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To cite this article: Muhammad Dan Suleiman (2023) The jihadists are coming! Abyssal thinking and spatial politics of un/knowning in Ghana's terrorism discourse, Critical Studies on Terrorism, 16:4, 620-647, DOI: [10.1080/17539153.2023.2250142](https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2023.2250142)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2023.2250142>



Published online: 23 Sep 2023.



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The jihadists are coming! Abyssal thinking and spatial politics of un/known in Ghana's terrorism discourse

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ABSTRACT

Coastal West African countries are in a threat anticipatory anxiety mode: over the fear that subaltern violent “jihadist” groups (SVJGs) are breaching their borders and heading south from across the Sahel. In Ghana, this fear has led to a build-up of commentaries, political statements, and counter-extremism/counterterrorism programs. This article interrogates the terrorism discourse in this West African country at the intersection of critical security studies and the politics of space, by applying securitisation theory and critical discourse analysis. In what is the most comprehensive academic review of news articles on the terrorism discourse in Ghana yet, I contend that the discourse evokes what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls ‘abyssal thinking’ and creates cognitive and physical spatial abyssal lines. On the invisible side, insecurity within Ghana gets “normalised” by the discourse. On the visible side, however, SVJGs are securitised as abnormal, foreign, and uniquely threatening. This nature of the discourse effectively places events and conditions in the country that are either terroristic or constitutive of terrorism on the invisible side of Ghana's security priorities. The discourse, therefore, hides much about the reality of insecurity and political violence within the country. These arguments advance the frontiers of security/terrorism knowledge and practice in West Africa by demonstrating the pervasiveness of “global war on terror” systems of representation, two decades after their inception and despite their flaws and adverse implications for human and national security.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 December 2022

Accepted 15 August 2023

KEYWORDS

Ghana; terrorism; abyssal thinking; spatial politics; securitisation theory; Sahel region

Introduction

Conflicts involving subaltern violent “jihadist”¹ groups (SVJGs) are escalating across Sahel countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. As a result, coastal West African states that border these states are in a threat anticipatory anxiety mode about a “coming” threat. In Ghana, a country considered as peaceful in an otherwise conflict-prone region, this anxiety has cascaded into a build-up of commentaries and counter-terrorism policies, frameworks and programs that are meant to maintain this reputation.² This security posturing is not without merit and justification. Indeed, insecurity in Sahel countries is concerning due to the interconnected nature of security

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

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in this region, which manifests as a form of 'regional security complex' (Buzan and Waever 2003). Ghana is surrounded by immediate neighbour countries that have recently either experienced SVJG-related violence (Togo to the East and La Cote D'Ivoire to the West) and are dealing with some SVJGs' territorial presence and control (Burkina Faso to the north). The Gulf of Guinea maritime domain to Ghana's south also grapples with insecurity. Countries like Mali, Niger and Nigeria, where SVJGs are still active, have strong, almost unrestricted, migratory ties with Ghana. The broader West Africa region has experienced close to a dozen successful and attempted coups in the last five years alone, with the most recent in Niger only a few weeks ago.

The human cost of insecurity in the Sahel is equally disturbing. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, who was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), presented statistics about violence in the Sahel to the UN Security Council in January 2020. 'In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, casualties from terrorist attacks have increased fivefold since 2016 with over 4,000 deaths reported in 2019 as compared to an estimated 770 deaths in 2016' (UNOWAS 2020). As a political analyst, broadcaster and avid follower of the terrorism discourse in Ghana, Abdul Karim Ibrahim, profoundly noted (pers. comm., July 20, 2022), if the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, commonly blamed for exporting extremist jihadist ideology, could suffer SVJG attacks, no country would be too distant from these statistics. Indeed, despite a vortex of national, regional and international counterterrorism programs, SVJGs are winning against counterterrorism/counter-insurgency across the Sahel (Dan Suleiman 2022). Against the above background, Ghana's discursive and policy interventions regarding SVJGs are expected.

However, it is also the case that security falls within the realm of the 'essentially contested' (Gallie 1956). Security and security issues such as terrorism do not have single interpretations. Instead, they have divergent meanings depending on who enacts the meaning, the power they wield, and their interests. Accordingly, by adopting one meaning over another, one of two issues of the same adverse magnitude and impact could become a security issue while the other remains something else, and vice versa. The last two decades of terrorism research provide practical lessons on how statements and comments about terrorism are not simply made but result from institutional practices, assumptions, symbolic systems, and rhetorical modes (Jackson 2005, 147). We have also learnt that expertise is 'an intermediary between knowledge and power, science and practice' (Berling and Bueger 2015, 13). The terrorism discourse in Ghana, like anywhere else, is, therefore, 'not neutral reflections of social and political reality; rather, they are partly constitutive of that reality – they have a reality-making effect' (Jackson 2005, 148).

Security threats are therefore, socially constructed in the service of political decisions and actions. How we call and discuss things is "concrete" because naming procures material reality in the practices it invokes (Hardy, Harley, and Phillips 2004, 20). Here, the seemingly genuine attempt to respond to the threat of terrorism in Ghana through discourse and practice is not so innocent. Politicians, analysts, and media actors could sell issues or places as security issues (Freedman 2004), and act to securitise politics to allow extraordinary measures a "legitimate" pass. The political effect of discourse also means that erroneous meaning-making of a security issue can lead to violent and counter-productive prescriptions (Pratt 2015). For instance some of the well-known implications of the post-9/11 reactionary, ahistorical and simplistic discourses around terrorism include

making suspects out of Muslim communities, turning them into ‘surveillance populations’ (Breen-Smyth 2014; Jamil 2017) and fuelling Islamophobia. Thus, what Amos Anyimadu calls, in his Facebook post (<https://www.facebook.com/Africatalks>), security experts’ ‘pompous wizardry and repeated platitudes’ about terrorism in Ghana could themselves threaten security.

Still, interest in “averting” a coming terrorism has led to almost an unprecedented convergence of will among almost every facet of Ghanaian society. The fear of the “terrorist” has united politicians, religious leaders, security analysts, security and intelligence agents, academics and other educators. The contested and political nature of security discourse, however, requires interrogating the concomitant discursive and policy interventions. In this context, this article takes a ‘sceptical attitude’ (Jackson 2007) towards the terrorism knowledge in Ghana produced through expertise. The article raises some questions. If security is contested and political how uncontested and apolitical is the attention and risk/threat level accorded the “coming” SVJGs in Ghana?

I contend that the discursive and political responses to the threat of terrorism are neither apolitical nor uncontested; they evoke what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) calls ‘abyssal thinking’ that creates abyssal lines. On the one hand, the discourse securitises the threat of terrorism (read: SVJG violence) and places it on the visible side of the line hence warranting pre-emptive measures against a particularly deadly and uniquely threatening “Muslim” threat *heading* south from the Sahel into a “peaceful” Ghana. On the other hand, terroristic acts, acts constitutive of terrorism, and non-jihadist cases of political violence within Ghana get excluded, written and spoken away into the invisible side. Accordingly, a visible feature of the discourse is that there are ‘reciprocal inclusions and exclusions’ (Lefebvre 1991, 131) and ‘constant flickering of presence and absence together’ (Eagleton 1983, 128) that isolate the violence associated with SVJGs for elimination by highlighting one meaning above others. By speaking and acting against a virulent “jihadist” heading towards Ghana to attack or recruit, the discourse securitises SVJGs and external security issues above other, more widespread and present manifestations of terrorism and insecurity within Ghana.

There are four related consequences of this character of the discourse. First, the simultaneous acts of erasing reality and redrawing imaginations concretise a simulated “global war on terror” (GWoT) mind image that equates terrorism with SVJG violence. Secondly, the “inside/outside” binary invents a national psychology that thinks of terrorism as foreign, yet, and about to enter Ghana. Thirdly, abyssal thinking legitimises pre-emptive anticipatory risk governance practices despite their potential negative impacts on human security. Worse, the character of the discourse detracts from the Ghanaian state’s original and vicarious responsibilities to take pre-existing insecurity and violent events and conditions seriously.

To make these arguments, the next section outlines this article’s contribution to the literature and debate on (counter)terrorism, specifically in Ghana and Africa. I then expound on securitisation theory and spatial abyssal thinking and why/how these theories offer valuable lenses to understanding the terrorism discourse in Ghana. I then describe the critical discourse analysis (CDA) data gathering and analysis method. Here, I explain the data, the criteria for selecting them, and some challenges of using a CDA method. The fourth section places the state of security in Ghana under the microscope. This section is crucial because it highlights the internal context against which the external

is securitised. The fifth section focuses on the terrorism discourse itself and how the discourse places SVJGs on the visible side. A final substantive section rethinks the inside/outside and the invisible/visible binaries in the discourse to highlight the analytical and political problems associated with abyssal thinking and the securitisation of space. I conclude on that note with some recommendations.

Contribution to CTS knowledge and the terrorism discourse

The above arguments contribute to the terrorism discourse and the critical terrorism studies (CTS) literature in several ways. First, the terrorism debate is largely taken as given and the above question remains largely unanswered; although a corpus of research is building up on the threat of terrorism in Ghana, many of which are postgraduate theses (Bamba 2014; Bongne 2016; Dei-Fitih 2018). Some critical literature does exist on the subject, including Mynster Christensen's (2023) deployment of critical literature and the unique case of Ghana to show how the GWOt worldview still shapes counterterrorism programs and discourse in a country 'characterised by the absence of terrorist attacks on home soil'. Accordingly, Dan Suleiman (2017b) points to the danger of Ghana getting drawn into global politics and how that could hurt nation-building efforts. Others include Adarkwah's (2020) interrogation of whether the many terrorism legislations create 'rule-of-law and other issues of liberty for individuals in Ghana'. Prah and Chanimbe (2021) also provide a textual analysis of Ghana's readiness to combat terrorism. Still, much of the literature tends to be overly descriptive, focusing on topics such as the makeup of Ghana's counterterrorism architecture, the country's readiness to prevent and respond to terrorism, and the impact of Islamist terrorism (Aubyn 2021; Azumah et al. 2020; Prah and Chanimbe 2021). In the end, a common denominator of this literature is the assumption that "jihadist terrorism" is a 'pre-given reality' just out there (Baldaro and Lucia 2022).

Critical literature on terrorism in the broader West African sub-region is much more promising (see Atta 2022; Chukwuma 2022, 2021; Dan Suleiman 2020a; 2017a; 2017b; Njoku 2021). Chukwuma (2021), for instance, contends that the 9/11 terrorist attacks act as reference points in official counterterrorism rhetoric that produces notions about the threat to Nigeria and the country's vulnerability to terrorist groups and justifies specific modes of intervention. One manifestation of this is that Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy produces north-eastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region as "ungoverned" and reincarnates known Euro-centric and state-centric, colonial and imperialistic discourses and practices, and related problems (Chukwuma 2022). Atta (2022) highlights other problems. He argues that the transposition and patronisation of Western-centric post-9/11 global discourse creates a 'kind of uncritical terrorism knowledge to African spaces, effectively contributing to the lack of progress' (Atta 2022, 23). For instance, counterterrorism in Burkina Faso and the broader Sahel region is undermined by a disconnect between "hard" militaristic counterterrorism programs and commitments, and the funding and morale to implement them (Atta 2021). Before this more recent strand of literature, Dan Suleiman (2020a) questioned why the dominant literature and discourse differentiated SVJGs from other groups in West Africa despite being similar in terms of their motives, networks, the use of ideology and terrorism. He used the cases of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (1990–2007) and Boko Haram in Nigeria to challenge this differential treatments of the two cases.

Table 1. Securitising the “coming jihadist” in Ghana’s news articles, 2015–2022.

Title	Actor	Date Published	Web address	Date Accessed
“Government urged to take all precautions to prevent terrorist attacks in Ghana.”	Functional acting	12/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Government-urged-to-take-all-precautions-to-prevent-terrorist-attacks-in-Ghana-1536359 .	21/07/2022
“Terrorism: GCBC, CCG urge churches to set up security committees with experts.”	Functional acting	02/06/2022	https://www.modernghana.com/news/1162118/terrorism-gcbc-ccg-urge-churches-to-set-up-secur.html	17/08/2022
“Immigration boss calls for effective coordination among security agencies.”	Functional acting	24/07/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Immigration-boss-calls-for-effective-coordination-among-security-agencies-1588811	15/09/2022
“Watch out for extremely late congregants – Ushers advised.”	Functional acting	06/07/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Watch-out-for-extremely-late-congregants-Ushers-advised-761059	15/09/2022
“Faith-based organisations are working to avert terrorism – Dr. Vladimir Antwi-Danso.”	Functional acting	16/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Faith-based-organisations-are-working-to-avert-terrorism-Dr-Vladimir-Antwi-Danso-1539305	21/07/2022
“12 ways to detect potential terrorists.”	Functional acting	18/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/12-ways-to-detect-potential-terrorists-Adib-Saani-outlines-1541540	15/09/2022
“Introduce security screening at all malls.”	Functional acting	16/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Introduce-security-screening-at-all-malls-Adib-Saani-reacts-to-threat-of-terrorism-in-Ghana-1539242	17/08/2022
“Citizens cautioned against hosting strangers.”	Securitising acting	24/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Citizens-cautioned-against-hosting-strangers-1545251	17/08/2022
“Ignore reports that Boko Haram has invaded Ghana; we are safe – Interior Minister.”	Securitising acting	16/08/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ignore-reports-that-Boko-Haram-has-invaded-Ghana-we-are-safe-Interior-Minister-1603982	15/09/2022
“‘Footages that extremists have attacked any part of Ghana are false’ - Ambrose Dery-1604324	Securitising acting	17/08/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Footages-that-extremists-have-attacked-any-part-of-Ghana-are-false-Ambrose-Dery-1604324	15/09/2022
“Terrorist threat: Be vigilant; don’t be scared – Christian Council.”	Functional acting	31/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorist-threat-Be-vigilant-don-t-be-scared-Christian-Council-1549604	21/07/2022
“‘Terrorists can wear military uniforms in Ghana, enter a market and kill’”	Functional acting	07/06/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorists-can-wear-military-uniforms-in-Ghana-enter-a-market-and-kill-Dr-Bonaa-1555349	21/07/2022
“Ghana is fast becoming a ‘fertile ground’ for terrorists.”	Functional acting	10/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-is-fast-becoming-a-fertile-ground-for-terrorists-Bombande-1534208	15/09/2022

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Title	Actor	Date Published	Web address	Date Accessed
"Insecurity in Burkina Faso getting closer to Ghana – Security Analyst."	Functional acting	01/02/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Insecurity-in-Burkina-Faso-getting-closer-to-Ghana-Security-Analyst-1458994	
"Ghana warned to be vigilant as 8 soldiers die in terrorist attack in Togo."	Functional acting	15/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-warned-to-be-vigilant-as-8-soldiers-die-in-terrorist-attack-in-Togo-1538624	21/07/2022
"'All is not well' – Deputy defence minister on possible terrorist attacks in Ghana"	Securitising acting	16/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/All-is-not-well-Deputy-defence-minister-on-possible-terrorist-attacks-in-Ghana-1539182	21/07/2022
"National Security Ministry warns of likely terrorist activity in North East, Upper East regions."	Securitising acting	14/06/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/National-Security-Ministry-warns-of-likely-terrorist-activity-in-North-East-Upper-East-regions-1553111?gallery=1	17/08/2022
"Terrorists using Ghana as central warehouse – Security Analyst warns."	Functional acting	31/07/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorists-using-Ghana-as-central-warehouse-Security-Analyst-warns-1593410	15/09/2022
"Between 200 and 300 Ghanaians have been recruited by terrorists – Adib Saani claims."	Functional acting	18/07/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Between-200-and-300-Ghanaians-have-been-recruited-by-terrorists-Adib-Saani-claims-1584659	21/07/2022
"'There are Islamic interpretations that encourage certain extremist tendencies.'" – Chief Imam spokesperson"	Functional acting	24/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/There-are-Islamic-interpretations-that-encourage-certain-extremist-tendencies-Chief-Imam-spokesperson-1545293	17/08/2022
"December Prophecies: What Owusu Bempah said about a possible terrorist attack in Ghana."	Functional acting	23/05/2022	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/December-Prophecies-What-Owusu-Bempah-said-about-a-possible-terrorist-attack-in-Ghana-1544474	21/07/2022
"Report suspicious characters to Police – NPP vice chair urges residents".	Functional acting	17/06/2021	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Report-suspicious-characters-to-Police-NPP-vice-chair-urges-residents-1288954	21/07/2022
"Police on high alert after hint of terrorist attacks in Bolga, Tamale."	Functional acting	15/06/2021	https://3news.com/police-on-high-alert-after-hint-of-terrorist-attacks-in-bolga-tamale/	17/08/2022
"Information Minister warns of terror threats in Ghana."	Functional acting	19/07/2021	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Information-Minister-warns-of-terror-threats-in-Ghana-1312603	15/09/2022
"Terrorists planning to reach Accra, other coastal cities in West Africa – NPC."	Functional acting	11/08/2021	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorists-planning-to-reach-Accra-other-coastal-cities-in-West-Africa-NPC-1330000	17/08/2022

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Title	Actor	Date Published	Web address	Date Accessed
"Border communities urged to increase vigilance to prevent violent extremism."	Functional acting	14/08/2021	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Border-communities-urged-to-increase-vigilance-to-prevent-violent-extremism-1332640	17/08/2022
"IPEG warns of terrorist attacks on Ghana."	Functional acting	15/03/2020	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/IPEG-warns-of-terrorist-attacks-on-Ghana-866533	21/07/2022
"Ghana ready to avert threats of terrorism – Kan-Dapaah."	Securitising acting	05/11/2020	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-ready-to-avert-threats-of-terrorism-Kan-Dapaah-1101667?gallery=1	15/09/2022
"Terrorist threat: No worries; security agencies wide awake – Deputy Defense Minister."	Securitizing acting	19/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorist-threat-No-worries-security-agencies-wide-awake-Deputy-Defense-Minister-747334	21/07/2022
"Bryan Acheampong 'bringing' terrorists to Ghana – Asiedu Nketia."	Functional acting	15/06/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Bryan-Acheampong-bringing-terrorists-to-Ghana-Asiedu-Nketia-755229	21/07/2022
"ISIS could take advantage of Ghana's lax security consciousness"	Functional acting	30/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/ISIS-could-take-advantage-of-Ghana-s-lax-security-consciousness-to-set-up-in-the-country-Security-Analyst-750,783	15/09/2022
"Armies alone can't fight terrorism – Akufo-Addo."	Securitizing acting	04/09/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Armies-alone-can-t-fight-terrorism-Akufo-Addo-778,388	15/09/2022
"Burkina Faso attacks: Beef up security – Ghanaian churches told."	Functional acting	17/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Burkina-Faso-attacks-Beef-up-security-Ghanaian-churches-told-747,209	17/08/2022
"Terrorism: Security chiefs meet churches." reach Accra	Securitizing acting	17/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorism-Security-chiefs-meet-churches-747,202	
"Accra safe but Ghana not out of the woods – ACP Eklū."	Securitizing acting	10/06/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Accra-safe-but-Ghana-not-out-of-the-woods-ACP-Eklū-753,641	15/09/2022
"Terrorism: Agyinasare intercedes for Ghana."	Functional acting	10/06/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terrorism-Agyinasare-intercedes-for-Ghana-753,595	
"Terror attacks: Adam Bonah advocates for regulation of religious facilities by government."	Functional acting	18/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terror-attacks-Adam-Bonah-advocates-for-regulation-of-religious-facilities-by-government-747,392	17/08/2022
"Church leaders must deploy scanners for security of members – Rev. Appiagyeyi."	Functional acting	27/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Church-leaders-must-deploy-scanners-for-security-of-members-Rev-Appiagyeyi-749,785	15/09/2022

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Title	Actor	Date Published	Web address	Date Accessed
"ISIS could take advantage of Ghana's lax security consciousness	Functional acting	30/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/ISIS-could-take-advantage-of-Ghana-s-lax-security-consciousness-to-set-up-in-the-country-Security-Analyst-750,783 .	21/07/2022
"Everybody needs to be involved in the fight against terrorism – Security analyst."	Functional acting	01/06/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Everybody-needs-to-be-involved-in-the-fight-against-terrorism-Security-analyst-751,355 .	17/08/2022
"Combating terrorism: Border communities call for intensified education."	Functional acting	19/07/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Combating-terrorism-Border-communities-call-for-intensified-education-1,585,178 .	21/07/2022
"Ghana risks terrorist attack – Experts caution."	Functional acting	06/07/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-risks-terrorist-attack-Experts-caution-761137	15/09/2022
"Government ready for terrorist attack' – National Security ministry."	Securitizing acting	19/06/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Government-ready-for-terrorist-attack-National-Security-ministry-661,540 .	21/07/2022
"Terror attacks: Adam Bonah advocates for regulation of religious facilities by government."	Functional acting	18/05/2019	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terror-attacks-Adam-Bonah-advocates-for-regulation-of-religious-facilities-by-government-747,392	17/08/2022
"ISIS scare as police arrest men with bombs at Odorkor."	Securitizing acting	15/01/2018	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/ISIS-scare-as-police-arrest-men-with-bombs-at-Odorkor-617626	21/07/2022
"Porous borders fuelling insecurity as Immigration grapples with serious logistical constraints."	Functional acting	19/02/2018	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Porous-borders-fuelling-insecurity-as-Immigration-grapples-with-serious-logistical-constraints-627387	21/07/2022
"Counter-terrorism drill November 30."	Securitizing acting	28/11/2018	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Counter-terrorism-drill-November-30-704466 .	17/08/2022
"Don't panic over ISIS infiltration."	Functional acting	15/01/2018	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Don-t-panic-over-ISIS-infiltration-Irbard-Ibrahim-617645?gallery=1	17/08/2022
"There is looming threat of terrorist attacks on Ghana – Okudzeto Ablakwa."	Functional acting	03/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/There-is-looming-threat-of-terrorist-attacks-on-Ghana-Okudzeto-Ablakwa-565726	17/08/2022
"Ghana is safe, no terror threats – Government"	Securitizing acting	04/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-is-safe-no-terror-threats-Government-566185	21/07/2022
"Authenticity of Ghanaians fighting for ISIS not proven – Majority cautions Minority."	Functional acting	11/10/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Authenticity-of-Ghanaians-fighting-for-ISIS-not-proven-Majority-cautions-Minority-589905	15/09/2022

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Title	Actor	Date Published	Web address	Date Accessed
"Prophet warns Ghana of heightened risk of terror attacks."	Functional acting	03/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Prophet-warns-Ghana-of-heightened-risk-of-terror-attacks-566002	21/07/2022
"Terror alert: Stage simulation of attack in Shopping malls."	Functional acting	04/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terror-alert-Stage-simulation-of-attack-in-Shopping-malls-lrbard-566267	21/07/2022
"Ghanaian security forces asked to be ever ready for terrorist attack."	Functional acting	06/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghanaian-security-forces-asked-to-be-ever-ready-for-terrorist-attack-566767	17/08/2022
"Do not ignore terrorist attack warning – Kwesi Pratt tells government."	Functional actor	04/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Do-not-ignore-terrorist-attack-warning-Kwesi-Pratt-tells-government-566388	17/08/2022
"Ghana not target of terrorists attacks – Minister replies Ablakwa."	Securitising acting	03/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-not-target-of-terrorists-attacks-Minister-replies-Ablakwa-565857?gallery=1	21/07/2022
"100 Ghanaians join ISIS – Minority."	Functional acting	10/10/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/100-Ghanaians-join-ISIS-Minority-589477	21/07/2022
"Terror Alert: Be proactive to avert attacks – Expert to Security."	Functional acting	03/08/2017	https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terror-Alert-Be-proactive-to-avert-attacks-Expert-to-Security-565950	17/08/2022
"TB Joshua predicts foreign attack in Ghana and Nigeria"	Functional acting	11/04/2016	https://dailyviewgh.com/tb-joshua-predicts-foreign-attack-ghana-nigeria/	21/07/2022
"Alarm Blows; Ghanaians Join ISIS."	Functional acting	25/08/2015	https://www.modernghana.com/news/638492/alarm-blows-ghanainas-join-isis.html	15/09/2022

To Oando and Achieng' (2021), another problem of the hegemonic terrorism knowledge and practice is their tendency to deny local ownership of security priorities and strategies. Their research identified colonial continuities between perceptions about Africa and the dominant understanding of SVJGs. This argument advanced that of Dan Suleiman (2017a), who maintained that the "threat" of SVJGs in Africa is largely "outsourced" to the Middle East through the regurgitation of the idea of Africa in Western consciousness and a logic of prejudice against local African political, cultural and historical dynamism. Hussein Solomon (2015) equally made a similar CTS argument that mainstream counterterrorism would only perpetuate insecurity because it refuses to see terrorism beyond narrow stereotypes. These scholars emphasise the significance of avoiding practices of unknowing and restrictive problem-solving approaches. Several other works do not make direct methodological claims about CTS but are nevertheless critical of terrorism research and practices in West Africa (see Baldaro and Lucia 2022; Bøås and Strazzari 2020; Charbonneau 2017; de Montclos 2020; Higazi et al. 2018). Bruno Charbonneau's (2017, 407) argument is of much relevance, stating that the "West Africa" space has been geo-politically malleable and that security practices do not simply respond to threats 'somewhere in "West Africa"'.

This article takes an interdisciplinary approach and builds on these arguments by interrogating Ghana's terrorism and counterterrorism discourses. Notably, the article

offers the most comprehensive academic critique of news articles on the terrorism discourse in Ghana from an interdisciplinary perspective. This way, it applies CTS beyond its Western-centric context, thereby expanding the frontiers of critical knowledge on terrorism in Africa. CTS' normative commitment to an emancipatory political praxis is suitable to the African case at the intersection of Africa's colonial relationship with Western systems of representation and attendant interventionist logic. This is important because despite the above scholarly interventions, (counter)terrorism research and practices in Africa remain in the grip of the hegemonic GWOt tropes (Njoku 2021). Notable aspects of the post-9/11 terrorism discourse and studies such as 'speculative studies', reductionist discourses by 'media "experts"' (Sageman 2014, cited in; Njoku 2021) and a fascination 'with the terrorist actor' (Hülse and Spencer 2008) still dominate. Thus, this article contributes to the critical approach to the study of terrorism and the securitisation literature.

The use of the case of Ghana equally advances the CTS literature. Apart from the above literature on terrorism in Ghana, it is notable that Mynster Christensen's (2023) has shown how GWOt systems of representation have shaped counterterrorism programs and discourse in Ghana, and how pre-emption, the "fear of the coming", and an uncertain future have led to 'practices of imagination and performance' such as outreach activities, simulation exercises, and night-time patrols (Mynster Christensen 2023). However, almost all the research on (counter) terrorism discourse and practices in Ghana assume that any future incidence of terrorism would be new in the space called Ghana. In this sense, another contribution of this article is demonstrating the ubiquitous nature of GWOt hegemony, even in spaces that have not experienced SVJG attacks. This article unpacks some of the discursive and policy practices that Mynster Christensen (2023) discusses to understand their use by Ghanaian elites to police the country's boundaries and spaces.

Since Ghana has yet to witness SVJG attacks, the country is, in this case, different from other countries in the region. The Ghana case will offer insights into differences and similarities in the discourse of terrorism in what, in the dominant narrative, may be called "zones of terror" like Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria, and "zones of no terror" such as Ghana. Notably, most pre-existing critical terrorism research in West Africa and Africa focus on countries and locations with active SVJG. Similarly, the case will shed some light on parallels or divergences between the pre-emptive discourse in a Western country (like the US before the Iraq war) and an African country (Ghana before the "coming jihadist"). This way, this article marries the critical terrorism literature with the risk governance and management scholarship (Amoore 2013; Amoore and De Goede 2008; Mythen and Walklate 2008). Here, the discourse's use of politics of space in making threats visible/invisible shows how the logic of possibilistic risk imaginaries instead of probabilistic risk trajectories underpin the modality of anticipating and pre-empting possible terrorist threats and its governance in Ghana.

Securitisation theory, spatial politics and abyssal thinking

Abyssal thinking creates 'radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of "this side of the line" and the realm of "the other side of the line"' such that "'the other side of the line" vanishes as reality, becomes non-existent' (Santos 2007, 45–46).

Securitisation theory (ST) helps highlight how abyssal lines separate what a security issue is and what is a political issue; or between what is a security issue and what is a more threatening one. ST maintains that security is 'a self-referential practice' that consists of securitising moves involving Referent Objects, Securitising Actors and Functional Actors (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, 24–5). Referent objects are things seen to be existentially threatened and have a legitimate claim to survival (This is the Ghanaian State and its people). Securitising Actors declare something – the Referent Object – as existentially threatened. These actors include government officials, security and intelligence personnel and agencies (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, 35–6). Functional Actors affect security dynamics and the security sector and influence the Securitising Actors. These are the security analysts and commentators, academics, and journalists who frame the storylines regarding the Referent Object and what threatens it. Securitisation process, therefore, involves constructing something as a threat, removing that thing from the domain of normal politics, thereby justifying extraordinary responses.

ST contradicts the saying, 'no matter how long a log of wood stays in a River, it will not become a Crocodile'. ST maintains that it could. Functional and securitising actors could speak a log of wood (it could be any political issue) into a Crocodile (a security threat) by convincing an audience to accept the log of wood as a Crocodile, hence a threat: by the speech-act of 'labelling something a security issue that it becomes one' (Fierke 2015, 35). That is, 'by saying the words ['the log of wood is a Crocodile!'], something is done' [an audience begins to react] (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, 26). Securitising actors aim to convince the audience to accept securitising moves and declare something (a log of wood) as a security threat (a Crocodile). If the audience accepts, the securitising actor prescribes extraordinary security measures (such as killing the Crocodile or making it incapable of free movement). If the audience rejects the securitising actor's 'speech act' (such as maintaining that the log of wood *is* a log of wood and not a Crocodile), you only have a securitising move. Securitisation has, thus, failed. Security, therefore terrorism, is what securitising actors make of it (Buzan and Waever 2003, 48). Statements and comments by analysts, politicians, security agents and agencies, and community and religious leaders are involved in constructing terrorism in Ghana.

As Santos (2007) argues, abyssal thinking 'consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones'. The abyssal line invents a chasm between what is present and what is not, what is known and what is unknown. Santos (2007, 46) focused on modern Western thinking as a historical form of abyssal thinking. He insisted that modern knowledge and modern law are the most accomplished manifestations of abyssal thinking as they constitute the main global lines of modernity. I apply his idea to unthinking and rethinking security, terrorism and political violence. The securitisation process draws abyssal lines between what a security issue is, what it is not, and what is within and beyond the domain of normal politics.

Securitisation theory allows the explication of the abyssal line drawn between the state of security in Ghana and the “coming” jihadist.

The terrorism discourse in Ghana does not only securitise SVJGs; it also securitises the spaces where SVJGs are assumed to be coming from. This puts the discourse at the mercy of conceptions and practices that securitise some spaces as “ungoverned”. These spaces become sites of chaos and conflict. Conversely, spaces that are not ungoverned assume the qualities of order, legitimacy and peace. Here, securitising spaces in the binaries of “governed” and “ungoverned”, and “in Ghana” and “outside Ghana” emerge from simultaneous similarisation and differentiation processes. The visible side is similar in its chaos and conflict but different from what is on the invisible side. The invisible side is similar in order and peace but different from the visible side. Importantly, these processes of differentiation and similarisation are based on existing politico-spatial practices and norms that do not account for other meanings and interpretations. Hence, Lefebvre (1991, 26) argued that the notion of space is a social construct that serves as a tool of ‘thought and of action’ through which control, domination and power are exerted.

In short, space is not simply tangible but also discursively produced. Power and knowledge are mutually-constitutive, and security knowledge is not objective but constituted and reconstituted through political practices (Krause 1998, 316). Accordingly, while the abyssal lines around the terror threat in Ghana may not be deliberate, they have political implications. For instance, abyssal lines based on the logic around “Islamist terrorism” allow the routinisation of counterterrorism to expand and externalise state intervention (Chukwuma 2022). Thinking that terrorism is “somewhere” securitises physically and cognitively defined space. The out-space (outside of the line) becomes visible as a threat to be acted upon only if the in-space (inside of the line) vanishes as one.

Method

My arguments are based on a discourse analysis of relevant terms in the titles of 60 online news articles published between 2015 and 2022 and accessed between July and September of 2022 to identify cases of functional and securitising acting and moves. One of the pioneers of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Van Dijk (1993), characterises CDA as the analysis of the relationship between power, dominance and discourse. The CDA used in this article analyses discursive events as political, social and cultural practice (Fairclough 1995, 2). This approach implies studying the dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and ... situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 258) and requires ideological, socio-cognitive, and political analysis of the discourse (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, 1993). In doing so, the events under analysis are considered constitutive of and constituted ‘by social context [situations of fear and risk of terrorism], by objects of knowledge [institutions such as the media, political authorities, and civil society groups] and the social identities [... the] relationships between people and groups (social structures)’ (Glynos, Howarth, and Speed 2009, 17).

The news titles analysed in this article come from across Ghana’s limitless news sources, most of which are in a Ghanaweb.com dossier captioned ‘*Terror attack on Ghana*’, containing several hundreds of articles. This dossier is a reliable source of the discourse because Ghanaweb.com is the most widely used online news source in Ghana and abroad and has existed since the late 1990s. I selected titles in this dossier based on two criteria. The first is

a securitising/threat language in the title. Here, I looked for languages of spatiality (e.g. “border”, “Burkina Faso”, “Togo”), vulnerability (e.g. “porous borders”; “Ghana’s lax security”), pre-emption (e.g. “warn”, “risks”, “be vigilant”), Othering (e.g. “strangers”, “suspicious characters”), and assurance (e.g. “Ghana is safe”, “don’t panic”). In line with the discourse-power nexus of CDA, a second criterion was the authority and integrity of the source. I selected titles referring to authorities in Ghana’s national security apparatus, analysts with visible media presence, politicians, and religious leaders.

I also noted that news articles must be used cautiously, as news stories are usually framed to suit specific interests and, thus, potentially misleading. Three examples are illustrative. On Tuesday, 11 June 2019, Ghanaweb.com carried a story sourced from classfmonline.com captioned ‘Australia issues terror alert to citizens in Ghana’, accompanied by a blurb that concluded that ‘Australia becomes the third country after Canada and UK to issue an alert to its citizens in Ghana.’ However, what was referred to as “terror alert”, as explained by the then Australian High Commissioner to Ghana, Andrews Barnes, and the First Assistant Secretary of Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, H. K. Yu, was a ‘part of *normal* business where we actually monitor the situation in every country very closely’ (emphasis added). While the statements of these Australian diplomats communicate some concern, they fell short of issuing a “terror alert”. Moreover, the reference to the UK and Canada pointed to another story from starrfmonline.com that informed Ghanaians that the United Kingdom and Canada had also issued terror alerts to their citizens (*Ghanaweb.com*, 3 August 2017). However, both countries and Ghana’s National Security Minister denied these claims (*Ghanaweb.com*, 4 August 2017).

Similarly, in August 2015, modernghana.com and other news outlets published a story that a Muslim organisation allegedly shared ‘extreme ideas about Islam’ (Daily Guide, 15 August 2015). The story stated that this organisation facilitated the radicalisation of a Ghanaian who had joined ISIS through the organisation’s WhatsApp group. Interrogating this story, however, exposed several problems about its authenticity. Blaming an organisation for someone’s actions because that “someone” was on the organisation’s WhatsApp platform raises questions, especially if there was no way of knowing the number of other platforms to which the person belonged. Nevertheless, according to someone involved in the investigation of this case (Anonymised, pers. comm., July 3, 2022), the organisation vehemently denied the allegations, including availing itself to national security operatives who cleared it of any wrongdoing (*Ghanaweb.com*, 27 August 2015).

Relatedly, since many news items reference politicians, political partisanship and interests could undermine the integrity of news items. For instance, many of the news articles in the Ghanaweb.com dossier carry diametrically-opposed claims and counter-claims about terrorism in Ghana from the two major parties – the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) – as they attempt to discredit each other’s comments. Yet, these parties could have occupied the same discursive space and made the same policy and rhetorical statements as their opposing party.

The above examples show that the news articles cited here may misrepresent their sources as they sacrifice nuance, rigour and conscience on the altar of political expediency, popularity and profit. Therefore, taking terrorism discourse in Ghana and their source as a given could advance the deception and half-truths associated with GWoT terrorism discourse. That said, even if it were established that all the news stories cited in

this article were deceptive, that would be a case for the article's arguments. Consider, for instance, the extent of the interest the dread of the "coming" terrorism has invoked. If the news stories were deceptive, that would be further evidence for the questionability and unreliability of the terrorism discourse in Ghana. Here, there would be every reason to doubt the authenticity of the terrorism discourse in Ghana if deceptive stories about it could be so pervasive.

Nevertheless, I considered Meyer's (2001; see also Flowerdew 1999) identification of representation, reliability, validity, completeness, accessibility and triangulation as criteria for assessing the quality of critical discourse analysis. Accordingly, the article triangulates the news stories cited against multiple sources, including the government, where government officials are cited. On reliability, the titles are crosschecked against their contents to ensure they do not misrepresent what they contain. Where applicable, I crosschecked Ghanaweb.com news articles with their original media sources. Similarly, I have used news articles featuring Muslims and Christians, politicians, and Muslim and Christian clergy to ensure representation and completeness. The article also uses information gathered through personal conversations to provide further anchorage. Since the discourse implicates Muslim identity, I considered shoring up Muslim agency in the article and, as such, most of the conversations cited were with Muslims. Table 1 above lists the news titles critically discoursed to address the criterion of accessibility.³

Ghana on the 'invisible' side of the security abyssal line

Ghana is viewed regionally and globally as one of Africa's most successful democracies. Evidence tendered to support this view includes a cordial relationship between Christians and Muslims, the two dominant religions in the country, in contrast to regional neighbours like Nigeria and Ivory Coast, where religious identity creates or widens conflict fault lines. Another is that Ghana has not experienced civil war which has earned it the reputation of being 'an oasis of peace in a sub-region engulfed in turmoil' (Sowatey 2005, 107). Commentators also remind us that the country has had several national elections, government has changed hands thrice since 1993 while elections have been peaceful, free and fair.

However, most of these positive assessments find meaning in comparing Ghana with other cases and places at the international level, thereby blunting a focus on what is happening in Ghana and what Ghanaians think of their country and government. In any case, this reputation is what makes Ghana so different from countries like Burkina Faso and Mali. By extension, it is what projects the coming "jihadist" groups 'as black as possible, without any shades of grey, let alone glimmers of white' (Freedman 2004, 7). The surest way to assess the extent of the completeness of the above view of Ghana, however, is by looking at security from the invisible side of the abyssal line against which the "coming terrorist" and insecurity in the Sahel appear so dark.

Although the above picture of Ghana has a modicum of truth, it leaves much out of sight. For instance, citing Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana as evidence for Ghana's successes of nationhood hides the fact that Christian-Muslim relations are coming under significant strain (Prempeh 2022) while reinforcing the framing of insecurity as religious instead of political. Endorsing elections in Ghana as "free and fair" also raise questions. Ghana's eight "peaceful" elections (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020)

has had several incidents of violence and fatalities. The question of what level of violence qualifies an election to be the opposite of peaceful remains unanswered behind a facade of democratic success in Ghana. Indeed, whereas there is a botched insurgency in the Volta Region to the south, there are scores of security issues in the country's north that challenge the idea of a secure and democratic Ghana (Longi 2014).

Several other conditions in Ghana make the view of Ghana and Ghanaians as peaceful by nature questionable (Agordzo et al. 2016). Recently, Ghana has experienced a proliferation of extra-legal militia groups created by political patrons and loosely affiliated with Ghana's two main political parties. These groups have been used for political advantage and disrupt law and order (Gyampo, Graham, and Asare 2017). In one instance, a militia group stormed a Court and freed 13 members facing charges of causing disturbances at government premises. They destroyed Court property and almost assaulted the judge (Gyampo, Graham, and Asare 2017, 124). Similar militia activities are also implicated in an event in 2019 when masked men said to be national security operatives used live bullets at a polling station during a by-election. That incident led to two fatalities, 18 injuries and an assault on a sitting MP. As Attuquayefio and Darkwa (2017, 90) observed, these extra-legal uses of force and violence have gone unpunished due to a culture of impunity resulting from a 'systemic decapitation of the Police by the political elite'.

The leading peacebuilding and security researcher and professor, Kwesi Aning, told a Commission of Enquiry on the electoral violence in 2019 referred to above that in Ghana, violence is 'perceived to be extremely useful, it is beneficial, it transforms lives, it creates new identities, and it gives access to power' (The Independent 2019). Law professor and now a member of the Supreme Court of Ghana, Henrietta Mensah-Bonsu, who was a member of the three-member Commission, buttressed Aning's argument in suggesting that these groups be called 'militia groups' instead of "vigilante groups" (The Independent 2019). She emphasised that doing so would capture how bad things were and described the activities of these groups as 'Warlordism' that were subjected 'to some people's control' (The Independent 2019).

Cases and allegations of attacks and assassinations are further evidence of a political culture of violence. On 16 January 2019, investigative journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale was shot dead in front of his home, allegedly assassinated for his work (*BBC News*, 30 January 2019). In 2021, National Security operatives assaulted a journalist for taking pictures of abandoned cars on the National Security Ministry premises, and his media firm was raided (*3News*, 12 January 2021). In 2016, a Ghanaian MP was also killed in what was perceived as a political assassination (*Africa News*, 16 February 2016). In 2012, an MP made comments interpreted as genocidal and treasonable, constituting ethnic hatred and a declaration of 'ethnic war' (*News Ghana*, 19 April 2012). He was arrested by Ghana's security agencies. However, he was eventually released following a *popular* legal appeal and his party's support. In 2020, the same MP called a judge 'stupid' and threatened to 'deal with' him (*Ghanaweb*, 13 September 2020). In a video, he also threatened to burn down the house of a former president of Ghana (*Ghanaweb.com*, 24 December 2020) and threatened to 'get people to beat' up a journalist a year later (Committee to Protect Journalists, 23 July 2021). According to a veteran journalist and political commentator, these and other cases showed Ghana was 'edging close to lawlessness'. He expressed concern about a 'gangster' mentality in Ghana, usually associated with a 'Banana

Republic' (*Ghanaweb*, 16 June 2012). Interestingly, in 2022, the abovementioned MP became a candidate in the race to run for President.

As earlier stated, elections in Ghana are not as peaceful because 'no election is worth loss of lives', according to the Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, Sam Jonah (*Classfmonline*, 25 April 2021). However, the 2020 general elections, the country's eighth since 1992, recorded five deaths and scores of injuries (*Aljazeera*, 9 December 2020). An official of the National Peace Council maintains that 86 constituencies experienced violence around the 2016 elections, compared to just 47 in 2012 (*Graphic Online*, 16 October 2020). After the said 2020 election, and following the constitution of Ghana's Eighth Parliament of the Fourth Republic, legislators exchanged blows on the floor of Parliament over a bill leading to an army "invasion" of the Parliament. Jonah described this event and the election fatalities as the 'biggest assault on democracy' (*Classfmonline*, 25 April 2021). In July 2020, a local MP fired gunshots during an election registration process in the lead-up to that election. Whereas the frightened people assumed the gunshots were coming from the usual criminals or 'vigilante' groups mentioned above, the MP claimed the shots were fired for her protection (*Daily Graphic*, 21 July 2020). It is unsurprising, therefore, that a 2018 Afrobarometer survey found that more Ghanaians feared becoming victims of political violence, and popular attitudes in Ghana have grown warier by 43.3% up from 35.5% in 2014 (Afrobarometer [n.d.](#)). At the intersection of a lack of trust in politics and economic desperation, there also appears to be a festering culture of economically-motivated ritual killings. Between 2013 and 2020, '17 known ritual murders involving approximately nine child victims' occurred in Ghana yearly (Owusu [2022](#), 21).

A poignant demonstration of a culture of desperation, and a paradigm of violence and fear in Ghanaian society is the lynching death of a military officer stationed in the farming community of Denkyira Obuasi, who was mistaken for an armed robber (*Graphic Online*, 4 April 2019). This lynching incident, one out of many, presented Ghana as a country where trust in law enforcement and security agencies was depleted, and citizens saw justification to respond to armed robbery on their own. Here, members of a remote rural community could be understood for misjudgement, even if tragic. The situation begins to get desperate when acts of violence are perpetrated by those mandated to protect the people. However, in June of 2021, two Muslims were shot dead in Ejura, and four were injured during a demonstration against an earlier killing of a Muslim civil society activist from the #FixTheCountry protest movement (*Africa News*, 4 October 2021). In 2018, 'Police wrongfully killed' seven young people from predominantly Muslim settlements, mistaken for armed robbers (*Citi Newsroom*, 18 July 2018). In 2022, 20 students of a Muslim High School were injured after police allegedly used live bullets to disperse a crowd (*Myjoyonline*, 13 June 2022).

The proliferation of unregistered arms in Ghana is yet another sign of insecurity and a culture of violence. Evidence from Ghana's National Small Arms Commission 'indicates that there are more than 1.2 million unregistered firearms and light weapons in circulation in Ghana. This figure is apart from the millions of sophisticated weapons imported into the country by criminal gangs through unapproved channels' (KAIPCT [2021](#)). Worse, analysts indicate that security officers rent out guns and uniforms to armed robbers (*Starrfmonline*, 24 April 2018) while rogue police officers get involved in armed robbery themselves (*BBC News Pidgin*, 9 March 2022).

De/Securitising space, drawing the lines and (un) naming the “coming”

Coastal West African countries have never been oblivious to the regional consequences of SVJGs in Nigeria and Mali. However, it was not until SVJGs extended their reach to Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire that Ghana started taking a more serious note. Currently, almost every facet of Ghanaian society has been enlisted into a national project to protect the “peaceful” and “terrorism-free” Ghana from differentiated chaos heading into the country from surrounding countries. The list includes ‘community vigilantes, civil society organisations, political parties, business organisations, churches, and traditional leaders’ (*News Ghana*, 20 May 2022). The discourse uses several active words and constructions to describe terrorism and imagine a terrorist. The arsenal meant to “home shield” Ghana includes calling for vigilance, improving border security, and praying for God’s intervention. While it may not be visibly deliberate, the deployment of this arsenal nevertheless creates ‘radical lines’ (Santos 2007, 45–46) between security issues within Ghana and those that are “coming”. Ultimately, the description of the dominant contours of Ghana’s terrorism discourse excludes in/security in Ghana as illustrated in the previous section to the invisible side of the line where it ‘vanishes as reality’ (Santos 2007, 45–46).

As expected, the first frontiers against the coming “jihadist” are national borders. Borders communities are usually sites of worry as they could easily be targeted for attacks or recruitment (Government of Ghana 2020, 23). Accordingly, the National Coordinator of the National Boundary Commission, Major Gen. Emmanuel Kotia, has urged the Government ‘to take all precautions to prevent terrorist attacks’ and to ‘prevent any downward movement of the terrorists into the coastal states of the sub-region’ (*Ghanaweb*, 12 May 2022). For many, events such as the attack on a Church in Nigeria’s Ondo State were signs of a terrorist heading towards the Gulf of Guinea and Accra (*Ghanaweb.com*, 11 August 2021). Before Major Gen. Kotia’s call, the Ghana Immigration Service assured citizens that Ghana’s northern borders were safe and secured (*Ghanaweb.com*, 15 March 2022). To maintain this peace, border communities have called for a more rigorous education on terrorism and security (*Ghanaweb.com*, 19 July 2022), while immigration officers advised improved coordination among security agencies (*Ghanaweb.com*, 19 July 2022). Similarly, heads of local government areas in border regions have called on border communities to ‘increase vigilance to prevent violent extremism’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 14 August 2021).

As a profoundly religious country, Ghana equally needed heavenly intercession. It, therefore, became necessary for Ghanaians to be assured that faith-based organisations were involved in averting terrorism (*Ghanaweb.com*, 16 May 2022). This assurance included security chiefs’ meeting with Church leaders (*Ghanaweb.com*, 17 May 2019), which coincided with a campaign for an all-hands-on-deck approach (*Ghanaweb*, 1 June 2019). Religious leaders’ voices have been prominent in the discourse and clergy members have taken to their podiums to announce the coming terrorist, including Muslim leaders. The Spokesperson of the National Chief Imam, for instance, maintained that ‘there are Islamic interpretations that encourage certain extremist tendencies’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 24 May 2022) and went on to advise national security to monitor Islamic scholars whose interpretation of Islam is the “hot type”

and receptive to terrorism. Unsurprisingly, suggestions have been made for government regulation of religious facilities (*Ghanaweb.com*, 18 May 2019).

The Spokesperson's comments and other calls draw from powerful flaws in GWOt discourse which forces a wedge between a "radical" and a "moderate" muslims (van Es, Laan and Meinema 2021; Abdel-Fattah 2020). The comments also find context within ongoing tensions between "Sufism" and "Salafism" in Ghana (Dumbe 2019). The problem with this narrative is that while the enlistment of religion reifies the view of terrorism as fundamentally based on religious ideology, advocating for a different interpretation of Islam suggested that the terrorism ideology was fundamentally Muslim, thereby banishing the material realities of terrorism and political violence. Aware of the internalising effect of the dominant GWOt narrative, Aning warned Ghanaians not to be too quick to link some Muslims arrested in the Accra suburb of Odorkor to ISIS (*Ghanaweb.com*, 16 January 2018). However, seeing that the entirety of Ghanaian society agrees about the coming jihadist, including Muslim communities, the Christian clergy has taken a moral/religious high ground in the fight against the coming "jihadist".

Church leaders, such as Owusu Bempah, Charles Agyinasare, and Albert Arjarquah, have predicted the future and warned Ghanaians about impending 'heightened risk of terror attacks' (*Ghanaweb.com*, 23 May 2022; *Ghanaweb.com*, 10 June 2019; *Ghanaweb.com*, 3 August 2017). In 2016, Christian preacher T. B. Joshua announced that a terrorist attack was imminent on Ghanaian soil (Graphic Online, 19 April 2016). These leaders and their "prophesies" avoided an invitation or interrogation by Ghana's intelligence agencies, at least publicly – something that would have been highly unlikely if a Muslim preacher made the same statements. To avert the coming attacks, these Christian leaders have opted to pray for God's intervention on Ghana's behalf (*Ghanaweb.com*, 10 June 2019). Following attacks in Burkina Faso (*Ghanaweb.com*, 17 May 2019), a Christian clergyman proposed that 'Church leaders must deploy scanners for [the] security of members' (*Ghanaweb.com*, 27 May 2019). This apprehension usually increased with related events of concern to the Church, such as after the attacks on a Church in Ondo State, Nigeria, when Ghanaian Christians were told there was no need to be scared (*Ghanaweb.com*, 31 May 2022). Even before these attacks, event ushers were asked to watch out for late congregants (*Ghanaweb.com*, 6 July 2019).

Apart from the coming terrorist being religious and Muslim, it was also necessary to demonstrate how he and his deeds were different and un-Ghanaian. In May 2022, Ghanaians were warned against hosting 'strangers' (*Ghanaweb.com*, 24 May 2022). A similar advice was delivered in June 2021 to report 'suspicious characters'. Similarly, "Operation Conquered Fist" aimed 'to ward off infiltrators and suspected jihadists' (*Ghanaweb.com*, 24 May 2022). In August 2022, the Interior Minister assured that news of Boko Haram's 'invasion' should be ignored. In June 2022, the Upper East Regional Minister informed the country about its preparedness to combat terrorist 'incursions' (*Ghanaweb.com*, 6 June 2022). On strangers and terrorism, an opposition politician, Asiedu Nketia, accused then Minister of State of national security, Bryan Acheampong, of 'bringing' terrorists to Ghana (*Ghanaweb.com*, 15 June 2019). The assumption that the threat of terrorism is not in Ghana – but about to be – is well communicated in a claim by Emmanuel Bombande, a former deputy foreign minister of Ghana. He lamented that Ghana was fast 'becoming' a 'fertile ground' for terrorists (*Ghanaweb.com*, 10 May 2022).

The above discourse draws physical and cognitive spatial lines. The spatiality present conceives of security in Ghana in a horizontal language of linearity (Ghana is flatly peaceful and terrorism-free), while the threat of jihadism is presented in a vertical language of linearity (the “jihadist” is coming southwards into Ghana from Burkina Faso in the north). To one analyst, a band of “jihadists” are running over Burkina Faso and ‘getting closer’ to Ghana (*Ghanaweb.com*, 1 February 2022). The phrase ‘getting closer’ is only one of many that see the threat in linear spatial terms. Others include the threat is ‘coming downwards’, ‘heading towards coastal states’, and ‘moving southwards’. In this framing, Ghana and Burkina Faso become distinct territories, and locations with different political signatures. The “inside Ghana” and “outside Ghana” spatial categories coincide with security and insecurity. They represent terrorism absence and terrorism presence respectively. The totality of the language of cultural and spatial othering creates a mind image that equates terrorism with SVJG violence, as demonstrated by the sudden wave of commentaries across the media whenever SVJG attacks occur nearby.

A poignant indictment of the above narratives is their characteristic self-contradiction. The portrayal of the Ghanaian space as peaceful contradicts admissions of Ghana’s vulnerability. In this vein, several analysts have called on Ghanaian security forces to prepare for a terrorist attack (*Ghanaweb.com*, 6 August), while another invited Ghanaians to ‘be proactive to avert’ terror attacks (*Ghanaweb.com*, 3 August). Ghana’s first National Security Strategy (Government of Ghana 2020, 23) notes that ‘terrorist attacks [. . .] close to the border with Ghana, exposes the vulnerability of Ghana’. Other statements warned that Ghana risked a terrorist attack due to the nature of its borders (*Ghanaweb.com*, 6 July 2019). The admission that ‘ISIS could take advantage of Ghana’s lax security consciousness to set up in the country’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 30 May 2019) is yet another demonstration of the entire country’s vulnerability. In 2022, a government minister admitted to a possible terrorist attack in Ghana (*Ghanaweb.com*, 16 May 2022) while a month later the National Security Ministry became increasingly worried about a likely terrorist activity in Ghana’s northern regions (*Ghanaweb.com*, 4 June 2022). Before this, Ghana’s Information Ministry had expressed worry over terror threats in Ghana (*Ghanaweb.com*, 9 July 2021).

In the face of vulnerability, the discourse also contained assurance. In 2017, an opposition politician stated that Ghana was a target for terrorist attacks, but a Government minister replied that it was not (*Ghanaweb.com*, 3 August 2017). Ghanaians were advised to stay calm because there was no cause for alarm, and the threat was not in Ghana yet (*Ghanaweb.com.com*, 4 August 2017). Two years later, Deputy Defence Minister told Ghanaians not to worry because security agencies were at work protecting them from the threat (*Ghanaweb.com*, 18 May 2019). In August 2022, Interior Minister Ambrose Dery assured Ghanaians that ‘footage that extremists have attacked any part of Ghana are false’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 17 August 2022). Even if Ghana were a target, there was no need to worry since, as National Security Minister Kan-Dapaah indicated, Ghana was ready to avert threats of terrorism (*Ghanaweb.com*, 5 November 2020). Measures like the conduct of a counterterrorism drill in November 2018 called ‘exercise home shield’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 28 November 2018) have been carried out to demonstrate the country’s readiness. Similarly, an analyst proposed 12 ways to identify potential terrorists (*Ghanaweb.com*, 18 May 2022) and suggested screening at shopping malls (*Ghanaweb.com*, 16 May 2022).

Despite these assurances, some Ghanaians believed that the strangers, suspicious characters, and infiltrators had already arrived. One such claim came from the Institute for Security, Disaster and Emergency Studies President, Ishmael Norman, that terrorists ‘are not just near Ghana, they are in Ghana’, and some may have been married to Ghanaians (*Modernghana.com*, 2 June 2022). Another analyst claimed that ‘the terrorists are in our communities, they are our neighbours, they are our siblings, they are our fathers, they are our mothers’ (*MyJoy News*, 25 May 2022). Similarly, a border security official maintained that jihadist militants are already in Ghana not to conduct attacks but to use Ghana as a haven as they increasingly come under attack elsewhere (Anonymised, pers. comm., October 13, 2022). It has been suggested that one way of doing this involved SVJGs using Ghana for a central warehouse (*Ghanaweb.com*, 31 July 2022). Similarly, in 2021, police were put on high alert following intelligence that ‘Bandits suspected to be in possession of military grade weapons may have already infiltrated Ghana at yet-to-be-identified locations in the northern regions and they are poised to launch the attacks any moment from now’ (*3 News*, 15 June 2021).

Whereas the above review of the discourse does not follow a timeliness and sacrifices context, the totality of the discourse does expose parallel and contradictory languages of spatiality, vulnerability, pre-emption, othering and assurance. For instance, the discourse contradicts itself by admitting that Ghanaians have joined SVJGs (Graphic Online, 27 August 2015) while simultaneously maintaining that they are *now* heading towards Ghana. Another contradiction is a concession by a security officer that Accra was ‘not out of the woods’ yet, although the Capital City was still ‘safe’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 10 June 2019). Adam Bonaa’s argument that terrorists could ‘wear military uniforms in Ghana, enter a market and kill’ (*Ghanaweb.com*, 24 July 2022) was yet another contradiction. This argument makes sense in the abovementioned point that police officers rent police uniforms to armed robbers. Notably, if criminals and terrorists could wear military/police uniforms to perpetrate their deeds, that would indicate that Ghana was already very insecure. In that case, it would be entirely legitimate to debate whether extant security conditions were less severe a security issue. Another contradiction looms large in the context of Ghana’s hyperbolic reputation as very hospitable. Ghana’s proverbial hospitality presents as a paradox: the belief that Ghana was peaceful appears to be why militants would find it attractive as a place to hide or set up a warehouse.

Despite these paradoxes and contradictions, the assumption that terrorism is now coming to Ghana is accepted as given, as functional and securitising actors deploy language in the service of power. Here, it must be noted that a section of the discourse has consistently remind of Ghana’s precarious security situation even before this “coming” threat. However, admitting to this as part of the discourse about a coming “jihadist” makes such admissions questionable. Here, it must be noted that the NAFPCVET and Ghana’s National Security Strategy (GNSS) will boost Ghana’s security generally (Anonymised, pers. comm., October 5, 2022). However, questions remain, for instance, as to why Ghana’s first-ever national security strategy and the NAFPCVET were produced at a time when the country feared a “coming” threat.

A valid conclusion after accounting for the above character of the terrorism discourse in Ghana is that it dances more to the GWoT’s propensity for ‘soundbite explanations that prey on people’s fears and anxieties about the “Other” (Mohammed 2022, 419). The totality of the terrorism discourse reflects an internalised view that terrorism is external.

As such, the implication of national-level factors in cases of insecurity becomes an appendage to the broader and dominant discourse. In other words, Ghanaians have accepted the speech-acting of functional and securitising actors and the discourse screams “The jihadists are coming!” more powerfully. It speaks a contradictory language that diverts, ostracises, isolates and outsources. The discourse communicates in different messages: ‘They are coming’; ‘They are not here, yet’; ‘We can prevent them from entering’; ‘We should prepare in case they do’; ‘Our actions could bring them’; ‘they are almost here’; ‘we are ready for their arrival’ and ‘they have already arrived’. Against the background of a Ghana on the invisible side of the discursive abyssal line, the discourse presents as an exercise of ‘reciprocal inclusions and exclusions’ (Lefebvre 1991, 131) and ‘constant flickering of presence and absence together’ (Eagleton 1983, 128). The discourse constitutes acts of spatial shaming and banishment, creating an “out-space” – places where there is terrorism (SVJGs and violence), and “in-space” being Ghana (a zone of no-terrorism). Drawing the “different/similar” and “inside/outside” lines allows SVJGs to be isolated and barricaded behind an imagined space, easily targeted by counterterrorism interventions and extraordinary security measures while existing conditions in Ghana remain in the fray of “normal” politics. In other words, terroristic acts and issues constitutive of terrorism in Ghana remain a log of wood, although they could easily be a Crocodile, too.

Terrorism or no terrorism? Erasing the abyssal line and violent standards

Slavoj Žižek (2009, 55) argues that the imposition of a standard is ‘the highest form of violence’ because it becomes a reference against which ‘some events appear as “violent”’. Abyssal thinking creates a standard and, as Santos (2007, 45–46) argues, ‘what most fundamentally characterises abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line’. Abyssal lines define the practices of spatial inclusions and exclusions that create a mental image of terrorism through which events, issues and conditions within Ghana that are terroristic or constitutive of terrorism become subjugated into the unknown (Jackson 2012). The inclusions of absence(s) and exclusions of presence(s) simultaneously serve as drawers and erasures that prevent counterterrorism from seeing more clearly based on a standard set by the dominant narrative about post-9/11 terrorism discourse.

Seeing beyond above standard-setting GWoT-inspired abyssal lines, however, we can agree with Jasper Ayelazuno (2007, 14) that ‘Ghana has most, if not all, of the underlying factors of vulnerability found in the insurrections that have ignited civil conflict in other countries’. Felix Longi (2014), thus, maintains that the image of Ghana as an oasis of peace and tranquillity ‘masks a festering wound of communal violence, inter-ethnic conflicts and armed confrontations’ in parts of the country. Ayelazuno (2007, 15) further argues that ‘Ghana rests on shaky grounds, and it is potentially an unstable country’, hence ‘a questionable model for countries undergoing post-conflict democratisation in the sub-region.’ These alternative assessments of security in the country get lost in the dizzying vortex of the terrorism discourse, which has effectively barricaded and subjugated the above statistics and facts about insecurity in Ghana to the invisible side of the abyssal line through a display of double-ended speech-acting. While the narrative strengthens the “gates” to shield Ghana from terrorists outside, it simultaneously shields the outside (both

cognitively and spatially) from the reality of insecurity inside Ghana; thereby projecting the country as a site of “peace” that sharply contrasts with the sites of violence surrounding it.

That said, it remains legitimate to question any suggestion that the above cases, events and conditions in Ghana constitute terrorism. However, given that terrorism itself is a term that has defied a universal definition, it is also legitimate to argue that many of the above issues and events are terrorism or constitutive of terrorism if terrorism were critically studied and cotextually analysed. Looking at invisible side of the line, the analyst must ask whether SVJGs and violence from across the Sahel are a more threatening, present and pressing security issue in Ghana, given the likelihood and frequency of election violence, militia groups, police brutality, claims of assassinations, and threats of death and injury from public officials. A further question will be whether the attention accorded the “coming” terrorist deserves to be accepted as given.

Ghana’s Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2012 (Act 842) (Parliament of Ghana 2012) provides a standard against which we can answer some of these questions. Act 842 describes a terrorist act as including one that is ‘performed in furtherance of a political, ideological, religious, racial or ethnic cause and (a) causes serious bodily harm to a person; (b) causes serious damage to property; (c) endangers a person’s life; (d) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public; (e) involves the use of firearms or explosives [. . .]’. Many of the above pre-existing security conditions and events in Ghana will qualify, at best, as terroristic or constitutive of terrorism per Act 842. However, against the dominant standard, they are not as securitised as SVJGs. This explains why some scholars have suggested that terrorism should be defined based on context (Ramsay 2015; Roberts 2015). Gilbert Ramsay (2015), for instance, argues that terrorism should be defined as a concept and an issue to suit specific, localised, and heterogeneous contexts. Adam Roberts (2015) similarly suggests that research and discourse on terrorism should focus on specific acts instead of the entire labelling of groups as terrorists. It makes sense, therefore, to agree with Ramsay (2015) that while terrorism can be defined, it should not. Another argument in favour of a standard-defying and context-specific reading of terrorism and political violence is the suggestion that there must be a commitment to deliberate discursive and political admission that terrorism is not an event but a process (Dan Suleiman 2020b).

In line with these arguments, what unqualifies the above events and conditions in Ghana as terroristic or terrorism is not that they are not; but because that qualification is based on the standard set by the dominant GWoT norms and systems of representation. This point means that before the current securitisation of terrorism, there had been terrorist activities or activities constitutive of terrorism in Ghana. This argument also problematises the “Ghana is not insulated from terrorism” warnings by many functional and securitising actors (*3News*, 22 May 2022; *The Ghana Report*, 1 November 2021; *Mx24 Online*, 23 May 2022) as statements that help to enforce abyssal lines. These warnings take their meaning from the assumption that Ghana is a coastal West African country that has not experienced terrorist attacks (Attuquayefio and Frimpong 2022; Prah and Chanimbe 2021). Such assessments become counterproductive, because, first, they shield those in charge of security from the responsibility to take pre-existing security conditions more seriously. Secondly, they leave other, perhaps more severe, everyday security issues within the scope of the normal, on the invisible side.

Following from all the above, the totality of the terrorism discourse in Ghana shows that whereas the escalation of SVJGs across the Sahel is concerning, the imputed level and extent of the risk and the panic associated with them in Ghana are social and political constructs. They may also be disproportionate compared to extant security concerns, issues and events in the country. The construction of the “coming jihadist” is the function of a process that securitises physical space, as Ghana’s northern borders with Burkina Faso serve as “doors” between Ghana and terrorist activity, as well as cognitive space that knows and sees terrorism as synonymous with subaltern violent jihadist groups.

Conclusion

This article examines the terrorism discourse in Ghana through the lens of critical terrorism studies, and the application of the concept of the politics of space, securitisation theory, and critical discourse analysis. It argues that the discourse exhibits what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls ‘abyssal thinking’ that creates cognitive and physical divisions in how security and insecurity are perceived in the country. The discourse employs securitisation techniques and frames SVJGs as abnormal, foreign, and uniquely threatening. In contrast, the discourse portrays Ghana as peaceful and secure, effectively normalising and rendering invisible events or conditions within the country that are, at best, terroristic or constitutive of terrorism. Furthermore, the discourse prioritises external threats over national-level conditions, treating the latter as appendages to the former. This tendency of the discourse obscures the reality of insecurity and political violence within Ghana, with adverse implications for peace and security.

Since a comprehensive understanding is necessary for sustainable solutions to a problem, the temporality and ahistoricity of the terrorism discourse in Ghana detracts long-term security, even if statements and actions of functional and securitising are well-intentioned. For instance, national campaigns, such as “See Something, Say Something” (S4), that urge Ghanaians to call National Hotline, 999, to report suspected extremists could be counterproductive. In the context of the permeating mind-image of GWoT terrorism prejudices, it is more likely for a bearded Muslim dressed for the mosque making audible Islamic supplication of *Allāhu Akbar* (Almighty God is Great) to be considered “something” worthy of being said (reported). In contrast, a criminal dressed in a police uniform or military gear, coming from the invisible side of the abyssal line, could go undetected to ‘enter a market and kill’. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the Ministry of National Security indicated that in the first 30 hours of the launch of S4, its hotline received over 5,000 prank calls (*JoyOnline*, 26 May 2022).

There are, therefore, urgent human and national security reasons to address the incomplete understanding of political violence in Ghana that the discourse communicates. One way of ensuring a symmetrical co-presence of what is inside Ghana (of poor security) and what is deemed outside (heading inside) is to erase the abyssal lines so that the invisible becomes visible, too. Doing so should include a commitment to ‘epistemic disobedience’ (Mignolo 2009) in terrorism knowledge and practice and pushing for a more critical and decolonial reading of terrorism and political violence (Chukwuma 2020; Jackson 2015; Mohammed 2022). This commitment is crucial because, as Çapan (2017, 602) notes, abyssal lines are ‘sustained and reproduced by Eurocentrism as a system of knowledge’ (Çapan 2017, 602). Specifically, this commitment means subverting the assumptions and practices

of the GWoT, which ‘transposed and patronised a kind of uncritical terrorism knowledge to African spaces, effectively contributing to the lack of progress in addressing the incessant violence’ (Atta 2022). Secondly, there is a need for comprehensive treatment of terrorism beyond securitising the border-defying dynamic of transnational organised crime. Finally, the discourse must acknowledge that “knowing” terrorism (defining and describing the threat) and “doing” terrorism (prescribing responses) are co-constitutive, and each can either contribute to or detriment security.

Notes

1. It remains essential to keep stressing that the usage of terms such as “jihadism” and “Islamism” (and others like “Salafism” “Salafi-jihadism”, and “Wahhabism”) remains speculative and prejudiced or, worse, cloaked in calculated ignorance. I use subaltern violent “jihadist” groups (SVJGs) instead, to bring some nuance and to avoid some of the problems associated with practices of un/naming. Where the term “jihadist” has been used, they must always be read as being in inverted commas.
2. Some of these policies and frameworks are the Ghana National Security Strategy (Government of Ghana 2020), the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Ghana (NAFPCVET) (Government of Ghana 2019), and a Practitioners’ Guide on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (The Commonwealth and National Peace Council 2022). In 2017, Ghana hosted several West African countries leading to the Accra Initiative (AI), a West African sub-regional security mechanism to address common concerns. The AI has launched a multilateral task force to counter violent extremism, terrorism and transnational crime. Another is establishing the Counterterrorism and Fusion Centre in 2020, with assistance from the United States, to help the country and others improve border security.
3. To access these news articles, copy and paste the URL into the browser’s address bar or search by the titles.

Acknowledgments

The author expresses his gratitude to three anonymous reviewers for their useful suggestions and comments on an earlier version of this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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