

1. Introduction

“We live in an illusion of security in this country without recourse to the lessons of the past.”¹

1.1 Secessionist Conflict in “Western Togoland”

On 6 March 2017, during Ghana’s 60-year independence celebrations, Ghanaian security forces arrested the leadership of the *Homeland Study Group Foundation* (HSGF),² including its then 84-year-old founder, Charles Kwame Kudzordzi. Shortly after Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992, the former educationist and self-proclaimed Ewe-historian founded the HSGF in 1994 to openly advocate for the secession of parts of Ghana’s Northern, Upper East, and Volta Region to form the state of “Western Togoland” (see Map 1).³

When members of the HSGF were spotted wearing T-shirts reading “9 May 2017 is OUR DAY Western Togoland” Ghanaian security agencies suspected the group to make a declaration of independence and thus arrested its leadership.⁴ Apart from the suspiciously deliberate decision of the Ghanaian security forces to arrest the group on 6 March, thereby producing a nationalist statement during Ghana’s 60th independence celebration, the HSGF’s allusion to “9 May” was a reference to another symbolic date – in Ghana’s national history and the history of decolonisation at large.

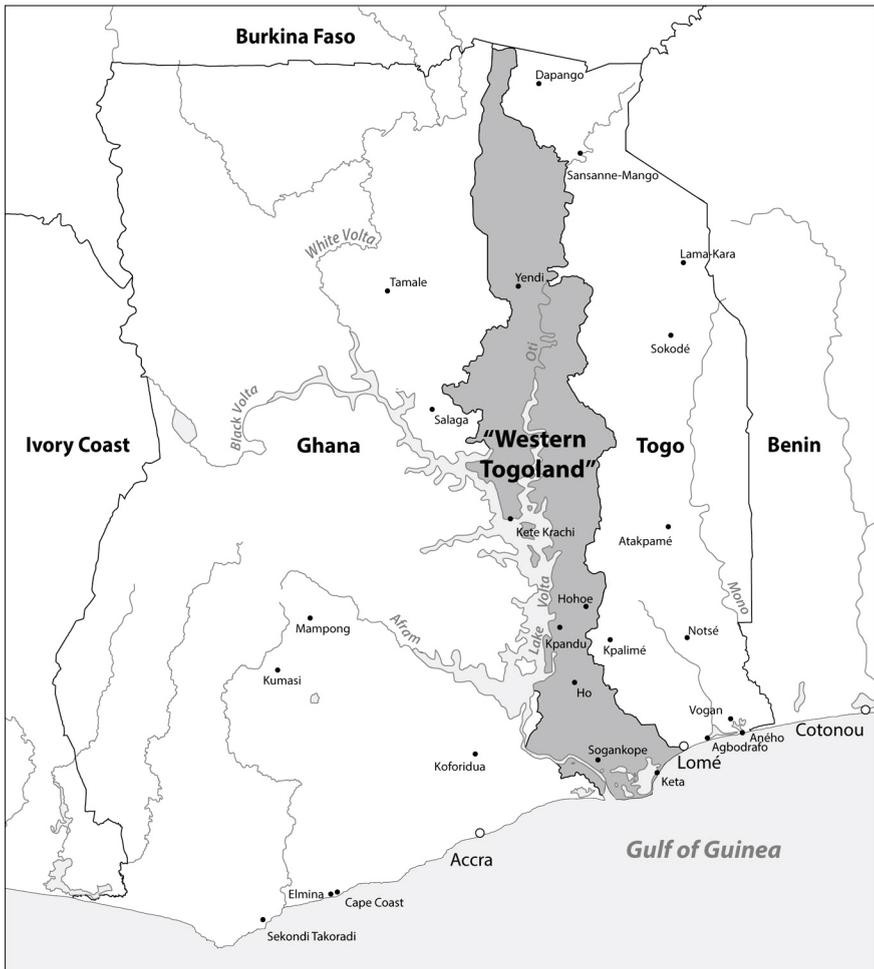
1 Samuel Adjei Sarfo, “The Secession of the Togolandese,” *GhanaWeb*, 26 September 2020.

2 A. B. Kafui Kanyi, “Police Arrest Volta Secessionist Group Leaders,” *Modern Ghana*, 08 March 2017.

3 Leticia Osei, “Police to Charge Volta ‘Separatist’ Group Members with Treason,” *Ultimate FM online*, 08 March 2017.

4 Tim Dzamboe, “Group to Declare ‘Volta Region’ Independence on May 9, 2017,” *Graphic Online*, 17 August 2016.

Map 1: "Western Togoland"



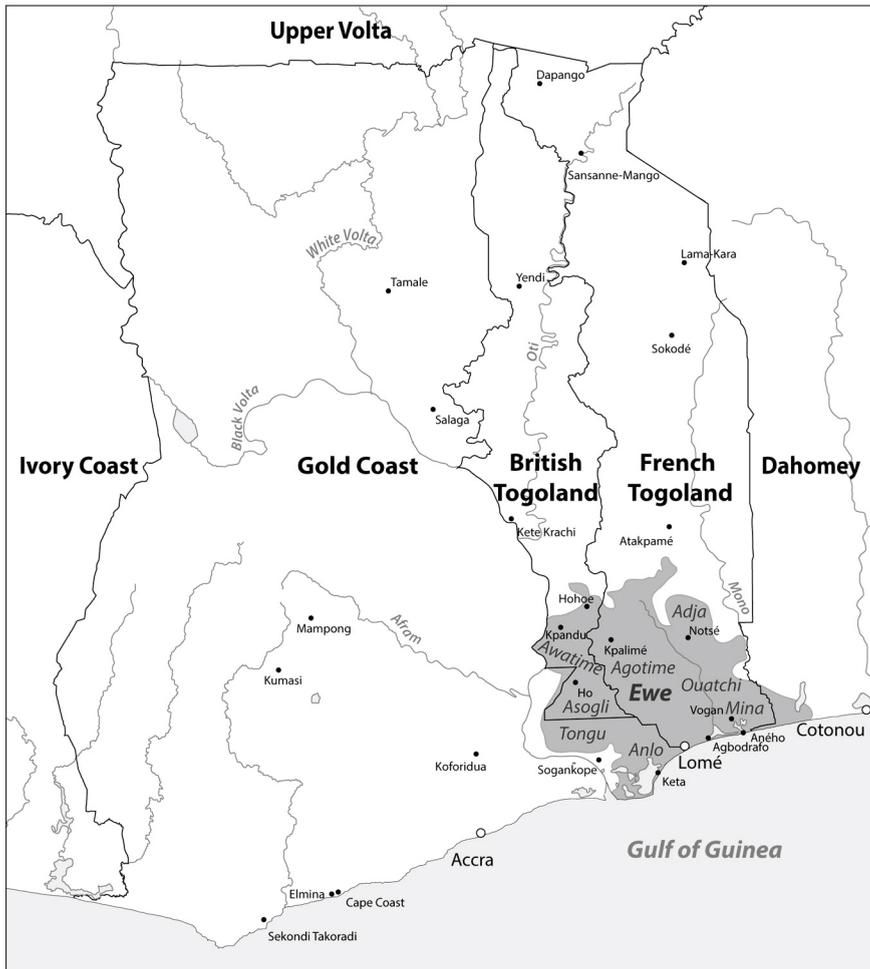
Source: Own creation.

The Division of Togoland

After World War I, the former colony of German Togoland was divided among France and Britain as spoils of war: "Eastern" Togoland became a League of Nations mandate territory under French administration and "Western" Togoland became a mandate territory under British administration. However, the new colonial border demarcation cut through the settlement area of the Ewe people(s),⁵ the majority of which found itself split among three territories: French mandated Togoland, British mandated Togoland, and the "Volta Triangle" of the British Gold Coast Colony (see Map 2).

5 The plurality-s aims to indicate the commonly held understanding that the Ewe-speaking people in the region neither ethnically nor politically formed a homogeneous unit in the pre-colonial period.

Map 2: Ewe Settlements & Togoland under UN Trusteeship (1946–1957)



Source: Own creation.

After World War II, the League of Nations Mandates System was transformed into the United Nations Trusteeship System and oversight of Togoland's path to self-determination developed a dynamic of its own: the division of the territory led to the formation of a unification movement, which at first campaigned for the unification of 'Eweland' and later for the reunification of French and British Togoland within its former 'German' borders. The unification movement petitioned the United Nations – a right which hardly any other dependent people had dreamed of having recourse to. By using the *right to petition* the unification movement soon turned into something like a “star turn”⁶ of the United

6 TNA (London), FO 371/138270, *Foreign policy of Togoland*, 1959, A.T. Oldham to H.F.T. Smith [Confidential Letter No. 5110/59], 24 April 1959.

Nations, where it regularly pointed out violations of the Trusteeship Agreements and human rights, discrediting the rule and prestige of France and Britain.

For these two colonial powers, the unificationists' campaign represented a concrete threat to the unity and integrity of their post-colonial associations of states: France wanted to keep French ("Eastern") Togoland in the French Union and Britain wanted to integrate British ("Western") Togoland into the Gold Coast, thereby keeping it within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Even though human rights gained international recognition and France and Britain were *de jure* the United Nations' "Administering Authorities" and not colonial powers, both powers ostracized the Ewe and Togoland unification movement, presenting unification as a minority demand that was unfeasible, unpractical, and overall, a serious threat that could set a potential precedent for the 'balkanisation' of the African continent at large.

In the end, after years of negotiations before the venues of the United Nations as well as political campaigns and colonial repression in the trusteeship territories themselves, the movement's *Dream of Unity*⁷ failed to materialise: On 9 May 1956, the United Nations supervised for the first time in its history an independence referendum, which eventually sealed the incorporation of the trusteeship territory of British ("Western") Togoland into the neighbouring colony of the British Gold Coast. Consequently, the referendum sealed the definitive separation of the trusteeship territory of British ("Western") Togoland from the trusteeship territory of French ("Eastern") Togoland and thereby put an end to the decade-long debate at the United Nations on the demand for the unification of the Ewe people and the two Togolands.

Under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, British Togoland and the Gold Coast merged to form a new state, Ghana, which became the first African colony to gain independence on 6 March 1957. Ghana's independence, thus, encompassed not only the independence of the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa but at the same time the independence of the first United Nations trusteeship territory. Ghana's independence on 6 March 1957 is widely deemed a milestone in the history of decolonisation.⁸ For many inhabitants of British Togoland, particularly in its northern regions, it represented an anticolonial victory. However, for the Ewe and Togoland unification movement, the referendum on 9 May 1956 was tantamount to an anticolonial defeat. Especially many Ewes criticised the integration because it degraded them to an ethnic minority within the Akan-dominated state of Ghana and further removed them from the Ewes in neighbouring French Togoland. Thus, until today, 9 May 1956 and 6 March 1957 respectively, symbolize the tension between two contesting nationalist visions for the region.

A Reawakened Western Togoland Nationalism

Although the HSGF is calling for neither the unification of the Ewe people nor of the two former Togolands anymore, its followers still embrace a territorial 'Western Togoland'

7 Claude E. Welch, *Dream of Unity: Pan-Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

8 Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire: The rise and fall of self-determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

identity,⁹ similar to the unification movement of the trusteeship era. In fact, the formation of the HSGF represented a direct revival of a territory-based Togoland-nationalism under Ewe leadership that since the partition of German Togoland has been propagated by the ('Western') Togoland Liberation Movement (TOLIMO) in the 1970s, itself a successor to the Togoland Congress of the 1950s, the Togoland Union of the 1940s and the *Bund der deutschen Togoländer* (Togobund) of the 1920/30s.¹⁰ At the same time, many HSGF followers embrace an ethnic Ewe identity,¹¹ for in the HSGF-produced maps of 'Western Togoland,' which are printed on T-Shirts and banners or distributed digitally on social media, the HSGF also lays claim to the Ewe-populated areas such, as Tongu or Anlo, that fall in the area of the former "Volta Triangle" of the British Cold Coast Colony, which historically never belonged to Togoland (see Map 2).

Since the HSGF's founding in 1994, Charles Kwame Kudzordzi and his followers claimed that the 1956 UN-supervised referendum was rigged and 'Western Togoland' was therefore illegally integrated into Ghana.¹² Besides the alleged invalidity of the referendum, according to the HSGF, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and Queen Elisabeth II allegedly tied the referendum's result to a moratorium, which required an approval of the 'union' between the Gold Coast and British ("Western") Togoland within 50 years; otherwise, the union would be void.¹³ As long as the 'union' was not approved, the people of 'Western Togoland' were merely "plebiscite citizens in Ghana."¹⁴ Ghanaian historians were alarmed by the HSGF's "bogus and unsubstantiated claims about the scope and import of the plebiscite,"¹⁵ stressing "the legality of the integration of British Togoland into Ghana."¹⁶ When in 2007 the alleged 'union document' could not be produced, the HSGF contrived a narrative that Kwame Nkrumah, the figurehead of Ghanaian independence, probably made said document disappear. Losing much of its credibility, public interest in the HSGF dwindled – at least until the arrest of its leadership during the 60-year independence celebrations on 6 March 2017.

Kudzordzi and two of his comrades-in-arms were charged with treason. However, the Attorney-General dropped the charges due to their advanced age. Kudzordzi was cautioned and dismissed after signing a pledge of good behaviour along with a docu-

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- 9 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, *A Stolen Nation and Her Deprived Nationals: (Franco-British Atrocities in Togoland). An Irredentist Nationalism* (Ho: Win I.C.T. Centre, 2016).
- 10 For his part, Kudzordzi makes no secret of his Germanophilia and glorification of the *Deutsch Togobund* as the national boundaries of the longed-for state of "Western Togoland" are based on the borders drawn first by German colonial officials.
- 11 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, *A history of Eweland: A Resource Document for Ewe Socio-Political Studies* (Ho: E.P. Church Publishing Ltd., n.d.).
- 12 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, interview by Julius Heise, 19 November 2018, Ho, Ghana.
- 13 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, interview by Julius Heise, 21 November 2018, Ho, Ghana.
- 14 Dzamboe, "Group to declare 'Volta region' independence on May 9, 2017."
- 15 D. E. K. Amenumey, "The Brouhaha over Togoland Plebiscite. The Historical Fact," *GhanaWeb*, 03 September 2016.
- 16 Obed Y. Asamoah, *The political history of Ghana (1950–2013): The experience of a non-conformist* (Bloomington, IN, USA: AuthorHouse, 2014), p. 23.

ment acknowledging that the continuation of the HSGF's secessionist activities is likely to pose a "threat to national security."¹⁷

The Division of the Volta Region

To understand why the Ghanaian Attorney-General attorney found compelled to threaten the three elderly HSGF leaders with imprisonment unless they give up their activities, it is important to note that the HSGF's demand for secession not only posed a threat to Ghana's one-nation-agenda but at the same time exacerbated a dilemma for the newly elected Ghanaian government.

A couple of months earlier, during the 2016 parliamentary elections,¹⁸ the presidential candidate of the conservative *New Patriotic Party* (NPP), Nana Akufo-Addo, won against the *National Democratic Congress* (NDC) of incumbent President John Mahama. Akufo-Addo's victory was in part due to the campaign promise to representatives of various ethnic groups that Ghana's intrastate boundaries would be redrawn to create new regions. In January 2017, barely a month after the elections, Akufo-Addo ordered the creation of the *Ministry of Regional Reorganisation and Development*. In the northern part of the Volta Region, the *Joint Consultative Committee* (JCC), composed mainly of chiefs from the Guan ethnic sub-group, petitioned to President Akufo-Addo on 6 June 2017 calling for the creation of a separate region from the existing Volta Region: the Oti Region (see Map 3).¹⁹

A government-appointed commission of enquiry subsequently determined that there was a need and necessity in Ghana for a *New Regions Referendum* to decide on the division of four regions to create six new regions. While the report of the government-appointed commission argued that the regional reorganization was "for enhanced socio-economic development and not based on ethnic, cultural and religious issues,"²⁰ the proposed new regional lines and support for them fell on an almost perfect parallel to where the new Oti Region would separate the Guans in the north from the Ewes in the south (compare Map 2 and Map 3).

The ruling NPP-government was in a predicament: Since it had to support the one-nation-agenda vis-à-vis the secessionist HSGF, at the same time it could not afford the impression that it was bowing to the pressure of ethnic appeasement. Soon voices were raised that the referendum on the redrawing of the internal border was an unconstitutional attempt at ethnic appeasement, representing a first step towards a possible descent into the 'balkanisation' of the Volta Region and a fragmenting "one-dialect-one-

17 Tim Dzamboe, "Western Togoland "Secessionists" Discharged, Bonded," *Graphic Online*, 20 July 2017; Osei, "Police to charge Volta 'separatist' group members with Treason"; "Member Profile: Western Togoland," UNPO, accessed 09 July 2020, available from <https://unpo.org/downloads/2363.pdf>.

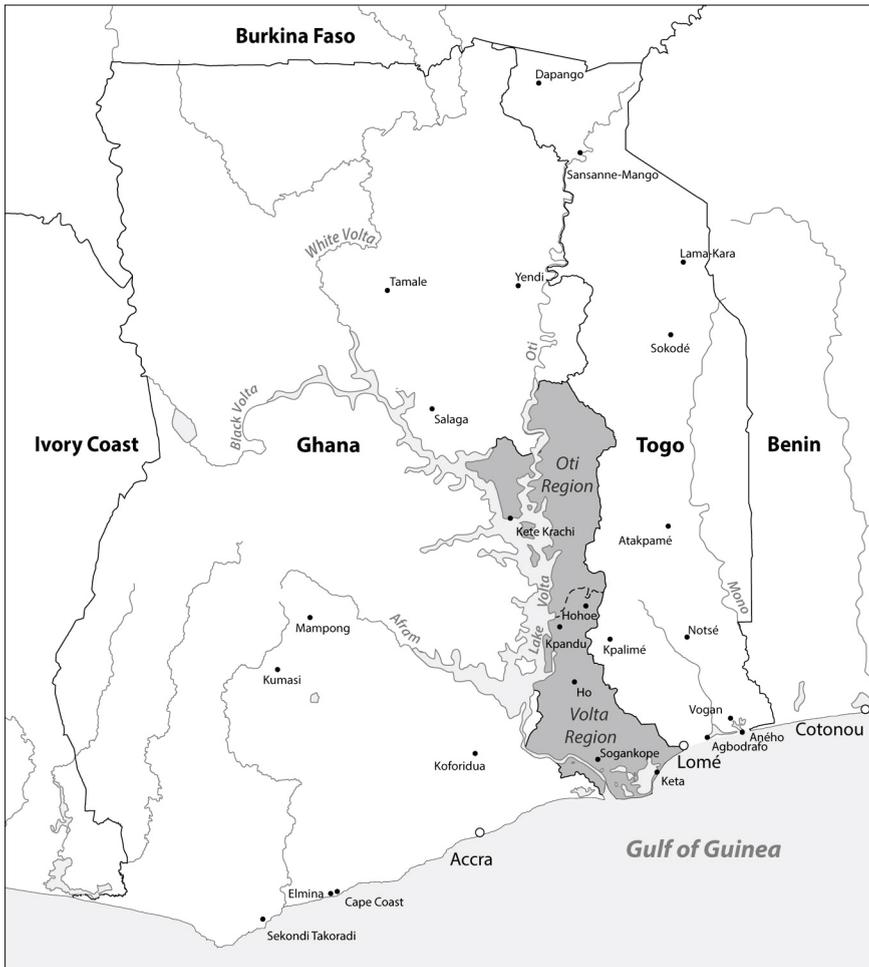
18 Nathalie Raunet Robert-Nicoud, "Elections and Borderlands in Ghana," *African Affairs* 118, no. 473 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adz002>.

19 Government of Ghana, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Creation of New Regions: Equitable Distribution of National Resources for Balanced Development" (2018), p. 91.

20 Government of Ghana, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Creation of New Regions: Equitable Distribution of National Resources for Balanced Development" (2018), p. 24.

region” system.²¹ Particularly in the Ewe-dominated southern part of the Volta Region, complaints were raised that voting was only allowed in the areas of the proposed Oti Region – a provision, which would prejudice the outcome of the referendum.²²

Map 3: Reorganization of the Volta Region



Source: Own creation.

In 2018, this prompted the US-based *Association of Volta Youth* to petition UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, to intervene. The petition likened the *New Regions Referendum* to the British Togoland referendum of 1956, condemning it as “yet another

21 Komla Dzigbodi-Adjimah, “Oti Region,” *Gbi Voice*, 22 March 2017.

22 Nii L. Lartey, “Ohene, Elizabeth Asks: Who Speaks for Ewes?,” *Citi Newsroom*, 02 November 2018.

fraudulent plebiscite.”²³ Desiring to secede the entire region from Ghana, Kudzordzi opposed the fragmentation of the region, which before Ghana’s independence, as Kudzordzi pointed out, was called Trans-Volta-Togoland: “A trusteeship territory – it’s an aggression to divide it!”²⁴ Kudzordzi regarded the *New Regions Referendum* as yet another weaponization of a popular consultation by the government in Accra against the traditional inhabitants of the Volta Region, particularly the Ewes, who over the last 150 years have seen the borders around them constantly change due to foreign interests.²⁵ For Kudzordzi, the division of the Volta Region was just another item on the growing list of Ewe indignities in an Akan-dominated Ghana. Instances, such as the 2007 forcible eviction of hundreds of residents from Dudzorme Island in Lake Volta’s Digya National Park, during which more than 100 of the forcibly evicted died when a ferry capsized,²⁶ or when the NPP-MP Kennedy Agyapong’s held his “Kill all the Ewes” hate speech in 2012,²⁷ led Kudzordzi to the conclusion: “Today we are not safe. Insecurity is in our land.”²⁸ Accordingly, the HSGF has...

“...decided to use force and leave. Yet, we are afraid. The nations of this world who will say ‘No. Why should you go by means of force? You must go democratically.’ What is the meaning of democracy? Does it not affect us as human beings too? This is the stage we have reached. And we are deciding now strongly, firmly to go, even if the United Nations, even if Britain would assist Ghana to commit genocide to all of us in the land, they could do so. They could decide to do so...”²⁹

Similarly, when opposing youth groups clashed violently at a hearing in the run-up to the *New Regions Referendum*,³⁰ the Asogli State Council, a representation of Ewe chiefs from the capital city of the Volta Region, Ho, voiced its opposition to the referendum as it represented apparently “a threat to the cherished peace we have enjoyed over the years in the Volta Region.”³¹ These statements were taken seriously: In the run-up to the ballot, 1,000 extra security personnel were deployed to the then still northern part of the Volta

23 Association of Volta Youth, “Petition,” accessed 22 March 2021, available from <https://www.modernghana.com/news/828252/volta-group-in-the-usa-petitions-un-over-split.html>.

24 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, interview by Julius Heise, 19 November 2018, Ho, Ghana.

25 Vincent Djokoto, “Eeto and the Partitions of Eenyigba,” *My Joy Online*, 30 April 2020.

26 Amnesty International, “Ghana: Forced Evictions in the Digya National Park Area Must Stop,” news release, 19 April 2006, accessed 10 June 2019, available from <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/68000/afz280012006en.pdf>.

27 *GhanaWeb*, “Kill All Ewes in the Ashanti Region – Kennedy Agyapong,” 16 April 2012.

28 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, interview by Julius Heise, 21 November 2018, Ho, Ghana.

29 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, interview by Julius Heise, 19 November 2018, Ho, Ghana.

30 Samuel Akumatey, “Hohoe and Buem Youth Clash at Hearing on New Region,” *Ghana News Agency*, 20 January 2018.

31 Asogli State Council, “Oti Region Referendum: Entire Region Must Vote,” news release, 03 October 2018, accessed 24 February 2020, available from <https://starrfm.com.gh/2018/10/oti-region-referendum-entire-region-must-vote-asogli-state/>.

Region.³² Journalists were banned.³³ In the end, in December 2018, according to official figures, an astonishing 99% voted in favour of becoming part of the new Oti Region.³⁴

Six months after the *New Regions Referendum*, on 5 May 2019, that is, again just before the symbolic 9 May anniversary of the 1956 British Togoland referendum, the HSGF protested with T-shirts reading “Independence for Western Togoland – No Division of Volta.”³⁵ Again, eight members, including Kudzordzi, were arrested by the Ghanaian security forces. Once more, the scale of the swoop was a national statement by the Ghanaian state that provided some bizarre imagery: described as a “Rambo-style” operation,³⁶ 26 armed police officers, 20 armed military personnel and some Bureau of National Investigation operatives whisked the eight arrested HSGF members to the 66 Artillery Regiment in Ho, where a waiting helicopter airlifted them to Accra. Video footage of the arrest shows the armed military personnel surrounding the by-then frail Kudzordzi, who approached the helicopter on a cane only with difficulty.³⁷ However, when the court hearings began two months later, as before, on the government’s instructions, the Attorney-General withdrew the charges due to Kudzordzi’s advanced age and general health conditions. The defendants were cautioned and released by July 2019.

Securitising “Western Togoland” Secessionism

Despite the previous arrests and judicial caveats, Kudzordzi could not be deterred in his determination: On 16 November 2019, he gathered his supporters at a rally, which was disguised as a funeral procession to elude the Ghanaian intelligence services, and publicly declared the secession and independence of ‘Western Togoland’.³⁸ Broadcasted via social media platforms, the livestream showed a crowd raging with joy and Kudzordzi being driven from the scene.³⁹ Soon after the declaration, pictures circulated on social media platforms, showing the supposed new country’s armed forces at the *Western Togoland Gorilla Army* training camp.⁴⁰

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- 32 Abu Mubarik, “Over 1000 Security Personnel Deployed for Oti Region Referendum,” *Pulse GH*, 26 December 2018.
- 33 *Starr FM Online*, “Journalists Barred from Covering Oti Referendum,” 27 December 2018.
- 34 Jude Duncan, “Referendum: Oti Residents Okay New Region with 99% YES Vote,” *Citi Newsroom*, 26 February 2020.
- 35 Jonas Nyabor, “Eight Arrested for Trying to Declare Volta Region an Independent State,” *Citi Newsroom*, 06 May 2019.
- 36 Rockson-Nelson E. Dafeamekpor, “Rambo-Style Arrest of ‘Western Togoland’ Separatists Worrying – MP,” news release, 07 May 2019, accessed 23 November 2021, available from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Rambo-style-arrest-of-Western-Togoland-separatists-worrying-MP-744471>.
- 37 Mary Mensah, “Suspected Secessionists Charged for Conspiring to Commit Treason Felony,” *Graphic Online*, 08 May 2019.
- 38 Peter Atsu Ahiayano, “Secessionist Armed Conflict Looms in Ghana as the World Is Silent,” *Modern Ghana*, 23 December 2019; A. R. Gomda, “Manhunt for Papavi as New Group Emerges,” *Daily Guide Network*, 22 November 2019; Benjamin Aklama, “Separatist Movement Declares Independence for Western Togoland,” *Citi Newsroom*, 17 November 2019.
- 39 *Western Togoland Independence Declaration* (Ewe TV Online, 2019), YouTube, accessed 26 November 2021, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J8Le-8hphI>.
- 40 Emmanuel Ayamga, “National Security Confirms Operations of Western Togoland Militia Group; Goes After Them,” *Pulse GH*, 18 December 2019; “New Photos Revealing ‘Military Opera-

From this moment on, various Ghanaian security analysts were alarmed and publicly called out the apparent lapsus by Ghanaian intelligence agencies,⁴¹ raising concerns that the aspirations of the Western Togoland secessionists could take on violent dimensions such as that of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.⁴² Numerous newspaper commentators and established security experts made appeals for a harsh and rapid crackdown:⁴³ “Now that the issue is becoming an *existential threat* to the Volta Region and Ghana, stakeholders including chiefs, politicians and duty bearers from the region must be seen and heard doing *something to contain the threat*.”⁴⁴ Some analysts considered “the stability of the entire country and, perhaps, even the entire West African sub-region” at risk.⁴⁵ Others cautioned that the secession campaign by the HSGF might cause “tribal war.”⁴⁶ Public calls were made to increase police presence in the Volta Region.⁴⁷

Endorsed by such calls, the Ghanaian security agencies launched a crackdown and fugitive hunt for Kudzordzi as well as members and suspected sympathisers of the HSGF. In the following two weeks some thirty people were arrested.⁴⁸ In a video message from his hiding place, Kudzordzi expounded that the Ghanaian authorities had forced the HSGF into exile and that those arrested had been put in prisons without trial and many people had disappeared. Kudzordzi called upon his supporters to remain peaceful in the face of antagonism from the Ghanaian security agencies. Yet, he reiterated his stance on secession by calling on international support: “I do appeal to the international world, those in the corridors of peace [...] to come here, to put the situation under control, [and] to avoid any possible mayhem.”⁴⁹ From his hide-out, Kudzordzi liaised with the Belgium-based *Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization* (UNPO), which in January 2022

tions’ of Western Togoland Pop up,” GhanaWeb, accessed 18 December 2019, available from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/New-photos-revealing-military-operations-of-Western-Togoland-pop-up-818080>.

- 41 Jonas Nyabor, “Clamp down on Western Togoland ‘Militia Group’ – Security Analyst to Government,” *Citi Newsroom*, 18 December 2019; Gomda, “Manhunt for Papavi as new group emerges.”
- 42 Atsu Ahiany, “Secessionist Armed Conflict Looms In Ghana As The World Is Silent”; Maria Ketzmerick, *Staat, Sicherheit und Gewalt in Kamerun: Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf den Dekolonisierungsprozess unter französischer UN-Treuhandverwaltung*, Postcolonial studies 36 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019).
- 43 Kwame Acheampong, “Deal with Western Togoland Security ‘Training’ Reports – Adam Bonaa to Akufo-Addo,” *Starr FM Online*, 18 December 2019.
- 44 Nicholas Mawunyah, “The Complexities of the Western Togoland Problem,” *My Joy Online*, 26 September 2020, authors emphasis.
- 45 Kwame Okoampa-Ahoofe, JR., “Let Us Settle the Western Togoland Problem Once and for All,” *Modern Ghana*, 08 December 2019.
- 46 Felix Anim-Appau, “Western Togoland Brouhaha Is Recipe for Tribal War – Antwi-Danso Warns,” *My Joy Online*, 26 November 2019; Kabu Nartey, “Our Independence Is Not Complete Without Western Togoland,” *My Joy Online*, 04 December 2019.
- 47 Edward Williams, ““We Have No Support for Secessionist Activities”-Fodome Traditional Council,” *Ghana News Agency*, 16 January 2020.
- 48 “Western Togoland: Members of HSGF Systematically Persecuted by Ghanaian Authorities,” UNPO, accessed 09 July 2020, available from <https://unpo.org/article/21783>.
- 49 Charles Kwami Kudzordzi, *Founder of Western Togoland Papavi sends ‘Love Note’ to President Akufo-Addo* (GhanaNews TV, 2019), YouTube, accessed 15 June 2021, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5phVqGsO9A>.

brought the matter officially to the attention of the UN, when it filed a complaint to the UN's *Working Group on Arbitrary Detention*, alleging that the government of Ghana was systematically misusing the criminal justice system to target the HSGF.⁵⁰ In June 2022, the UNPO followed up with a submission of a *Universal Periodic Review* to the UN Human Rights Council on the subject of Ghana's crackdown on members of the HSGF.⁵¹

In the meantime, Ghanaian media outlets hotly debated the influence and legacy of these very 'international corridors of peace' invoked by Kudzordzi. Journalists dug up 60-year-old UN documents, strongly arguing for and against the historical (il)legality of the integration of British Togoland into the Gold Coast.⁵² In the course of the debate some notions of the United Nations' colonial complicity were expressed: "Ghana's rule over Western Togoland is [...] an injustice, a trespass, a tyranny, worse than colonialism. [...] that annexation of Western Togoland by Ghana for the purposes of expansionism or preponderance have been allowed, questioned the sacredness of the UN trust."⁵³ After a radio anchor in Sogakofe, South Tongu, criticised the Volta Regional Minister, Archibald Yao Letsa, for the heavy-handed crackdown, the latter responded that "some media houses have become mouthpieces for the group whose activities threaten the peace and security of the country. But [...] they will be held liable if national security takes action against the group."⁵⁴ The Ghanaian Bureau of National Investigation arrested the radio's director and shut the radio station down on grounds of national security concerns,⁵⁵ which caused a massive backlash by press and NGOs.⁵⁶

Eventually, the training camp of the *Western Togoland Gorilla Army* was located at Wli Todzi, near Hohoe, at the Togo-Ghana border. Two separate counter-insurgency operations by the Ho-based 66 Artillery Regiment and the Ghana Police Service led to over 70

50 "UNPO Submits Complaint to UN on Detention of Western Togoland Activists," UNPO, accessed 02 August 2022, available from <https://www.unpo.org/article/22183>.

51 "Western Togoland," UNPO, accessed 02 August 2022, available from <https://unpo.org/article/222>.

52 Enimil Ashon, "Western Togoland: Blame UK and UN, Not Ghana," *Graphic Online*, 22 November 2019; Cameron Duodu, "The 'Western Togoland' Issue," *Peace FM Online*, 28 November 2019; Appiah Brobbey, "Opinion: History of Trans Volta Togoland," *My Joy Online*, 28 November 2019; Richard Amoako Bahh, "The UN Document on the Ghana and 'Western Togoland' Unionization," *GhanaWeb*, 06 October 2020; Mawunyah, "The complexities of the Western Togoland problem."

53 Not to be mistaken with the UN Trusteeship System; Seth Mifetu, "Why Western Togoland Restoration Struggle Is Lawful," *Modern Ghana*, 27 November 2019.

54 *Daily Guide Network*, "Letsa Warns Media Promoting Secessionists," 10 January 2020.

55 Nii L. Lartey, "NCA Shuts down Radio Tongu over National Security Concerns," *Citi Newsroom*, 12 February 2020.

56 *Committee to Protect Journalists*, "Radio Tongu Broadcaster Suspended, Director Arrested in Ghana," 11 March 2020.

arrests by May 2020.⁵⁷ However, many of the suspected secessionists were discharged in subsequent court hearings.⁵⁸

Yet, despite the military-aided crackdown, more separatist groups, such as the *Peoples' Liberation Council of Western Togoland*,⁵⁹ the *United Freedom Fighters*,⁶⁰ the *Association of Western Togoland Youths*,⁶¹ or the *Concerned Citizens of Western Togoland* made themselves publicly known.⁶² The latter claimed, given that Western Togoland's "fundamental human rights always have been abused, they have come to the point of no return in becoming a state on its own."⁶³ A former MP from the Volta Region, Kosi Kedem, who has been echoing the HSGF's thesis of the absent union document,⁶⁴ argued that Ghana did not legally exist.⁶⁵ While President Akufo-Addo, for his part, invoked Ghana's national cohesion, he contended that the Western Togoland secessionists "do not understand nation-building."⁶⁶

In the meanwhile, some analysts opposed the hardliners that called for the heavy-handed crackdown, pleading that "government overreaction [...] should not escalate into full blown destructive wars."⁶⁷ Especially John Mahama, presidential candidate of the oppositional NDC, which maintains a stronghold in the Volta Region, condemned the ruling NPP for the deployment of military and security agencies in the Volta Region as a strategy to intimidate people ahead of the voter registration for the parliamentary elections in December 2020.⁶⁸ "The military siege of the Volta Region and other locations during the [voters] registration exercise created an intimidatory atmosphere akin to a

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- 57 *My Joy Online*, "17 Members of Separatist Group Rounded up in Dawn Swoop," 24 December 2019; Mohammed Alabira, "18 Suspected Western Togoland Separatists Arrested in Bimbilla," *Citi Newsroom*, 30 December 2019; Fred Q. Asare, "Update: Military Invades 'Secessionist' Training Camp, Arrests 21 Trainees," *My Joy Online*, 17 February 2020; Fred Q. Asare, "Western Togoland: 14 Suspected Secessionists Arrested at Kpando Aziavi," *My Joy Online*, 30 May 2020.
- 58 Justice Agbenorsi, "Court Discharges 20 Suspected Western Togoland Secessionists," *Graphic Online*, 04 April 2020.
- 59 Seth Mifetu, "How Divine Odonkor Saved Ghana from Torrential Encumbrances," *Modern Ghana*, 08 August 2020.
- 60 Peter Atsu Ahianyio, "New Separatist Group Pops-up in Volta Region," *Modern Ghana*, 19 August 2019.
- 61 Enimil Ashon, "West Togoland: Let's Go to UN," *My Joy Online*, 05 October 2020.
- 62 Gomda, "Manhunt for Papavi as new group emerges."
- 63 *Rainbow Radio*, "No Amount of Arrest Will Stop Us – Citizens of Western Togoland," 18 September 2020.
- 64 Amoako Bahh, "The UN document on the Ghana and 'Western Togoland' unionization"; Kate Skinner has previously discussed Kedem's stance on the status of Western Togoland, Kate Skinner, "Local Historians and Strangers with Big Eyes," *History in Africa* 37 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2010.0022>.
- 65 *GhanaWeb*, "Ghana Doesn't Legally Exist – Kosi Kedem," 30 September 2020.
- 66 *Modern Ghana*, "Attempts to Cede Volta Region from Ghana Misguided – Prez Akufo-Addo," 09 June 2021.
- 67 Andy C. Kwawukume, "Revisiting the Road to Secession Agitation in the Volta Region," *Modern Ghana*, 08 December 2019.
- 68 Andres Atta-Asamamoah, "Are Africa's Borders Sacrosanct? Ghana's Western Togoland Crisis," Institute for Security Studies (ISS), accessed 11 December 2020, available from <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/are-africas-borders-sacrosanct-ghanas-western-togoland-crisis>; *Starr FM Online*, "Separatist Movement Intended to Destabilize Volta Reg. Ahead of Polls – MP" 30 September 2020.

nation at war.”⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly the NDC’s founder and Ghana’s former Ewe-born president, John Rawlings, put his political weight into the balance, condemning that the “deployment of the military and other security agencies in some parts of the Volta and Oti Regions is generating animosity especially amongst innocent citizens.”⁷⁰

While Ghana’s Minister of National Security, Albert Kan-Dapaah, justified the use of military personnel by claiming that the Ghana Police Service was at times not up to the task when it comes to the level of security equipment required, several of Ghana’s prominent security analysts called for his removal saying that events in the Volta Region apparently vindicated that “the practice of ‘civilianising’ the military cannot be justified, cautioning that the military may lose its relevance and respect.”⁷¹ A media commentator’s historical analysis of Ghana’s security personnel concluded that Ghana’s security system is not fit for the separatists anyway, concluding that “at first gunshot emanating from these Western Togoland, every one of them will run into the bush.”⁷² And shots were fired.

On 25 September 2020, events came thick and fast: militants of the previously unknown *Western Togoland Restoration Front* (WTRF) blocked several streets into the Volta Region, stormed two police stations, freed inmates, kidnapped three officers, stole two vehicles and a dozen or so machine guns from the armoury. During an exchange of gunfire, a member of the WTRF and the Chief Superintendent were shot.⁷³ The WTRF subsequently issued a press release regarding their attempt to “assert their sovereignty on the Volta Region,”⁷⁴ and called on the Ghanaian government to negotiate a ban on all its political activities including the withdrawal of all security forces from the Volta Region. By October 2020, another militia faction calling itself the *Dragons of Western Togoland Military Army* sent a note of caution to the Regional Minister, Letsa, claiming that “4,000-plus persons have been trained in another country to rescue their motherland” within 3 weeks.⁷⁵ This claim has not materialised and operations by the Ghanaian security forces have had some success in containing the situation.

The ensuing media discussion was in full swing, and the spotlight was on historians and security analysts who offered different assessments of the causes of and possible responses to the secessionist threat.⁷⁶ Security analysts engaged in an exchange of blows

69 GhanaWeb, “Election 2020: ‘Military Siege’ of Volta Region Creates Atmosphere of Fear – Mahama,” 04 December 2020.

70 Kobina A. Amoakwa, “Statement by Former President Rawlings on Deployment of Security Agencies in Volta, Oti Regions,” news release, 29 July 2020, accessed 27 October 2021, available from <https://twitter.com/officeofjJR/status/1277480313070006272/photo/1>.

71 MyJoy Online, “Kan Dapaah’s Attack on Security Analysts Laughable – Adib Saani,” 12 February 2020.

72 Adjei Sarfo, “The secession of the Togoland.”

73 GhanaWeb, “Detailed Account of How Western Togoland Group Staged Successful Attacks in Volta Region,” 04 October 2020.

74 Ghana News Agency, “Deal with Secessionist Group-Awoamefia,” 27 September 2020.

75 Class FM online, “Our 4000-Man Army Dragons’ll Re-Claim ‘The Motherland’ in 21 Days – Togoland Warn Amewu, Letsa, Ablakwa,” 14 October 2020.

76 Listing the news articles here would go beyond the scope of this chapter. The news outlet GhanaWeb has compiled a dossier on the debate: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/dossier.php?ID=605>.

with the Minister of National Security, again calling for his removal over the failure of intelligence and security agencies.⁷⁷

Indeed, the events and public debate had an effect as it eventually prompted a whole series of reforms addressing Ghana's national security challenges.⁷⁸ In the following, Ghana's 25-year-old *Security and Intelligence Act* was reformed,⁷⁹ transforming the Bureau of National Investigation into a National *Intelligence* Bureau (NIB), thereby conflating core competencies of policing and criminal investigation with increased intelligence-driven activities.⁸⁰ The reform furthermore updated Ghana's pyramidal security architecture, rooted in the colonial period,⁸¹ and created additional committees for the National Security Council (NSC). Furthermore, memberships of the Regional Security Councils (RegSeCs) and District Security Councils (DisSeCs) were expanded to include community leaders with expertise in human security. To encourage public vigilantism as a direct reaction to the violence by the Western Togoland secessionists in the Volta Region, in June 2020, the Ministry of National Security and the *National Commission for Civic Education* (NCCE)⁸² launched a workshop campaign with representatives of civil society and religious communities, as well as district directors of the police and the newly created NIB.⁸³ Finally, under the directive of President Akufo-Addo, a comprehensive *National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism* has been introduced – the first document of this kind in Ghana's history.⁸⁴

77 *Starr FM Online*, "Western Togoland: There Was No Intelligence Failure – Govt," 27 September 2020; *Happy Ghana*, "Keep Quiet and Let Experts Speak – Information Minister Chided over Western Togoland Comments," 30 September 2020; *Happy Ghana*, "Kan Dapaah Must Resign – Adib Sani on Western Togoland Brouhaha," 29 September 2020.

78 *Ghana News Agency*, "It Is Our Responsibility to Prevent Violent Extremism – National Security," 01 September 2021.

79 *Ghana News Agency*, "Parliament Discusses Security and Intelligence Agencies Bill, 2020," 12 August 2020; After Jerry Rawlings came to power in a 1981 coup d'état and he put Ghana back on the path of multiparty democracy through the 1992 referendum. The Security and Intelligence Act of 1996 (Act 526 – a security sector reform) was the first law passed after Rawlings' election victory in December 1996. See Avinash Paliwal, "Ghana's National Security Ministry Ignites Old Fears After Fracas over Photos," *The Conversation*, 30 May 2021.

80 *Ghana News Agency*, "Parliament discusses Security and Intelligence Agencies Bill, 2020."

81 Obuobi provides a good overview for Ghana's security and intelligence architecture before the reform: Patrick P. Obuobi, "Evaluating Ghana's Intelligence Oversight Regime," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 31, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2017.1375841>.

82 *Business Ghana*, "NCCE Calls for Peaceful Co-Existence," 24.08.2021; *Ghana News Agency*, "NCCE Cautions Security Against Threats of Vigilantism, Fundamentalism and Secessionism," 09 May 2021.

83 Per the Constitution of Ghana implement and oversee programs intended to inculcate in the citizens of Ghana awareness of their civic responsibilities and maintain with the community the sense of the principles and objectives of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

84 European Commission, "Commission Decision: on the financing of the Annual Action Programme 2020 in favour of the Republic of Ghana" (Annex, 2020), available from https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/ghana_aap_2020-annex.pdf, p. 7.

Final Act?

These measures soon paid off: the figurehead of the secessionist movement, Kudzordzi, was tracked down by the Ghanaian intelligence services at his hideout near Ho and arrested on 28 July 2021.⁸⁵ Due to health reasons, the trial against Kudzordzi had to be postponed several times and was finally scheduled to begin on 22 October 2021. In a final media interview, Kudzordzi presented himself combative: “I’ll be angry with God if my dream for Western Togoland is not realized.”⁸⁶ Yet, after being released from custody to seek medical treatment, Kudzordzi passed away at St. Paul Hospital in Aksthi South, Volta Region, on 15 October 2021, at the age of 88.⁸⁷

Expectedly, Kudzordzi’s passing was not the end of the story as even his funeral polarised the Ghanaian society: the MP for Volta Region’s district of North Tongu, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, called on President Akufo-Addo to pay Kudzordzi the honour of a state funeral, whereas security analysts, on the other hand, pointed to the still lingering threat posed by Kudzordzi’s ideas for which he should be buried in an unmarked grave so as not to create a place of pilgrimage for a martyr.⁸⁸ On 29 October 2022, Kudzordzi was finally laid to rest in his hometown Xavi, in the south of the Volta Region, with tributes paid by HSGF comrades and amidst heavy presence of state security personnel.⁸⁹

A month later, in November 2022, by order of the Ministry for National Security, Ghana’s National Peace Council had undertaking consultations with stakeholders in the Volta and Oti Regions regarding alleged ethnic identity-based discrimination and marginalization raised by people of Ewe origin and put together a report including recommendations, which would serve in addressing the concerns. Ironically, speaking on behalf of the Minister of National Security was the National Coordinator of the Ghana Boundary Commission, Major General Emmanuel Kotia, that is, head of the very state institution that for the HSGF was the starting point of the most recent bloodshed over ‘Western Togoland.’ This context was not sidestepped by the Volta Regional Minister, Archibald Letsa, who reminded at the event that “the alleged marginalization of the Ewe ethnic group dates back to 1956, following the plebiscite which saw the unification of the then Western Togoland and other territories to form Ghana.”⁹⁰

In January 2023, the United Nations *Working Group on Arbitrary Detention* (WGAD) finally delivered its verdict in the case of arrested Western Togoland secessionists, concluding that the Ghanaian government had violated their rights by detaining them for

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- 85 *GhanaWeb*, “Western Togoland Founder Papavi Arrested After Months of Hiding,” 29 July 2021.
- 86 *MyNewsGH*, “I’ll Be Angry with God If My Dream for Western Togoland Is Not Realized – Papavi,” 26 September 2021.
- 87 “Charles Kormi Kudzorzi, Leading Figure of Western Togoland’s Self-Determination Movement, Passes Away Aged 88,” UNPO, accessed 20 October 2021, available from <https://unpo.org/article/22162>.
- 88 *GhanaWeb*, “Papavi’s Death Should Not Be Viewed as End of Western Togoland Separatists – Security Analyst Warns,” 18 October 2021.
- 89 *GhanaWeb*, “Western Togoland Leader ‘Papavi Hogbedetor’ Laid to Rest at Xavi,” 31.10.2022.
- 90 Fred Q. Asare, “Peace Council Moves to Address Allegations of Ethnic Identity-Based Discrimination, Marginalization by Ewes,” *My Joy Online*, 30.11.2022.

sedition.⁹¹ Two months later, on 21 March 2023, the Accra High Court finally convicted the five arrested in the aftermath of the September 2020 attacks.⁹² Although the trial implicated the accused in the attacks, they were not charged for the attack and the policeman's murder *per se*, but each received the maximum sentence of five years in prison in hard labour for violations of the *Prohibited Organisations Act*. Although the WTRF was unknown until the attacks, the *Prohibited Organisations Act* (which was passed in 1976 when Ghana was under military rule) banned the National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland (Tolimo) and thus also “any other organisation howsoever called, whose objects include advocating and promoting the succession from Ghana of the former British mandated territory of Togoland or part thereof.”⁹³

1.2 Research Puzzle & Goal

The events and debates following the declaration of independence of ‘Western Togoland’ are exemplary of many speech-acts collected in the course of this work, demonstrating that the conflicts once considered resolved after the termination of United Nations trusteeship over Togoland are flaring up again. By reviving a language of threat and security in the conflict over ‘Western Togoland,’ the Ghanaian state and the secessionists entered a discursive exchange of blows in which one side is portrayed as an existential threat for the other – a dynamic which eventually led to bloodshed. Inspired by this empirical observation, this dissertation traces the history of Togoland’s internationally supervised decolonisation process to solve the puzzle of how (re)awakenings of a dormant Ewe and (“Western”) Togoland nationalism became a matter of security.

Over 60 years ago, ‘Western Togoland’ was hailed as the first territory to achieve independence under the international supervision of the United Nations Trusteeship System. Against the backdrop of the internationalisation of global governance, an emerging anti-colonialism as well as a right for the inhabitants of trusteeship territories to petition directly to the United Nations, Ewe and Togoland unificationists continuously petitioned against French and British rule and for sovereign statehood before United Nations venues. Their claims for unification, self-determination, statehood, and independence were similarly negotiated through a language of threat and security, influencing international opinion in a way that hardly any other independence movement in Africa had managed before. Yet, as Claude Welch put it in 1967,⁹⁴ the institutions of international

91 United Nations, “Opinion No. 47/2022 concerning George Nyakpo (Ghana)” A/HRC/WGAD/2022/47 (Human Rights Council, 2023), available from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session94/2023-01-30/A-HRC-WGAD-2022-47-Ghana-ADVANCE-EDITED-VERSION.pdf>.

92 *GhanaWeb*, “Western Togoland Case: High Court Sentences 5 Secessionists to a Total of 25 Years in Prison,” 22 March 2023; *GhanaWeb*, “Western Togoland Attacks: Five More Arrested for Stealing AK 47 Rifles,” 04 October 2020.

93 Prohibited Organisations Act, Supreme Military Council Decree 20 at Section 1(1)(b) (1976), accessed 22 March 2023, available from [https://lawsghana.com/pre_1992_legislation/SMC%20Decree/PROHIBITED%20ORGANISATIONS%20ACT,%201976%20\(SMCD%202020\)/118](https://lawsghana.com/pre_1992_legislation/SMC%20Decree/PROHIBITED%20ORGANISATIONS%20ACT,%201976%20(SMCD%202020)/118).

94 Welch, *Dream of Unity*.