

The Rise of Insurgency in Ghana: Developing Fertile Grounds?

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Abstract

Ghana can largely be described as a nation that has enjoyed relative peace and stability in a sub region bedevilled with violence and instability. However, this relative peace and stability has been overhyped leading to the neglect of certain conflict-prone variables that can prong the country into an insurgency; as has been experienced in many African countries. Analysing this from the perspective of the human needs theory, coupled with conducting a survey, the study finds that a sizeable number of Ghanaians are deficient in access to their basic needs. Consequently, it predisposes citizens to insurgent ideas and make them susceptible to insurgency. Thus the study recommends that the Ghanaian government must make provisions for achievement of basic needs, security presence and engagement of people in the governance system a priority to prevent the possibilities of the rise of insurgency in Ghana.

Keywords: *Insurgency; Basic Needs; Fertile Grounds*

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INTRODUCTION

Insurgencies have been with humanity throughout history in states where people are always seeking to overthrow an established order and replace it with a new social and political order in view of Schaefer (2010). To Moghadam, Berge, & Beliakova (2014) is a struggle between a group of people and a government by the means of combining political and military actions to undermine its legitimate authority with the focus on obtaining control over a territory or the whole state. In the view of Paul, Clarke, Grill, & Dunigan (2013) the purpose of the insurgency determines the tactics adopted. According to the CIA report (2009), insurgencies form shadow governments to undermined authority of existing regimes through the destruction of the regime by violent means to obtain support from disaffected population as well as explore existing tribal or religious loopholes. This makes unpredictable the response of the citizenry to government actions in the presence of weak state capacity to provide social goods.

Seminally, Hobbes (1960) has argued that the most important duty of a state is to ensure the security of its citizenry from aggression as well as creating opportunities for the total development of their citizens. In return the state enjoys absolute cooperation from the population. Thus, the stability of a country is dependent on the uncompromised performance of both parties to the social contract. However, scholarly evidence show that most African countries and governments fail in performing their responsibilities towards their citizenry (Rotberg, 2011). Not only are these states unable to guarantee the security of the citizenry but also they cannot create the atmosphere that militates the development of its own people. Even though the third wave of democratization led to the steady decline of autocratic tendencies, it has been marred

with some challenges including insurgencies, religious extremism and terrorism in the region. Mention can be made of groups such as the Tuareg rebels in Mali, and Boko Haram in Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad. Additionally, there have been violent political take-overs in Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire; recent political upheavals in the Middle East: most of which has been attributed to the failure or inability of the state to adequately uphold its core responsibilities.

Amidst these events, Ghana is regarded as an oasis of peace in the West African sub-region which is regarded as one of the world's most insecure and turbulent sub-regions. Indeed, during the democratic revolution in the 1990s, the region was a zone of civil wars, piracy, and civil disobedience or strives as well as the hot bed of insurgencies and terrorism. Prior to the 1990's Ghana and other West African states had additionally faced challenges of dictatorship under one party states governed by the charismatic independence winning leaders followed by the wave of military take overs (Doucey, 2011). Across board, these military take overs and civil upheavals were justified with the reason of economic mismanagement, social hardships and bad governance even in cases clearly inspired by spillover thirst for political power (Ogueri, 1973).

While these conditions have led to insurgencies in some African countries, the Ghanaian case is not an exception. The economic, political and religious issues laying the foundations for insurgencies in the sub region can be pinpointed in Ghana. Currently in Ghana, collapsed economic enterprises have led to unemployment that heavily burdens the Government. Interethnic conflicts coupled with vices such as drug abuse and the proliferation of locally manufactured small arms are on the rise. In addition, Scholars have opined on the presence of divisive politicking along ethnic lines while religious tensions

and undercurrents begin to emerge. In view of this, some academics suggest Ghana is just sitting on a time bomb which might explode in any case of mismanagement. A report by the West African Network for Peace (WANEP) in 2013 stated, these situations, coupled with public discontent over the government's efforts to manage corruption and address economic hardships, the emergent violent attacks on some police stations and barracks by criminals and increasing incidents of target killings (homicide) might risk the present political and general stability in the country if not well managed.

For a new democracy like Ghana, coupled with inherent and diverse conflict drivers, it is eminent that an examination of peoples' receptiveness or inclination to insurgency is worthwhile. This is because, existing literature fall short in this respect. This study therefore adds to existing literature on challenges of emerging/new democracies.

This research is conducted within the framework of two theories. Firstly, the Frustration-Aggression theory which argues aggressiveness or violence perpetration is strongly instigated when people are frustrated deliberately and wrongly kept from reaching their goal (Berkowitz, 1989). Gurr (2000) and Murshed & Tadjoeddin (2007) indicated collective political violence is a result of relative deprivation which births frustration amongst the oppressed leading to aggression.

Secondly, is the human needs theory which generally assumes the human dimension of the causes of conflict in human societies. Human needs are basic vital commodities to ensure the survival of the human race. Human needs theorists assert that conflicts and aggression arise out of the situation of unmet needs and people have no other avenue to attain their needs (Burton, 1990). This theory puts forward that needs cannot be compromised upon (Marker, 2003).

These theories focus on prevention

of conflicts by identifying their sources. This is because they are able to predict the possible reaction of people to a particular causative factor of a conflict and gauge whether there is enough reasons for violent outbreaks.

To critically examine the possibilities of the rise of insurgency in Ghana and to assess the impacts on the state. The research sought to identify similar conditions between situations in Ghana and other countries in the sub-region currently experiencing insurgent movements and attacks. It also embarked on identifying the presence of human need factors that could lead to insurgencies in Ghana. This was to aid in establishing the tendency of the masses to join insurgent groups in the presence of resentment towards government. These objectives translated into the research seeking answers to some pertinent questions such as are there similar conditions in Ghana and other countries in the sub-region that are experiencing insurgent movements or attacks? What factors can lead to insurgencies in Ghana? Are there resentments, if any, strong enough to cause the formation or joining of insurgent groups?. some of these questions will be discussed in this article.

RESEARCH METHODS

Mixed method approach was deemed as the best approach for this study which combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in a single study. Quantitatively, the researcher conducted a survey using questionnaires generally with close ended questions whiles the Qualitative aspect relied on the use of secondary sources of data to draw inferences between the situations in other countries experiencing insurgencies.

The researcher randomly selected 50 respondents cutting across the various socio-economic classes whose responses through questionnaires constituted the primary data. The 50 respondents were

chosen from Madina, a cosmopolitan suburb of Accra. The choice of study area was influenced by the demographics of the inhabitants. According to the population and housing census of 2010, 77.1% of the migrants residing in the municipality resided elsewhere before migrating. This population cuts across all regions in Ghana. Migrants from the Eastern Region represented 31.1%, Volta Region accounted for 27.4% while Ashanti Region was responsible for 14.1% and the remainder of the figures cut across the other regions. Indeed, these migrants might have migrated from their regions for reasons relevant to my study. The cosmopolitan nature of this area presents me the opportunity of gathering data that is fairly representative of the entire country and a cross section of perspectives of the entire country converged at a single location.

Secondary data was gathered using library materials such as reports, news bulletins, journals, books and internet sources also such as google scholar, jstor, Scencedirect etc to allow for the inclusion of scholarly findings beyond the predetermined questions of the researcher. The primary data collected was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences while secondary data gathered was subjected to content analysis to give meaning conclusions and generalizations made.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A significant majority of 62% indicated they lacked one (1) or more of the basic needs while 38% said they lacked none of the needs. This finding lends support to CIA 2015 report which states that majority of Ghanaian live in poverty which is aware they lack their basic needs and therefore are unhappy with their standard of living. To Draman (2003), who posited that the low rating human development conditions are rather a high predisposition towards conflict.

Amongst the needs lacked are secu-

rity/safety, shelter, lack water, lack participation, self-esteem, food, job and social belonging. To Draman (2003), the correlation between lack of human needs and emergence of insurgencies in other countries gives credence insurgencies have been driven by the poor economic conditions under which people could barely survive. Under such conditions guerrillas join rebel groups to obtain basic needs such as food and clothing and the sense of belonging. In this regard, I submit that lack of these basic needs is a threat to the security of Ghana.

There is a clear indication of unsatisfactory standard of living hence the intention of 97.92% of the respondents to improve their standard of living. Respondents identified the role of government in improving on their standard of living if absent the government must be changed. The respondents' perceived roles of government in improving their standard of living include reducing the high cost of living through sound economy, providing jobs and other basic needs. I submit the Ghanaian populace is aware of the role government in enhancing their standard of living. This is a fair understanding as to the responsibility of the state as Hobbes' argued for the total development of the citizenry in all spheres.

A majority respondents of 77.1% affirm they are politically marginalization usually through the lack of participation is one of those factors that lead to the rise of insurgencies. It is worthwhile noting that in the situation where the majority of the respondents do not feel part of governance process, failure to deliver positive political goods gives rise to insurgencies in the view of Rotberg (2007).

Significantly, 82% did indicate that provision of the needs of the individual is the shared responsibility of both government and the individual however, 83.7% of the respondents indicate government has failed in providing their needs. It is usually in the face of these issues that in-

insurgent leadership emerges in response to domestic grievances (CIA, 2015). In this breath, a majority of 97.6% wants a change of government. This situation can easily breed insurgency by creating a "vulnerable population" according to Schaefer (2010). Of the above respondents, a majority of 66.7% want change of government through conservative means such as elections however 33.3% were much radical options such as coup d'etat and civil uprising. This indicates some Ghanaian citizenry are willing to engage in violence corroborating the claims of Ikejiaku (2009) that some circumstances can directly endanger democracy and good governance by negating the trust relationship between the population and the state. Collier (2006) argues these some instances drive people to violence by the extremity of the conditions and government irresponsiveness.

Though a majority of 72% of the respondents are not politically active due to lack of interest depicting the inadequacy of civic education in Ghana which can be manipulate to build a strong public support for insurgency. 39.6% of the politically active make their decisions as members of groups. Group identification can be exploited in view of Everton (2011) to aid the development of an insurgent consciousness. This is in line with Doucey's (2011) argument that these group acts are harnessed through mobilization of collective fears and exploitation to reach political objectives which in the presence of collective deprivation drives violence in the view of Freeman (2008).

Unfortunately, 24% of the respondents have indicated their willingness to joining insurgent groups which represents the presence of a vulnerable population prepared to fund or directly engage in the activities of such groups. Thus, these people believe that political violence can bring beneficial for social change as espoused by Fording (1997). A majority of 66.7% of the respondents ready to join

insurgent groups mentioned they would do so to have their needs provided.

Though majorities of 97.9% of the respondents do not belong to such groups, 50% of the respondents are not prepared to share information with authorities on the existence of such groups which a crucial factor that aids the development of insurgent groups. All in all a majority of 53.1% of the respondents felt they were not safe affirming collective fear based on state failure to provide security which can lead to insurgencies in a country according to Bujra (2002).

Documentary Review on the Ghanaian Conditions

The CIA fact book (2015) categorically stated the presidency of Ghana is facing the problem of the population being unhappy with their standard of living. Documentary review on economic, political and social conditions in Ghana, it is evident that the economic crisis in Ghana revealed about 28.5% of the Ghanaian population lives below the poverty line according to CIA report (2015). It is estimated there are about 600,000 unemployed graduates in Ghana, is the most critical problem of government. Even though it is the most critical, according to Dr. Kwakye of the IEA, this is the area government least performs as the result of their survey pegging unemployment at 20%. The observer concludes that the national resources are being depleted through corruption. Crocker, Hampson, & Aall (2007) asserts that countries with poor economies such as Ghana indirectly enhance the activities of rebel groups due to the lack of strong defence and intelligence gathering systems.

Tsikata & Seini (2004) have identified the regular deterioration of conflicts into violence driven by identities, inequalities and disparity in economic development and the availability of natural resources. Ghana is dominated by conflicts over land or boundaries, political power,

intra-ethnic conflicts over chieftaincy and recently intra and inter religious conflicts. In the view of Mbowura (2014) the culture of “impunity” and “lawlessness” displayed by disputing parties threatens social cohesion and national security.

Of Course we regrets the incidence of infiltration of religious and ethnicity into the political landscape is very disastrous for the country. In the other view, this clear danger of tribal politics is where political leaders appeal to the human natural fear of tribal belonging and superiority is deepening of tribal fault lines and mistrust can lead to conflict. Tettey, Puplampu, & Berman (2003) confirmed the presence of tribal sentiments in the Ghanaian body politics having analyzed the voting patterns of the various regions.

Similar conditions between Ghana and countries experiencing insurgencies in the West African sub-region

Literature available on neighbouring countries experiencing insurgencies have established that some causal factors accounting for insurgency are present in Ghana. These factors include political marginalisation from governance processes, widespread of poverty, lack of basic needs and poor standard of living all creating resentment towards government. These are the factors underpinning the need for change of political order by whatever means including the use of force. The citizenry support for these groups and harbouring them in the midst of civilians makes it difficult for insurgency to be eradicated.

The presence of human need factors that could lead to insurgency in Ghana

The study arrived at the findings that majority of the respondents have knowledge of their basic needs and have indicated they lacked one or more of those needs which include shelter, water, security, participation, identity, social belongingness and self-esteem demonstrat-

ing widespread poverty and low standards of living in Ghana. The respondents feel excluded from the governance of the country.

Tendency of the people to join insurgent groups

The presence of group political decision making can be exploited and used as the nucleus around which insurgent movements are developed. The displayed eagerness of the respondents to join insurgent groups explains the general feeling of insecurity in the country. Above all, majority of the respondents do not intend to report the presence of such groups to the appropriate authorities demonstrates the deteriorating trust relationship between government and the people.

Resentment towards government

In the face of these findings, the immediate inability of government to provide basic needs to improve their standard of living is fast creating the condition for question of legitimacy. These frustrations predispose the population to being lured into joining any insurgent group representing the section of the respondents subscribed to the use of violent force to change of government.

Related to this discussion of this article then I recommend, Firstly, Politically, there is the need for government to include the citizenry in the process of governance through frequent dialogue at all levels. It is also relevant to ensure accountability and control corruption to prevent the negative perception of looting of national resources. This is necessary because it creates the dangerous impression of a few being the benefactors of the existing political order by equitable distribution of resources.

Secondly, The security sector must play a more engaging role with the citizenry such that they can be willing to offer intelligence information as well as ensure security nationwide security pres-

ence to suppress the widespread feeling of insecurity amongst the people. Moreover, There is the need to engage in extensive education of the citizenry about the harms insurgents pose to them though insurgents come preaching redemption to gain the peoples' support to give them legitimacy but eventually pounce on them.

Thirdly, Government needs to address the needs of the people in order to maintain the country's reputation as West Africa's democratically stable and most peaceful country. The government must be abreast with the fact that Ghana being a developing country needs social infrastructure and goods. The dejection the people feel by the State usually channelled against the State by those movements. To the poor man, his concern is that of butter and bread for sustenance and less concerned about Ghana retaining her stability. To nip insurgent movements in the bud requires the government to provide the needs and address other grievances.

We also recommend that further researches must be carried out on the factors of ethnicity and religion in the need to prevent insurgencies in the country. These factors of identity cannot be undermined in the prevention of insurgency since they usually serve as the core around which people usually rally to execute insurgent ideologies.

CONCLUSION

In view of the claim that Ghana is the beacon of democracy and safe haven for peace seekers in West Africa, this research sought to ascertain for how long the peace can be maintained. A mixed method research approach discovered that the citizens are deprived of the basic necessities of life hence living in poor standard of living. These factors largely necessitated the rise of insurgencies in Nigeria, Mali and civil war in Cote d'Ivoire. The awareness of state failure to perform its responsibility and the diffusion of

insurgent ideas from other countries in the sub-region endangers the state such that the citizenry might rise to use force to reverse the social contract.

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