

CALL FOR CHAPTERS

Freedom Fighters, Warlords and Jihadists Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Armed Rebellion in Africa

EDITORS*:

1. *Dr Muhammad Dan Suleiman* (Centre for Alternative Politics & Security, Ghana, Curtin University, Australia; KFUPM, Saudi Arabia),
2. *Dr Charles Nyuykonge* (Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, South Africa),
3. *Dr Shirley Gabriella Achieng'* (United States International University – Africa; Africa Network of Critical Security Scholars, Ghana and Kenya; and Decolonial Terrorism Studies Network).

FOREWORD BY: Prof Siphamandla Zondi, Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about Islamist armed groups (IAGs), and it may be argued that research that criticises how IAGs are represented has reached a point of saturation. However, the subject still suffers from empirical, analytical, and ideological confusion and biases, especially around their motives, ideologies, networks and the use of terrorism. Claims that IAGs are “new” and “driven by irrational forces” continue to hold sway in academic and policy discourses (Duyvesteyn, 2018; Jackson, 2015; Celso, 2014). In Africa, whereas much work has been done on IAGs (Hansen 2019, 2013; Thurston 2020, 2018; Solomon, 2015; Mustapha, 2014), these works have not been free of Western systems of preferences in (re)naming and (re)presenting IAGs. With a few exceptions, much of this research “has focused on the same conversations for years” (Ujoku, 2021), influenced mainly by the ontological controversies and epistemological crises surrounding the ‘global war on terror’ (Jackson, 2015; Suleiman, 2017; 2020).

IAGs in Africa, thus, continue to be explained as fundamentally “Islamic in motive”, “Middle Eastern in origin”, and “anti-West in target” (Dan Suleiman, 2017; 2020). While these ascriptions are not entirely misplaced and may indeed be validated by the rhetoric of IAGs, they place the local dimensions of these groups in the blind spot and outsource their agency. In the process, they bring African actors, places and spaces down to passivity and “denied cognitive autonomy or the ability to act independently” (Sulemana & Azeez, 2015, p. 54).

One implication is that knowledge accumulated from decades of conflict analysis and peace research regarding the causes and resolution of violent political conflict in Africa before the proliferation of IAGs is forgotten and rendered unknown (Jackson, 2012). The continent, for instance, is home to a plethora of ethnocentric armed rebel groups (ARGs) that sought freedom from the colonial state, fought against Africa’s new post-colonial states or fought to capture the state. Examples of these groups include the Biafra Secessionist Movement, National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone (in West Africa); The Lord’s Resistance Army and National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) (in Central Africa); and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in East Africa. Many of these armed groups have survived the test of time and still exist today.

Before the jihadists ‘arrived’ (Dan Suleiman, 2023), therefore, the continent had a long history of freedom fighters and warlords challenging the post-colonial state with forces of both arms and words. However, the dominant knowledge about the motives, ideologies, networks and violence of IAGs banishes this history of armed rebellion, undermining the sustainable resolution of armed conflicts in Africa.

THE VOLUME

At a time when Africa has been described as home to the most lethal and fastest-growing IAGs (Global Terrorism Index 2023; 2024), this proposed volume seeks to critically challenge the dominant knowledge about IAGs in the continent by studying and comparing the **motives, ideologies, networks, and terrorism** (MINT) of armed rebel groups in Africa across the Cold

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War, the post-Cold War, and the post-9/11 periods. It intends to question whether the MINT of post-9/11 IAGs differ from their pre-9/11 counterparts. It will also interrogate the role of international events, prevailing hegemonic narratives, and ‘world orders’ in explaining and understanding African armed groups. For instance, could IAGs have been called something else if they had occurred during the Cold War era? Would freedom fighters and warlords have been given different names and tags had they manifested in the 21st century? In other words, is there an alternative and more comprehensive framework for explaining and (re)naming armed rebel movements in post-colonial Africa?

AIMS OF THE VOLUME

This volume seeks to advance critical, comparative, and decolonial scholarship on African armed rebellions across historical periods. Specifically, it aims to:

- 1. Critically challenge dominant narratives on Islamist Armed Groups (IAGs):**
By interrogating Western-centric representations that portray IAGs as irrational, externally driven, and inherently anti-Western, the volume restores attention to local agency and context in African insurgencies.
- 2. Restore historical continuity in the study of armed rebellion:**
The volume re-establishes connections between contemporary jihadist movements and earlier forms of armed rebellion in Africa, revealing patterns of continuity, transformation, and rupture in their motives, ideologies, networks, and violence.
- 3. Develop a comparative framework for analysing armed groups:**
The volume uses the MINT framework (Motives, Ideologies, Networks, Terrorism) to enable robust comparisons between jihadist and non-jihadist groups across the Cold War, post-Cold War, and post-9/11 eras.
- 4. Expose epistemological and ontological biases in terrorism studies:**
The volume critiques how global counterterrorism discourses marginalize African voices and suppress alternative epistemologies, advocating for more reflexive and emancipatory approaches in understanding political violence.
- 5. Advance Africa-based and Africa-led scholarship:**
By prioritising contributions from scholars based on the continent, the volume aims to re-centre Africa as a site of knowledge production and scholarly authority in global debates on conflict and insurgency.
- 6. Promote reflexive and interdisciplinary methodologies:**
The volume encourages contributors to adopt critical, interdisciplinary, and context-sensitive approaches that allow for conceptual innovation and methodological diversity.

THEMATIC AREAS

This volume invites contributions across ten thematic areas framed around the four core components of the MINT framework:

- Historical Context and Evolution of Armed Groups
- Motivations Behind Armed Rebellion
- Ideological Constructs and Narratives
- Networks and Alliances
- Use of Terrorism and Violent Tactics
- Impact of International Narratives and Global Orders
- Gender, Youth, and Identity Politics
- Local Agency and Identity
- Counterinsurgency Strategies, Successes and Failures
- Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding
- Post-Conflict Transitions and Legacies

STRUCTURE

Many armed groups have dotted Africa's post-colonial history. The table below lists the armed groups in Africa since the 1960s. Each chapter will compare at least two armed groups, one of which must be an IAG (from Category A) of the table below. Category A armed groups primarily operate in the post-9/11 context, while Category B consists of those in the previous Cold War and post-Cold War eras.

While comparative chapters are required, authors may propose alternative formats where thematic depth, regional complexity, or methodological innovation justify a single case focus. Exceptions will be considered on merit.

CATEGORY A

Post-9/11 Jihadist Armed Groups	Primary Country/Region	Active Years
Boko Haram	Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon	2009–Present
Ansaru (Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa)	Nigeria	2012–Present
Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO)	Mali	2011–2013
Ansar Dine	Mali	2011–2017
Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	North & West Africa	Active Since 2007
Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)	Nigeria, Niger, Chad	2015–Present
Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM)	Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger	2017–Present
Al-Shabaab	Somalia, Kenya	2006–Present
Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)	Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso	2015–Present
Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP)	Mozambique, DRC	2018–Present
Tuareg Rebellion (MNLA, MPA, FPLA, FARS)	Mali, Niger	Active Since 1990s
Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia)	Tunisia	2011–2016
Ansar al-Sharia (Libya)	Libya	2012–2017
Al-Mourabitoun	Mali, Algeria, Libya	2013–2017 (Merged with JNIM)
Islamic State in Libya	Libya	2014–Present (Weakened)
Islamic State Sinai Province (ISSP)	Egypt (Sinai)	2014–Present
Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP – African branch)	Somalia/Yemen	2009–Present
Allied Democratic Forces (ADF - IS Central Africa Province)	DRC, Uganda	1995–Present (Rebranded as ISCAP in 2018)
Islamic State Mozambique (Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama)	Mozambique	2017–Present

CATEGORY B

Pre-9/11 Armed Rebel Groups	Primary Country/Region	Active Years
Biafra Secessionist Movement	Nigeria	1967–1970
Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)	Senegal	Continued Activity
National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)	Liberia	1989–1997
Revolutionary United Front (RUF)	Sierra Leone	1991–2002
United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO)	Liberia	1991–1997
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	Sierra Leone	1997–1998
Civil Defense Forces (Kamajors)	Sierra Leone	1997–2002
Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)	Liberia	1999–2003
Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)	Liberia	2003
Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)	Nigeria	2004–2013
Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)	Sudan/South Sudan	1983–2011
Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)	Uganda, CAR, DRC, South Sudan	1987–Present
Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	Ethiopia	1989–2019
Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)	Ethiopia	1973–Present
Polisario Front	Western Sahara	1973–Present
Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)	Eritrea	1970–1991
National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)	Angola	1966–2002
Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)	Mozambique	1962–1975
Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO)	Mozambique	1975–1992 (Still Active in Reduced Capacity)
Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)	Zimbabwe	1963–1980
Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU)	Zimbabwe	1961–1987

PROPOSED SECTIONS

The volume will be divided into five parts. Part I will compare the motives and origins of armed groups, while Part II investigates their ideologies and rhetoric. Part III will focus on networks and alliances, with Part IV delving into the use of violence and terrorism. Part V will draw coherent arguments regarding the MINT of armed groups across the three historical periods, highlighting the politics of hegemony and misrepresentation toward suggesting an alternative framework.

PART I: Motives and Origins of Armed Rebellion

This book section will comprise chapters examining the underlying causes and political, social, and economic conditions that drive armed groups to rebellion. These chapters will explore a range of motivations such as marginalisation, state repression, resource control and identity-based grievances. Authors will interrogate whether jihadist motives in the post-9/11 era represent a rupture from or a continuation of earlier rebel movements. Each chapter in this section must compare at least two armed groups—at least one from Category A (post-9/11 IAGs) and at least one from Category B (pre-9/11 rebel groups).

PART II: Ideological Constructs and Narrative Frameworks

This section will feature chapters that analyse the ideological foundations and discursive strategies employed by armed groups. Contributors will explore how these groups frame their legitimacy, construct identity, and appeal to supporters through religious, nationalist, pan-African, or ethnocentric narratives. Attention will also be given to the performative and symbolic dimensions of ideology across historical periods. Each chapter in this section must also compare at least two armed groups, at least one from each category.

PART III: Networks, Alliances, and Transnational Linkages

This section will feature chapters investigating the organisational structures and transnational dimensions of armed groups. Contributions will examine how groups build and maintain networks, whether for funding, training, logistics, recruitment, or propaganda. The chapters will also explore the role of diaspora communities, international backers, and regional alliances in sustaining rebellion. Each chapter in this section must also compare at least two armed groups from different categories.

PART IV: Terrorism, Tactics, and Representations of Violence

This section of the book will host chapters that interrogate the use of violence by armed groups and how such violence is labelled, legitimised, or condemned by states, media, and global institutions. Chapters will explore strategic and symbolic uses of terrorism, civilian targeting, and how state and international actors apply the term “terrorism” differently to similar behaviours. Each chapter in this section must compare at least two armed groups—one from Category A and one from Category B.

PART V: Epistemes of Armed Rebellion

This section examines how global academic and policy discourses have constructed knowledge around rebellion, especially Islamist militancy. It interrogates naming practices, epistemological biases, and the marginalisation of African agency in understanding armed conflict.

METHODOLOGY

The book is a decolonial critique of how IAGs have been dominantly constructed in the security literature and practice through a critical security/terrorism studies approach. Each comparative chapter, therefore, is guided by “a set of core epistemological, ontological and ethical commitments” (Jackson, 2007). Authors are not obliged to follow a particular theory, though they may choose to. This preference for epistemic freedom allows novel arguments and fresh perspectives. Chapters must, however, have an “appreciation of the politically constructed nature of terrorism knowledge; an awareness of the inherent ontological instability of the ‘terrorism’ category; a commitment to critical reflexivity regarding the uses to which research findings are put; a set of well-defined research ethics and a normative commitment to an emancipatory political praxis” (Jackson, 2007). The book uses a comparative case study design to show how contemporary armed rebel groups across different historical eras have deployed MINT. We encourage critical, reflexive, and accessible writing that balances academic rigour with conceptual clarity. Submissions should aim to engage an interdisciplinary audience.

AUTHORSHIP AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

ANeCS is committed to advancing Africa-led scholarship that presents the continent as a site of knowledge production, not only knowledge consumption. Accordingly, all contributions must be authored or co-authored by an Africa-based scholar, researcher, or student. African scholars, researchers, and students temporarily researching or studying outside the continent are considered based in Africa and can contribute.

Abstracts and chapters should be no more than 300 words and between 6,000 and 9,000 words, respectively, and must adhere to the following timeline. Co-authored chapters and chapters by/with female or early career scholars are highly encouraged.

Timelines:

- Deadline for sending abstracts: **June 15, 2025**
- Notification of decision on submitted abstracts: **July 15, 2025**
- First draft of contribution due: **October 15, 2025**
- Editors’ feedback on first drafts: **December 15, 2025**
- Second draft of chapters due: **January 31, 2026**
- Submission to Publisher: **March 2026**

Send abstracts and contributions to info@anecs.net (with the subject line “ANeCS Book Project”)

*NOTE ON EDITORS

Dr Muhammad Dan Suleiman is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at King Fahd University in Saudi Arabia after previously working at Curtin University, Australia (2022-2024) as a lecturer and research associate and the University of Western Australia (2017-2021) as a research officer and as a lecturer. He is an adjunct fellow of the Curtin Centre for Australia-Africa Relations. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Western Australia, a Master's in International Law from the University of Sydney (Australia), and a Bachelor's in Political Science from the University of Ghana.

Muhammad's research interests are the international politics of Africa, as well as peace and security in West Africa. He is particularly interested in how hegemonic interpretations of security issues and politics detract from human and state security in African countries. His work has been published in leading journals such as *International Studies Quarterly*, *African Security*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, *Australian Journal of Political Science and History*, *African Security Review*, *African Identities*, and *Peace Review*, among many others. Some of his recent publications include "Journeying to Jihadiphate: A Vehicle Framework of Jihadist Conflicts in West Africa" (2024), "Abstract Spaces for Intervention in Libya and Nigeria" (2024), "The Jihadists Are Coming! Abyssal Thinking and Spatial Politics of Un/knowing in Ghana's Terrorism Discourse" (2023), and "What Makes Islamist Movements Different?" (2020).

Muhammad is a 2020 fellow of the United Nations Fellowship Programme for People of African Descent (Geneva) and an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (United Kingdom). He is the recipient of the Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Library Summer Scholarship (2016), the Khalifa Al Falasi Prize in Muslim Studies (2018), and the UWA Guild Students' Choice Award (2020) for excellence in teaching. He is an expert on Sahel security and has provided expert analyses for over a dozen policy, research and media organisations worldwide. In 2024, Muhammad led the founding of the Centre for Alternative Politics & Security West Africa (CAPS-WA) and the African Network of Critical Security Scholars (ANeCS).

Dr Charles Nyuykonge founded Peacebuilders Without Borders and is a Peace and Research Fellow at the Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He is a researcher, peace and conflict consultant, and conflict and development practitioner working with the African Development Bank since January 2022. His over 15 years of professional experience have been conducting research, managing teams, programs and multi-institutional collaborations on peace and security studies, human rights and election observation missions with international organisations and research institutions in Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Before embarking on full-time consultancy and supporting multilateral organisations, development partners and international financial institutions (IFIs), Charles has garnered immense experience in leading and conducting conflict assessments, conflict and peace research, conflict analysis and providing strategic policy direction for conflict, mediation, peacebuilding and peacekeeping first as a Senior Research Fellow with the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) in Pretoria, as Senior Researcher with African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and as a Civilian Human Rights Observer with the African Union Mission in Mali and the Sahel. Prior to these, Charles was a lecturer at the universities of the Witwatersrand, where he also served as a tutorial and doctoral fellow, and at the University of Zululand in South Africa.

Charles's combination of academic and practical knowledge gives him a rare ability to blend theory and practical knowledge in conflict and peacebuilding research and analysis. He focuses on fragile situations, complex emergencies, crisis policy design, strategy development, and institutional transformation. Charles has undertaken and led major consultancies with critical

outputs for states such as Somalia, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and international organisations such as the African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), The Institute of Security Studies (ISS Africa), Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and more recently, The Pacific Community (SPC), the World Bank, and the UNDP Regional Service Center for Africa for whom he has conducted a vast array of research initiatives, designed training materials, facilitated workshops, coordinated multi-country projects and interviewed governments while offering practical solutions to critical challenges bedevilling their countries.

Charles is well-published in the conflict, peace and security in Africa, with more than 20 publications in accredited and peer-reviewed journals.

Dr Shirley Gabriella Achieng' is an Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Criminal Justice at the United States International University – Africa. She is the Executive Director and inaugural co-convenor of the Africa Network of Critical Security Scholars (ANeCS). She is also a co-founder of the Decolonial Terrorism Studies Network. She is currently working with other scholars and stakeholders in the Global South to advocate for local solutions to the terrorism problem. She holds a Ph.D. in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Otago, New Zealand, which was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand. Her doctoral thesis, *Towards an Indigenous African Approach to Counterterrorism in Kenya*, was awarded the 2024 Exceptional Doctoral Thesis Award by the University of Otago for its outstanding contribution to counterterrorism. This award recognises doctoral theses of exceptional quality and standard in every respect – research content, originality, quality of expression and accuracy of presentation – and is among the 10% of theses examined.

She also holds a Master's in International Relations from the United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa), and a Bachelor's in Political Science and Public Administration from Maasai Mara University. Shirley has extensive experience in the civil service. She has provided policy and technical advice to the National and County governments on matters of peace and conflict and legislative procedures. Shirley has published several articles and book chapters in various journals, including *The African Review* and *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, and has been invited by various journals as a peer reviewer. Her research interests include terrorism and violent extremism, criminology, decolonial methodologies, restorative justice, peacebuilding and security studies.

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