



CALL FOR CHAPTERS

Peace and Security in West Africa: Indigeneity, Politics, and the Local-Local Turn

Editors:

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Foreword:

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Background

West Africa has long been a focal point of global security concerns due to political instability, civil wars, persistent communal violence, environmental crises, and governance failures. Despite substantial security investments by regional bodies like ECOWAS and the African Union, as well as international actors and interventions such as Operation Serval, Operation Barkhane, and MINUSMA, insecurity continues to persist in the sub-region. For instance, the Sahel region has become a hotspot for violent extremism, with groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and ISIS Sahel taking advantage of socio-economic and political vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities have also provided opportunities for the re-emergence of coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger, along with the declining trust in democratic institutions. This underscores the fragility of governance structures and their failure to address citizens' grievances.

That notwithstanding, conventional approaches to security in West Africa often emphasise militarisation and state-centric policies (Omenma & Hendricks, 2018), sidelining the needs and agency of individuals, groups and communities most affected by insecurity (Williams, 2016; Dan Suleiman, 2020). Instead, many of the above approaches outsource the agency of local populations and communities (Maingangwa & Dan Suleiman, 2017; Malito & Dan Suleiman, 2024), sometimes with devastating consequences (Dan Suleiman, Onapajo & Mustapha, 2021; Malito & Dan Suleiman, 2023). In the end, state-centric, militarised and outsourced approaches fail to engage with the region's rich traditions of conflict resolution and community governance—such as the “palaver tree” in Côte d'Ivoire (see Abugbilla, 2023), the role of elders in disputes resolution in northern Ghana (Issifu & Bukari, 2022), *Sulhu* as peacebuilding in Nigeria (Akintayo, 2025), and *Ubuntu/Utu* (Achieng', 2024)—which have historically played a vital role in maintaining social harmony and cohesion.

Against this background, the Centre for Alternative Politics & Security, West Africa (CAPS-WA) calls for chapters for its upcoming edited volume titled *Peace and Security in West Africa: Indigeneity, Politics and the Local-Local Turn*. This volume builds on the “local turn” in International Relations and Peace Research, which emphasises local agency and knowledge. The “local turn” in peace and conflict research has garnered significant attention for emphasising the inclusion of local actors and contexts in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Mac Ginty, 2015; Richmond, 2011). However, this approach often falls short of genuinely centring the voices and agency of local communities, as it tends to treat “the local” as a monolithic category and privileges actors with access to elite

networks or international platforms (Paffenholz, 2015). Thus, while “local turn” represents a fundamental shift from the liberal peacebuilding project (Paffenholz, 2015), the failure of interventions to consider local perspectives and promote local micro-level agency and ownership highlights the need for conceptual clarity.

This volume proposes a "local-local turn" (Agyei, 2024a; 2024b; Agyei et al., 2023), which seeks to deconstruct the hierarchies within the local sphere itself and foreground the experiences, narratives, and agency of marginalised everyday communities—those often excluded even within local frameworks. The local-local turn challenges the instrumentalisation of "the local" by international and national actors, advocating instead for a deeper engagement with grassroots practices, traditional knowledge systems, and horizontal solidarities that authentically reflect the pluralistic realities of communities (Kappler, 2015). This approach calls for reimagining peace and security discourse, shifting from externally driven interventions to processes rooted in diverse local populations' self-determined priorities and lived experiences.

This edited volume, therefore, redefines the understanding and practice of security in West Africa by recentring Indigeneity, which embodies a connection to ancestral lands, traditional knowledge systems, and cultural practices (Corntassel, 2012), and a view of politics that transcends formal structures of governance to encompass the informal, everyday practices through which communities negotiate power and maintain social order (Chandler, 2017). The volume, therefore, offers an alternative approach to addressing the persistent insecurities in the region, considering the shortcomings of previous efforts by regional and international communities.

The collection will feature original research and critical analyses by leading scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. It will offer transformative ideas for building a resilient, inclusive, and secure West Africa. The volume will be an essential resource for academics, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to understand and address the root causes of insecurity in West Africa through innovative and transformative local solutions.

Suggested Sections and Themes

The volume will comprise four sections:

1. Foundations of Security: Interrogating Paradigms (3 chapters)

- This section will critically analyse existing security paradigms in West Africa, questioning the dominance of external frameworks and exploring why these approaches have largely failed to address root causes.
- Chapters under this section may focus on the limitations of state-centric and militarised strategies and theoretical critiques of regional and international security interventions.

2. Indigeneity and the Local-Local Turn (4 chapters)

- This section will examine how indigenous knowledge systems and traditions contribute to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.
- Chapters may include case studies of traditional peacebuilding practices and the role of community leadership and cultural values in addressing insecurity challenges and opportunities in integrating Indigenous practices into national security policies.

3. Human Security, Politics and Power Dynamics (4 chapters)

- This section will explore how political interests, governance failures, and power struggles shape insecurity in West Africa.
- Suggested topics include the role of political legitimacy in fostering or undermining security, how state-society relations impact peace and stability, and security as protecting individuals and communities from a broad spectrum of threats.
- Other themes include environmental security and its link to human resilience, socio-economic insecurities and the pursuit of equity in resource distribution, and the intersection of gender, youth, and security in fostering inclusive peace.

4. Success Stories and Innovations (4 chapters)

- This section will highlight successful examples of local, regional, or international interventions that align with CAPS-WA's pillars.
- Suggested topics include integrating technology and traditional practices in conflict resolution, grassroots movements and their role in preventing violent extremism, and lessons from collaborative regional security frameworks, such as ECOWAS initiatives.

Submission details

- **Abstract Deadline:** 28 February 2025
- **Word Count for Abstracts:** 300-400 words
- **Draft Full Chapter Deadline:** May 31, 2025
- **Submission to Publisher:** November 30, 2025
- **Chapter Length:** 6,000-8,000 words (including references)

Please send your abstracts, draft chapter and inquiries to Dr Prince Agyei Duah at prince.agyei@tuni.fi

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