missions affected are MONUSCO (DRC), which completed its phased withdrawal at the end of 2024 and. MINUSMA (Mali), which completed drawdown at the end of 2023.

3.2. Economic Impact on Personnel and Maintenance of Morale

At the individual level, the financial rewards are transformative, offering a vital and substantial income supplement that significantly exceeds the local wages of military personnel. For example, troops deployed to UN missions receive approximately $35 USD a day, while police personnel may receive about $150 USD a day. These material benefits empower Ghanaian soldiers, enabling personnel to invest in significant assets such as housing and cars, supporting their families and boosting the local economy through investment in the private sector. Transparency and equity in the disbursement of these peacekeeping benefits are essential for morale, and they are proactively managed, helping to prevent confrontations between soldiers and their command structure, which is vital for maintaining professional commitment.

Table I - Financial Interdependence: Peacekeeping Revenue and GAF Budget

Srl	Financial Stream	Recipient	Typical Value/ Use	Implication for Governance	Vulnerability/Risk
1.	Institutional Reimbursement (COE)	GAF/MOD	Major supplement to national defence budget; purchase of major equipment (aircraft)	Secures institutional legitimacy and military modernisation	High risk from UN arrears, "subject to cash availability"
2.	Individual Stipends (Per Diem)	Personnel (Troops/Police)	$35 - $150 USD/day (significant supplement to local wage)	Key component of internal rewards system; maintains morale and professionalisation	Risk of internal friction if disbursements are delayed or inequitable
3.	Extra-Budgetary Funds	GAF	Used for rapid response/internal security projects (e.g., border FOB construction)	Allows GAF quick response capacity outside parliamentary budgeting	Potential for reduced legislative oversight and transparency

3.3. Structural Risks: Assessment of UN Reimbursement Delays and Financial Burden

The dependence on external funding introduces significant systemic risks arising from the UN's financial structure. The UN frequently faces severe financial crises due to delayed or non-payment of assessed contributions by key Member States, with shortfalls sometimes exceeding $2 billion. Such shortfalls force deep cuts in missions, potentially requiring a 25% reduction in uniformed personnel.

This instability directly translates into large debts owed to TCCs. While civilian staff contracts and procurement are prioritised, reimbursements for uniformed personnel and COE are paid only "subject to availability of cash". This financial structure effectively transfers the financial burden of UN peacekeeping from developed nations, which often default on their assessments, to developing TCCs like Ghana. The uncertainty over reimbursement timing disrupts the GAF's planning cycles, potentially jeopardising readiness and the ability to maintain and replace expensive assets.

3.4. Diplomatic Solutions: Ghana's Leadership in AU / UN Financing Reform

Ghana transformed its experience with financial vulnerability into high-level policy influence by advocating for structural reform in global security financing. Serving as one of the three African Members (A3) on the UN Security Council in 2023, Ghana spearheaded the adoption of Resolution 2719. This crucial resolution establishes a framework for the UN to utilise assessed contributions to fund up to 75% of African Union (AU)-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

This diplomatic achievement demonstrates Ghana's role as a policy broker, successfully advocating for predictable and sustainable financing for African security missions. By championing this resolution, Ghana utilised its TCC status not only for operational deployment but also for architectural reform of global security mechanisms, ensuring long-term fiscal resilience for the entire continent.

3.5 Other Dividends: Enhanced Bilateral and Personal Relations

The positive fallout cannot be measured only in monetary or economic terms; other dividends accrue from peacekeeping. Throughout Ghana's participation in peacekeeping operations across Africa and beyond, certain enduring relationships have been developed, which have involved individuals and, even at the bilateral level, between Ghana and some of the nations in which Ghanaian troops have participated. At the personal levels, marriages and business partnerships have developed between Ghanaians and Liberians, Ivorians and Lebanese. This relationships were raised a lot higher when Rwanda decided to recognise the role played by the Ghanaian contingent under then Brigadier General Anyidoho, the Deputy Force Commander, supported by the Commanding Officer of the Ghanaian battalion, then Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Adinkrah (now Major General, deceased), in saving many lives during the genocide by refusing to leave the mission area despite an order by the UN Security Council to close down the mission, and when even more militarily capable nations like Belgium had left the scene, and Rwandans to their fate. Going beyond the formal recognition with the award of Rwanda's highest national honours to Generals Anyidoho and Adinkrah, on 4th July 2022, Rwanda now wants to build a monument at Burma Camp to serve as a permanent reminder of the "moral courage" of the Ghana Armed Forces, a moment when they chose humanity over diplomatic orders. According to ***modernghana.com***, the monument is "more than a retrospective honour. It is a diplomatic asset and a soft power amplifier."[4]
This, certainly, is a feather in the cap of Ghana's peacekeeping diplomacy.

IV. PEACEKEEPING AS A CATALYST FOR NATIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE REFORM

The influence of Ghana's peacekeeping missions extends deeply into its domestic Security Sector Governance (SSG), operating as a powerful, albeit complex, mechanism for institutional transformation and adherence to international norms. This external commitment has been fundamental to shaping the GAF's institutional practices, norms and political role domestically.

4.1. Depoliticisation and Civilian Oversight

A major strategic outcome of Ghana's consistent peacekeeping policy has been the strengthening of civil-military relations and the successful institutionalisation of firm civilian control over the GAF[5]. Following historical periods of extensive military involvement in politics, peacekeeping deployments provided a crucial strategic outlet. The deployment strategy post-1990s deliberately utilised PKOs and PSOs to keep ambitious troops focused externally, thereby, keeping them "on track" and effectively removed from domestic political tensions and potential mutinies.

This strategy reinforced security sector reforms that began in the 1980s, giving impetus to parliamentary control and civilian oversight, which are enshrined in the 1992 Constitution. Peacekeeping, thus, acted as a functional externalised security sector reform mechanism, shifting the military's strategic focus and ambition overseas and playing a foundational role in Ghana's democratic consolidation.

It should, however, be noted that parliamentary oversight is not as smooth-sailing as one would expect. It is severely hamstrung by partisan considerations[6].

4.2. Institutional Learning: The Transfer of Professionalisation and Capacity-Building – The Positives and the Negatives

Participation in external missions has served as a primary source of professionalisation and capacity development for both the GAF and the Ghana Police Service (GPS). On the positive side, the learning process involves the direct appropriation of international practices such as:

Policing Transformation: The GPS' establishment of the Formed Police Unit (FPU) and the Community Policing Unit in 2011 was directly inspired by the UN's community policing concepts and the in-mission role of FPUs. This professionalisation enhances law enforcement methods and community engagement domestically, improving skills relevant to policing terrorism.

Technological and Procedural Gains: Experiences abroad have also led to the domestic appropriation of operational practices, such as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for tracking during operations.

External Capacity Support: Ghana's peacekeeping capabilities are further reinforced by continuous international partnerships, such as the Africa Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP), which provides specialised training and capacity-building, including critical mass casualty (MASCAL) exercises.

The Professional Dividend and Institutional Learning: Ghana's prolonged engagement in peace operations has yielded significant institutional and professional benefits for the GAF. Continuous deployment, coupled with mission-specific training, has successfully refined the conduct of GAF contingents, leading to a marked improvement in professionalism and discipline that aligns the force with international best practices. The country possesses a robust professional military education infrastructure, exemplified by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC). This specialised regional centre of excellence provides training focused on critical areas such as conflict management, advanced stabilisation and reintegration, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR).

Many Ghanaian officers have used their peacekeeping experience to write books, which have added to the body of knowledge and literature in the peacekeeping domain.[7]

On the negative side, "marked improvement in professionalism and discipline" has not been translated into best practices in anti-corruption and transparency issues. There is a not-too-flattering picture of corruption or veiled corruption through opaque procurement practices that have been flagged by Transparency International's GDI (Government Defence Integrity Index) for 2015 and 2020 In the 2015 report, TI (Transparency International) does not mince words: "***Ghana's overall ranking in Band D places it in the high category for corruption risks in the defence and security sector. Ghana finds itself in the same category as Kenya and South Africa; it performs better than Ethiopia and Nigeria, which are placed in Band E.***"[8] While commending Ghana for performing ***"most strongly in the areas of political and personnel risks",*** it is much surprising that ***"given Ghana's strong record in peacekeeping, its scores are weakest (Band E, indicating very high corruption risks) for operations, finance and procurement***."[9].

The GDI 2020 is not complimentary either. In giving Ghana an overall score of E (Very High Risk), it states: ***"Secrecy and defence exceptionalism remain entrenched, with national security prerogatives used to bypass reporting and oversight procedures. Parliamentary oversight remains weak, despite the relative***

***strength of audit bodies, whilst defence procurement is overwhelmingly restricted, single-sourced and exempted from substantial oversight and controls*"**[10].

The reports are not speculative; they are based on actual procurement breaches within the MoD and the GAF. Though this might certainly not have been captured in the 2015 and 2020 reports, there was a report by the current Minister of Finance, Cassiel Ato Forson, during the delivery of the 2026 Budget Statement in Parliament, on 13th November, 2025, that Ghana paid US$40 million for armoured vehicles that never arrived.[11] There are also bits of information circulating "in the grapevine" that some armoured vehicles purchased from a scrap yard in Azerbaijan were directly shipped to a mission area where they ceased to function. Though this is yet to be verified, they add up to the corruption perception index.

Both reports are, however, hopeful that Ghana has the capacity to improve on its rankings. **"There is existing good practice that Ghana should be able to build on to improve its systems, in some cases without much additional effort.**"[12]

4.3. Institutionalising Gender Parity: The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

Ghana is recognised as a leader in implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (UNSCR 1325), strategically leveraging this commitment to enhance its international standing and operational effectiveness. The GAF has consistently deployed between 13–15% women to UN PKOs globally, positioning Ghana as one of the foremost TCCs in this regard. In missions like UNIFIL, Ghana fields the largest contingent with the highest number of female peacekeepers. The rank structure within the GAF has also made provision for women's advancement to the General rank, which was previously unthinkable. To date, GAF has had two female Major Generals – one deceased and the other still serving. There is a growing number of female One-Star Generals in all the services, thanks to the Elsie Initiative espoused by Canada.

The success in achieving gender parity stems from strong senior leadership commitment and effective human resource strategies. The GAF actively cultivates its female pipeline through regional sensitisation tours aimed at high-school and tertiary students, successfully increasing the female share of recruits from 16% to 26% between 2021 and 2024. These efforts do not only reflect adherence to UN norms but also create visible role models, motivating more women to pursue leadership and non-traditional operational roles.

Table II: Peacekeeping's Transformative Effect on Security Sector Governance (SSG)

Srl	SSG Area	Peacekeeping Norm / Practice Transferred	Domestic Result / Mechanism of Transfer	SSG Implication
1.	Civil-Military Relations	Apolitical Stance[13] / Civilian Control	External deployment as a depoliticising mechanism post-1990s	Strengthened democratic consolidation and parliamentary oversight
2.	Police Doctrine	Community Policing, FPU Concepts	Establishment of Community Policing Unit (2011) and FPUs	Improved law enforcement methods and community engagement
3.	Gender Integration	Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)	13–15% female personnel deployment; targeted recruitment	Sets a high standard for institutional gender parity and reflects UN reform leadership
4.	Counter-Terrorism Readiness	Contextual Knowledge & Engagement Skills	Increased awareness of war prevention; enhanced community interaction for policing	Doctrine divergence challenge remains in execution against complex threats

4.4. The Challenge of Doctrine Divergence: Balancing PKO-Centric Capabilities with Emerging Domestic Security Threats

Despite the undeniable institutional gains, a crucial strategic risk arises from the GAF's intensive focus on PKO capabilities. The GAF possesses a wealth of operational knowledge honed by decades of PKO / PSO experience, recognised globally for professionalism. However, this specialised expertise is not consistently mirrored by a similar capacity or adapted doctrinal framework for tackling Ghana's rapidly emerging internal security threats, such as transnational non-state actors, violent extremism and domestic insurgencies.

The development focus on PKO protocols risks creating a force structurally optimised for external stability operations, potentially leading to a doctrinal mismatch when confronting agile, highly localised counter-terrorism threats at home. This suggests that while institutional learning is robust for governance norms (like WPS and community policing), adaptation of combat doctrine for contemporary asymmetric warfare remains a critical strategic gap that demands a deliberate pivot in training focus.

This doctrinal inflexibility is compounded by ambiguities in Ghana's domestic legal framework regarding military deployment. While Ghana's military doctrine emphasises the rule of law, the Constitution lacks clear legislation defining the conditions for the GAF's withdrawal from protracted police-related duties (PRD). When the military is, consequently, forced into lengthy domestic policing or internal security roles, it naturally defaults to its existing operational training, which is heavily PKO-influenced. This convergence means a PKO-centric force, operating under ambiguous domestic law, is highly susceptible to mission creep and the inappropriate application of robust operational methods in civilian contexts, risking ethical and legal transgressions domestically.

This has often been the case in interactions between the forces operating in an anti-galamsey role. For instance, interactions between the National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat (NAIMOS) and illegal miners in some parts of the country, particularly in the Ashanti and Western regions, have been mixed. In some cases, some success is achieved without resistance from the illegal miners, but in other situations, when communities gang up against the force, a dangerous stalemate is imposed, with the force paralysed into inertia to avoid collateral damage and possible excessive loss of lives.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA

Ghana's influence is instrumental in shaping West African security responses, particularly through its leadership within ECOWAS and its diplomatic efforts to address the existential threats posed by instability in the Sahel.

5.1. Leading ECOWAS Response and ECOMOG Legacy

Ghana played a foundational role in the establishment and execution of ECOWAS's early complex interventions, notably through the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1990s. Ghana has consistently served as a driving force behind key ECOWAS PSOs, demonstrating how a resource-constrained state can project power and operational competence to enhance its influence in regional affairs. The GAF has, thus, become a crucial instrument of Ghana's foreign policy, bolstering its agency in the international system.

5.2. Countering the Sahel Spillover: The Accra Initiative

The rapid spread and intensity of terrorist attacks in the West African sub-region, with a reported 400% rise in attacks and thousands of deaths annually, pose an existential threat to coastal states, including Ghana. In response to this imminent danger, Ghana co-founded the Accra Initiative in 2017. This mechanism is designed for crucial security cooperation among member states to combat terrorism and violent extremism (CT/VE) through enhanced intelligence sharing and coordinated cross-border operations.

5.3. Operationalising the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF)

Ghana is a central proponent of accelerating the operationalisation of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) as a dedicated rapid response mechanism to confront violent extremism.[14] ECOWAS plans the initial deployment of 1,650 personnel, with a strategy to scale up to 5,000 troops through contributions from member states and international partners.

The effectiveness of this force, however, faces severe governance and logistical challenges. Regional counter-terrorism efforts are continually hampered by fragmented national responses, systemic funding shortfalls (despite the UNSC 2719 framework), weak intelligence-sharing frameworks and limited operational coordination and trust among neighbouring states. The imperative to operationalise the ESF creates a direct strategic tension, as it competes for high-readiness human and material resources against Ghana's established, revenue-generating UN mission commitments (e.g., UNIFIL, UNMISS). Since GAF assets are finite, the decision to prioritise regional stability via the ESF must be strategically balanced against the economic and reputational costs associated with reducing personnel contributions to profitable UN missions. This complex resource allocation decision represents Ghana's most significant contemporary strategic dilemma.

5.4. Diplomatic Leverage: Hosting the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial

Ghana's diplomatic standing as a TCC leader culminated in its hosting of the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Accra — the first such ministerial held in Africa. This event solidified Ghana's role as a global thought leader, directing the international community's focus on critical reforms under the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) agenda.

By hosting the meeting, Ghana transformed its position from a consumer of UN mandates to an active champion and producer of specific global peacekeeping norms, securing high-level political commitments and pledges from 57 Member States. The outcomes of the Ministerial emphasised commitments in areas where Ghana demonstrates leadership, including operationalising the full participation of women in peace operations (WPS), enhancing peacekeeper safety and transitioning to "Cleaner and Greener UN Peacekeeping" through renewable energy solutions. This diplomatic strategy sustains Ghana's international relevance and attracts specialised capacity-building resources (e.g., for environmental management and WPS implementation).

5.5. The New South-South Humanitarian Initiative – Mission to Jamaica

Ghana broke new ground beyond sending troops on peacekeeping operations. On **Wednesday, December 17, 2025**, Ghana officially dispatched a specialised contingent of the **48 Engineer Regiment** (and elements of the 14 Engineer Brigade) of the GAF to Jamaica.

The deployment is a humanitarian mission intended to assist with reconstruction following the catastrophic impact of **Hurricane Melissa**, a Category 5 storm that struck the Caribbean in late October 2025. The mission is being framed as a historic act of **Pan-African solidarity**, specifically aimed at strengthening ties between the "African family" and the Caribbean diaspora.
Amidst the joy, euphoria and back-patting, three issues come to mind:

5.5.1. Dependence on External Sources for Strategic Airlift: This issue of ***"logistical sovereignty deficit"*** has been discussed earlier in this paper (2.2). The fact that Ghanaian troops and over 65,000 pounds (lbs) of equipment were airlifted from Accra to Kingston via a **United States Air Force C-17 aircraft** is of great concern. The question that comes to mind in dealing with a transactional personality like President Donald Trump is: what was the ***quid pro quo***? Did it have to do with concessions granted by Ghana for the use of its facilities and U.S. presence on Ghanaian territory (base or no base) to carry out surveillance flights and subsequent bombing of targets in Nigeria?

5.5.2. Parliamentary Oversight or the Lack of it: While the mission has been praised as a landmark in South-South cooperation, it has also sparked some domestic debate in Ghana. The Minority in Parliament recently raised concerns regarding the lack of prior parliamentary approval for the deployment, though they noted they do not oppose the principle of assisting Jamaica. This raises the vexed question of parliamentary oversight.

5.5.3. What could be the Positive Fallout from this: Charity, the sages say, begins at home. How can the government and GAF capitalise on this Jamaican Humanitarian Expedition to support nation-building at home? This question is not too far-fetched. The military has been used positively in nation-building in many countries, Brazil, South Korea, the U.S.A., Egypt, Turkey and Israel come to mind. In Ghana, the use of the military to open up the Afram Plains is not lost on anybody. While this is laudable, some might see it as a double-edged sword, as it could stifle civilian participation (on the profit or capitalist side).

Table III: Ghana's Strategic Footprint in Multilateral Peace Operations

Srl	Mission/ Mechanism	Duration	Organisation	Key Contribution / Specialisation	Strategic Significance
1.	ONUC	1960–1964	UN	Initial deployment, significant casualties (Port Franqui)	Established foundation of TCC role; demonstrated high-risk commitment
2.	UNIFIL	Since 1978	UN	Major TCC, highest female deployment for a single contingent	Exemplifies sustained commitment and leadership in WPS agenda
3.	MINUSMA	2013 - 2023	UN	Only African Aviation Unit; Engineer Company	Demonstrates niche, high-value, specialised capacity
4.	ECOMOG/ECOWAS PSOs	1990s–Present	ECOWAS	Driving force in Liberia/Sierra Leone; subsequent missions	Established regional security agency despite resource constraints
5.	Accra Initiative	Since 2017	Regional	Security cooperation mechanism for CT/VE	Direct policy response to immediate domestic/regional terror spillover

VI. CONCLUSION AND FORWARD-LOOKING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Synthesis of Strategic Gains and Persistent Vulnerabilities

Ghana's six-decade peacekeeping experience is defined by a successful Strategic Duality: utilising external security roles to underwrite internal political stability, achieve GAF depoliticisation, professionalise its forces and secure vital supplemental funding. Ghana has leveraged this position to become a diplomatic architect for African security mechanisms, notably, through the successful advocacy for UNSC Resolution 2719.

However, the architecture supporting this policy is challenged by a Capability Paradox: a sophisticated PKO-trained force struggling to adapt its doctrine to existential domestic counter-terrorism threats. This is aggravated by persistent financial vulnerability due to reliance on external, often delayed, UN reimbursements, which can compromise operational readiness. Furthermore, the dual mandate requires balancing the economically profitable UN missions with the urgently needed, yet, underfunded regional counter-terrorism efforts (ESF / Accra Initiative), which poses a critical strategic dilemma.

6.2. Recommendations for Institutionalising Lessons Learned

***Refine National Security Doctrine for Asymmetric Threats**: Rather than setting up another commission to conduct a comprehensive assessment to explicitly address the doctrine divergence, focusing on integrating PKO-derived professionalism with specialised counter-terrorism training and equipment relevant for confronting transnational non-state actors, (as suggested by DIIS), the government must trace

the whereabouts of the 2015 report presented by the Brigadier General Oppong-Otchere Committee and implement it.

***Establish a Fiscal Buffer for Peacekeeping Revenue:** To mitigate the systemic risk posed by UN reimbursement delays, a national contingency fund should be established. This fund, secured with transparent parliamentary oversight, must be ring-fenced specifically to bridge financial gaps during periods of UN arrears, thereby, protecting GAF readiness and guaranteeing uninterrupted peacekeeper welfare payments.

***Sustain and Deepen SSG Gains:** Institutional focus must remain on consolidating the democratic and accountable foundations of the security sector. This includes institutionalising the effective civilian oversight established post-1992 and embedding PKO-derived professional practices (such as community policing and digital operations management) into permanent domestic doctrine.

6.3. Ensuring Sustainability and Relevance in the Next Decade of Peace Operations

Ghana's strategic relevance hinges on its ability to balance global commitments with urgent regional needs:

***Prioritise and Resource Regional Readiness:** The GAF should dedicate and fully resource specific, high-readiness deployment capabilities that are non-UN-earmarked for immediate operationalisation of the ECOWAS Standby Force and the Accra Initiative. This requires sustained national funding for these specialised counter-terrorism assets, ensuring rapid and effective intervention against transnational non-state actors operating near Ghanaian borders.

***Maintain Leadership in Norm-Setting:** Ghana should continue to institutionalise its high standards for gender parity (WPS) and environmental management (Green Peacekeeping) into national military doctrine. These commitments are strategic assets, positioning Ghana as a leader in international security reform and enabling the continued attraction of high-value, specialised donor partnerships and capacity-building support.

***Using the Wet Lease Reimbursement System:** Ghana could benefit immensely from equipment and logistics deficiencies with a little bit of strategic thinking.

a. Transport Aircraft: The GAF could contract commercial loans to purchase 2-3 heavy lift transport aircraft like the C-130 to lift troops into and out of UN mission areas. This will ease movement and control, and the same aircraft could be contracted to lift other contingents to UN mission theatres by direct UN contracts to facilitate quick liquidation of the commercial loans and make a profit at the same time.

b. Engineer Equipment: In the same way, GAF could procure engineering equipment like bulldozers, excavators, loaders and tippers to form the core of 2-3 Engineer companies or detachments for deployment into UN missions to benefit from the COE reimbursement system. These same equipment could be used back home on road construction projects, as was done in the opening up of the Afram Plains under the Rawlings PNDC regime.

***Using the "Can Do" Attitude and Improvisation to Manufacture own Equipment:** As recounted in Eboe Hutchful's article *Peacekeeping Under Conditions of Resource Stringency: Ghana's Army in Liberia,*[15] GAF Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EME)could improvise to manufacture their own equipment using appropriate technology and innovation as some of them had done in manufacturing portable foldable

beds for use in the field during operations. There is also the case of ECOMOG Ghanbatt 8 (nucleus from the First Battalion of Infantry based at Michel Camp, Tema). All previous seven Ghanbatts lifted by merchant ships had used firewood for cooking during the trips in and out of Liberia. The battalion decided to improvise by manufacturing gas cooking stoves out of tyre rims to ensure safe and efficient cooking on board. This is an innovation that subsequent Ghanbatts copied and implemented for the duration of Ghanbatt operations in Liberia.

This could be done, in collaboration with local manufacturers like KANTANKA, who have experimented with armoured cars and other equipment. After all, the big arms manufacturers of today were modest novices in years gone by. It is only through governmental tutelage and support that these companies (Lockheed Martin and others) have become what they are now. There is also the possibility of teaming up with other countries like Nigeria, which has a growing local manufacturing industry. Of course, this cannot go without governmental support.

By consolidating its SSG gains while strategically resolving the capability mismatch against asymmetric threats and mitigating financial dependencies and equipment deficiencies, Ghana can ensure its continued relevance as a crucial pillar of global and regional security governance

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End Notes

[1] Hutchful, Eboe. *The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in West Africa"*, in Mark Malan (ed), *Whither Peacekeeping in Africa*? Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1999
[2] Ibid
[3] Hutchful, Eboe. *"Peacekeeping Under Conditions of Resource-Stringency: the Ghana Army in Liberia*", in Greg Mills and Jakkie Cilliers (eds), From Peacekeeping to Complex Emergencies: Peace Support Missions in Africa, South African Institute for International Affairs and Institute for Security Studies, 1999:
[4] www.modernghana.com/news/1458545/a-monument-of-memory-and -moral-courage-rwandas.html
[5] Agyekum, H. A. "Peacekeeping Experiences as Triggers of Introspection in the Ghanaian Military Barracks, Africa Spectrum 55(I), 2020
[6] Transparency International Defence & Security, 'Country Overview: Ghana', 2020
[7] This long list includes Lt Gen E.A. Erskine former Commander of UNTSO and UNIFIL (2 books, *Mission with UNIFIL: An African Soldier's Reflections* and *Peacekeeping Techniques for Africa's Conflict Management*); Maj Gen H. K. Anyidoho, former Deputy Force Commander of UNAMIR, *Guns Over Kigali*; Maj Gen Emmanuel Wekem Kotia, *Ghana Armed Forces in Lebanon and Liberia Peace Operations*; Col Festus B. Aboagye, *ECOMOG: A Sub-Regional Experience in Conflict Resolution, Management and Peacekeeping in Liberia*,
[8] Transparency International Defence & Security, 'Country Overview: Ghana', 2015
[9] Ibid.
[10] Transparency International Defence & Security, 'Country Overview: Ghana', 2020, op cit
[11] Ghanaweb, 13 November 2025
[12] Transparency International Defence & Security, 'Country Overview: Ghana', 2015, op cit.
[13] Agyekum, op cit p56
[14] The recent reported deployment of Ghanaian troops in Benin to support the government in dealing with an attempted coup together with troops from Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire raises many issues. Is it part of the effort to operationalise the ESF or just an attempt (at the Club level) to prop up a colleague who has fallen out of favour? In other words, is it in defence of national security or regime security?
[15] Hutchful. *"Peacekeeping Under Conditions of Resource-Stringency: the Ghana Army in Liberia*", Op cit: p. 111.