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The peace process in the Bawku conflict in Ghana: Challenges and prospects

Kurzfassung: Obwohl eine Vielzahl an Maßnahmen ergriffen wurde, um die Bawku-Region im Nordosten Ghanas zu befrieden, ist ein nachhaltiger Frieden noch nicht in Sicht. Gegenstand des vorliegenden Aufsatzes sind die Herausforderungen und Perspektiven des Friedensprozesses in dem ethnischen Konflikt in der Bawku Traditional Area. In diesem Zusammenhang untersucht er sowohl die von der Regierung als auch die von zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen und NGOs angewendeten Konfliktmechanismen und studiert, wie der Frieden in der Region durch eine Lösung des Konflikts gefördert werden kann. Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung lassen erkennen, dass der Bawku-Konflikt eines stärker partizipatorischen Lösungsansatzes bedarf als ihn die gegenwärtigen ad hoc Herangehensweisen leisten.

Abstract: Many conflict resolution measures have been used and continue to be used in order to bring peace to Bawku, but the area does not yet experience lasting peace. This paper examines the challenges and prospects of the peace process in the ethnic conflict in the Bawku Traditional Area, in the Upper East Region of Ghana. As part of this, the study also examines the mechanisms used to resolve the conflict by both government and CSOs/NGOs and how the conflict can be resolved to enhance peace in the area. The study reveals that the Bawku conflict needs to apply a more participatory approach to resolving the conflict than the current ad hoc approaches do.

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War saw a spate of new and different conflicts in many parts of the world with Africa getting her share of these conflicts (Ali, 2006; Yeomans, 2003). These new conflicts were more internal within the state and permeated by causes such as ethnic conflicts between rival ethnic groups, internal conflicts, conflicts over succession and power struggles within the state and conflicts over the control of state resources (Kaldor, 2007; Boege 2006; Idowu, 2005). Most of these conflicts in several parts of Africa have often been driven by ethnic contest for power, land, resources, the struggle for identity and, in recent times, class struggles for political control of state power (Osaghae, 2005). These ethnic conflicts, such as the Sudanese, Burundian and Democratic Republic of Congo's conflicts, have created deep-seated hatred and destructions with their attendant manifestations of genocide, mistrust, inequality in the distribution of power and resources among ethnic groups in these states. These new conflicts, therefore, required new approaches to manage, regulate and resolve them since they had devastating consequences on development. The challenge, however, became the new possible conflict resolution approaches and mechanisms that could be used both at the local and national levels to end these new conflicts (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2007).

There arose therefore in the 1990s, a wide range of new approaches and mechanisms to regulate and resolve these conflicts through a number of resolution processes that involved the use of international statesmen, international and regional organizations, the involvement of neighbouring countries, peace support operations and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Galadima, 2006; Konteh, 2006). Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2007) note that a cross-fertilization of resolution approaches to these conflicts became the preoccupation of conflict resolution in the 1990s. The almost fifteen year conflict in Liberia, for instance, was resolved effectively through the adoption of a number of these resolution approaches, including the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which included the deployment of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the peace agreement finally signed in Accra in 2003 and the formation of an all-inclusive transitional government (Iheme, 2006).

However, the protraction and intractability of some conflicts on the continent question the effectiveness of most of the resolution approaches and mechanisms in Africa. The conflicts in Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger Delta rage on, despite efforts to resolve them. As a result, the challenges associated with the resolution approaches call for alternative resolution mechanisms that can be used to bring a final resolution to the conflicts in the continent.

Ghana, although is internationally acclaimed as the most peaceful country in West Africa, has some pockets of conflicts that are mainly inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic disputes that result from disputes over chieftaincy, land, identity and resources and ethnic struggles for state political power, (Kendie & Akudugu, 2010; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Some of these conflicts involving land, chieftaincy and ethno-politics have been resolved and managed over the years through a combination of NGO/CSO, government and religious bodies' efforts and committees of enquiry. For instance, the most devastating conflict in the history of Ghana between the Konkomba and Nanumba/Dagomba¹ in 1994/95 which claimed over 2000 lives was

1. This conflict took place in the Northern Region of Ghana between the chiefly tribes of Dagomba and Namuba against the acephalous tribe of the Konkomba who have hitherto been under the authority of these chiefly tribes. It was their demand for their own paramount chief and recognition that resulted in the conflict. It has often been described as the most deadly in the country since 2000 lives were lost. See Tsikata, D. & Seini, W. (2004), Identities, inequalities and conflicts in Ghana. CRISE working paper. Oxford: CRISE and Mahama, I. (2003), Ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana. Tamale: Cyber Systems.

resolved through the joint mediation and reconciliation efforts of the Permanent Negotiation Team made up of several CSOs and government, and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) (Mahama, 2003).

However, an overview of many of these resolution efforts and approaches used in Ghana reveals that many conflicts remain unresolved and have assumed a protracted nature. Several of the resolution mechanisms used in the conflicts have not been effective in bringing lasting peace to these areas. Managing and resolving ethnic conflicts, in fact, remains very difficult because deep-seated issues such as identity and values which border on the entirety of a person's life always remain at the top of ethnic conflicts (Coleman, 2000). The Bawku conflict is no exception to this.

The Bawku conflict is a deep-seated and longstanding ethno-political conflict between two ethnic groups - the Kusasis and Mamprusis in the Bawku Traditional Area of Ghana. The conflict is identity-based, and revolves around the claim for traditional political power (chieftaincy) between the Kusasis and Mamprusis. The contest between the Kusasis and Mamprusis over the Bawku chieftaincy has its roots in colonial times. Since the 1930s, the conflict has taken different twists and has remained intense and unresolved, and therefore protracted. The primary actors in the conflict – the Kusasis and Mamprusis – have taken entrenched positions making resolution efforts difficult and almost impossible.

The peace process in the Bawku conflict has mainly been characterized by a combination of government and CSOs/NGOs efforts. The colonial Governments established the Opoku-Afari Committee in 1957 to help resolve the conflict when disputing claims for the chieftaincy started. A number of laws and decrees passed in Ghana, which although were not directly intended for the Bawku conflict only, have also been used in helping to end the conflict, but these have failed. These included the National Liberation Council (NLC) Decree 112 and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) ¹ Law 75. Governments have also used mediation to help end the conflict. In 2008, the then President of Ghana, John A. Kufuor, invited both the Kusasis and Mamprusis to The Castle (seat of Ghana's Government) to broker peace between them. This was followed by mediation by the National Peace Council (NPC), a body established by the Government of Ghana to promote peace-building and conflict resolution in the country.

In March 2009, following the outbreak of violence, the Vice President of Ghana, John Mahama, embarked on a mediation mission to help resolve the conflict between the two factions. This was again followed by a visit by President Atta Mills on May 28, 2009 to Bolgatanga (capital of the Upper East Region) to help broker peace. The two ethnic groups have also resorted to the law courts to back their claim for the Bawku skin². These include writ filed by the Mamprusis at the divisional court to reverse the Governor General's decision in 1957; the Kusasis' counter writ at the Appeals Court (the highest court of Ghana at the time) in 1958 to overturn the ruling by the divisional court; and again the Mamprusis court action for their claim to the Bawku skin in 2003. All these court actions have apparently failed to bring an end to the conflict. Governments have also instituted peace-keeping operations, deploying security personnel to the area and the imposition of curfews to manage the conflict, but the conflict still rages on.

A number of CSOs /NGOs since 2001 have also made efforts at mediating to end the conflict through peace building processes and conflict resolution mechanisms. These efforts include the Bawku Peace Agreement reached between the stakeholders in the conflict at the Damango³ Peace Agreement, which was spearheaded by a consortium of NGOs mediating in the conflict, including Action Aid Ghana, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Advocacy Peace Group - IBIS (West Africa), the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Christian Council of Ghana and the Bawku East Women's Development Association (BEWDA). The National Peace Council (NPC) has also mediated and drawn up a roadmap to peace. In addition, an Inter-ethnic Peace Dialogue – the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) was recently formed in 2009 by both ethnic groups to help resolve the conflict. The aforementioned efforts seem to have all failed to bring the needed resolution of the conflict and peace to the Traditional Area.

The apparent failure by all peace efforts to resolve the conflict raises questions about the resolution methods and therefore the peace process in the area. Questions that remain to be answered are: why is the Bawku conflict not resolved despite the various approaches that have been used at finding lasting peace?; What is militating against the peace process?; and what alternative measures can be used to bring lasting peace to Bawku? It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the peace process in the conflict in the Bawku Traditional Area and the alternative resolution mechanisms that can be used to resolve the conflict or complement both government and CSOs/NGOs efforts at finally resolving the conflict to enhance peace and development in the area. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: section two presents the methodology used; section three discusses theoretical and conceptual issues; the empirical results and discussions are examined in section four and section five finally gives the conclusion and prospects for peace in Bawku.

1. These were the military governments in Ghana from 1966-1969 and from 1981-1992 respectively.
2. This is used to refer to the title of the paramount chief in the area. Note that the skin (of an animal) is the title of power of chiefs in Northern Ghana whilst the stool is the title of chiefs in Southern part of Ghana. Therefore there is the tendency to refer to the chieftaincy in a particular as the area's skin or stool in Ghana. Hence, the name the Bawku Skin.
3. Damango is where the peace agreement was reached. It is the capital of the West Gonjo District Assembly of the Northern Region of Ghana.

2. Methodology

The study adopted mixed methods in both its analysis and data collection. That is, both quantitative and qualitative methods. A descriptive case study approach was used for the study to allow for a detailed description of the topic. A total of 220 respondents were involved in the study. The purposive sampling method was used in selecting key informants comprising chiefs, community leaders, youth leaders, women groups, the Bawku Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), members of parliament, the security agencies, assembly members and heads of CSOs. This technique was to enable the selection of respondents who were relevant to the study and also had relevant information for the study. Fourteen communities in the area were purposively drawn, taking into consideration the fact that they had been the scenes of the conflict. These communities were mainly in the Bawku Municipality (BMA) because the conflict is mainly centered in the BMA. Zebilla and Garu in the Bawku West District (BWDA) and Garu-Tempani District (GTDA) respectively were also purposively chosen because they did have occasional outbreak of violence. Thereafter, the simple random sampling technique was used to choose 110 residents in these communities as shown in table 1.

Community	District	N	%
Saabon-Gari	BMA	12	10.9
Gingande	BMA	9	8.2
North Natinga	BMA	9	8.2
South Natinga	BMA	9	8.2
Daduri	BMA	9	8.2
Possum	BMA	9	8.2
Zabgu	BMA	7	6.4
Zawsi	BMA	7	6.4
Sarabogo	BMA	7	6.4
Pusiga	BMA	7	6.4
Bazua	BMA	7	6.4
Binduri	BMA	6	5.5
Zebilla	BWA	6	5.5
Garu	GTDA	6	5.5
Total		110	100.0

Table 1: Sample distribution of community residents. BMA = Bawku Municipal Assembly with Bawku as capital; BWA = Bawku West Assembly with Zebilla as capital; GTDA = Garu-Tempani District Assembly with Garu as capital.

A list of the population of the communities within the traditional area was used as sampling frame for the general residents, which was obtained from Ghana's 2000 Housing and Population Census and also the population of communities in the area from BMA's office. After obtaining the list of the fourteen communities, a lottery method was used to select the respondents in households. Each household, from the communities selected, in the list was assigned a number on a paper and then a selection of the sample was drawn by taking out the list of households in a container by the research assistants. After getting the selected sample, one person in this household was interviewed. However, in some instances, selection of the sampled population was made to take care of people's profession like teachers, market women, farmers etc.

The 220 respondents involved in the study were distributed as follow: 60 respondents were involved in the focus group discussions and unstructured interviews whilst 160 respondents were used for the structured interviews. The sample size comprised 18 government functionaries made up of the Bawku MCE, three members of parliament from Bawku Central, Pusiga and Binduri constituencies, 14 assembly members and the commanders of the police and military. The traditional authorities included the Bawku Naba, the Mamprusi regent, five sub-chiefs from the Kusasis and five from the Mamprusis and two each from other ethnic groups (Hausa, Mossi, Bimoba, Busanga and Dagombas). There were also 10 community elders from the Kusasis and 10 from the Mamprusis who were involved in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In all four FGDs were conducted. In terms of gender distribution of the general respondents, males constituted 55.5 percent (61) of the respondents whilst females consisted of 44.5 percent (49). All of the 42 traditional rulers were males. Out of the 18 assembly persons, only two were female. The largest (39.1%) of the general respondents were in the 35-44 age group whilst respondents above the age of 75 years were the least in this study (0.9%). Out of the 42 traditional authorities, majority (72%) were in the age group of 55-64 followed by the age group 65-74 (37%). With the 18 assembly persons, the majority (57%) were in the age group 35-44 whilst age 25-34 was the least (18%).

Six heads of CSOs involved in peace building activities in the area made up of one each from the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Actionaid Ghana, the Bawku East Women’s Development Association (BEWDA), the Presbyterian Church-Bawku, the Catholic Church – Bawku and the Muslim Community- Bawku and the two co-chairmen of the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIPC). The women and youth groups involved one Kusasi women group, one Mamprusis women group, a Mamprusis youth group and a Kusasis youth group, each made up of 10 members at separate fora who were all involved in the FGDs. The general respondents were made of 40 Kusasis, 40 Mamprusis and 30 from other tribes. These respondents included farmers, teachers, students, health personnel, market women and business men, all randomly selected. The distribution of the sampled population is shown in table 2.

Actors	N	%
Community Residents	110	50.0
Traditional Actors	42	19.1
Youth and Women Groups	40	18.2
Government Functionaries	18	8.2
CSOs	8	3.6
BIEPC	2	0.9
Total	220	100.0

Table 2: Sample distribution of actors

The main instruments used for the data collection were interview schedules, interview guides and focus group discussions. The data were analysed using interviews of respondents through descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and content analysis of transcribed interviews and documents on the conflict.

3. Theoretical and conceptual issues

Conflict occurs when two or more parties pursue incompatible interests or goals through actions that the parties try to undo or damage each other. These parties could be individuals, groups or countries. The parties’ interests can differ over access to resources, the control of political or traditional power, their identity and values or ideology. The realization of these needs and interests by people can lead to conflict. When two groups or individuals such as ethnic groups pursue incompatible interests and needs which could either be political, economic, social or cultural, they can engage in conflict which can be violent. In the case of the Bawku conflict, the needs of both the Kusasis and Mamprusis include who owns the chieftaincy. The needs of both ethnic groups remain very fundamental, uncompromising and non-negotiable. As a result, the interest of the two ethnic groups to get the chieftaincy results in violent conflict.

3.1 Protracted social conflict theory

The protracted social conflict (PSC) theory, which is also referred to in some circles as the social conflict theory, mainly has its underpinnings in Azar’s model of Protracted Social Conflict. The protracted social conflict theory examines the root causes, effects and the implications of conflicts in a society or country which are protracted or intractable. Thus, the theory examines conflicts which keep recurring and seem almost irresolvable.

Coleman (2000) says that an intractable conflict is one that is often intense, deadlocked and difficult to resolve. The common characteristics of intractable (protracted) conflicts include occasional outbursts of conflicts which are often intense, persistent and vicious; their effects are often pervasive affecting all aspects of a person or community’s social, political and economic life and tend to also affect institutions; and there is hopelessness for a constructive resolution. The causes of intractable conflict usually include questions of values, claim to identity, cultural norms, power, resources, human needs, past history of ethnocentrism, discrimination, colonialism and abuse (Coleman, 2000). According to Bar-Tal (2000), intractable conflicts are often viciously violent and durable which result in the construction of a *conflictive ethos*¹, which provides the dominant orientation to the society. He believes that in such conflicts, “conflict resolution leads only to the formal termination of the conflict” but not the real conflict.

The protracted social conflict theory identifies a plethora of factors as being responsible for intractable conflicts. This theory

1. See Bar-Tal, D. (2004), Ethnos of conflict. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/ethos-of-conflict> and http://www.edu.haifa.ac.il/personal/gsalomon/Bar-Tal_Salomon_last%5B1%5D.pdf

pays attention to ethnic and other forms of communal conflicts and emphasizes that the sources of these protracted conflicts are more internal (within a state) rather than external (Azar, 1990). These sources, according to Azar (1990), include cultural, political, economic, colonial and institutional factors. Protracted conflicts usually tend to affect all sectors of a society's development because of the intensity and recurrence of violence.

In sum, the protracted social conflict theory is an all-encompassing theory that looks at conflict from the structural, cultural, ethnic, political, economic, religious, human needs as well as social factors. Mail, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999) suggest that, in resolving protracted social conflicts, there is the need to properly manage ethnic dominance, provide economic opportunities for people and the state (government) should protect and provide minority needs and rights. Proper needs satisfaction remains important for resolving protracted social conflicts (Coleman, 2000). Also, Bar-Tal (2000) argues that resolving such conflicts needs a successful reconciliation process, which in turn requires a change of the conflictive ethos and formation of the alternative *peace ethos*¹.

The Bawku conflict fits well into a PSC because its sources involve claim to values, identity, power as well as cultural contestation. The continuous and vicious cycle of violence in Bawku makes the conflict defy any workable solution despite all interventions that government and NGOs have made and are still making. With the nature of protracted conflicts, they tend to affect all aspects of a society especially peoples' livelihood and the society's local-level development. The Bawku conflict continuously results in violence which tends to affect commercial activities, agriculture and all aspects of social activities in the area (see Bukari, 2011).

3.2 Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution is an integral part of peace and conflict studies and development discourse (Richardson Jr. & Sen, 1996). Conflict resolution aims at identifying the main causes of a conflict so as to put an end to the conflict to ensure sustainable peace. The United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2001) maintains that a conflict is resolved when the root causes of that particular conflict are identified and addressed. Conflict resolution seeks to design solutions through a joint-problem solving approach. When a conflict is successfully resolved, the conflict is transformed and becomes a catalyst for deep-rooted enduring positive change in individuals, relationships and structures (development) (UNDESA, 2001). Thus, successful resolution of a conflict will ensure sustainable peace which would lead to improved security and good relations among people which could lead to human well-being and general development.

Conflict resolution brings an end to a conflict where the disputing parties are satisfied and the conflict is genuinely and truly resolved. Many approaches and methods could be used in conflict resolution. These include mediation through a third party intervention, negotiation, alternative dispute resolution, collaboration, arbitration and conciliation. The appropriate method may depend to a large extent on the nature and type of conflict involved (Best, 2006). Generally, the various methods of conflict resolution are usually a process in that each requires a certain procedure and time and not just a one way approach (Best, 2006). Peace keeping remains one important method that is used to respond to violent situations in times of conflict. In *An Agenda for Peace 1992*, Boutros Boutros-Ghale indicates that peace keeping is one of three ranges of instruments for controlling and resolving conflicts between and within states.

Godongs (2006) maintains that mediation by a third party (institutions and bodies) helps to identify the root causes of conflicts in order to address them. Godongs believes that mediations are collaborative and reconciliatory to help to design solutions through a joint problem-solving approach to conflicts. With regard to the Bawku conflict, conflict resolution has been sought after with the aim to end the conflict with almost all the methods mentioned above being used to bring the conflict to an end.

3.3 Ethnic conflict resolution

Resolving ethnic conflict remains by far the most difficult since ethnic conflicts involve assaults to people's identity. Addressing deeply rooted cultural, identity, economic, socio-political and geographical issues and concerns are important in resolving ethnic conflicts. This requires effective communication and third-party intervention through transparent mediation. Third party intervention in ethnic conflict resolution is very important because getting ethnic groups to negotiate in conflict situations is very difficult (Richardson Jr. & Wang, 1993). This is because the issues involved in ethnic conflicts are always uncompromising and non-negotiable until a neutral party who is trusted by both feuding parties steps in to mediate for a compromise. Third party intervention has been a prominent feature of the peace process in the Bawku ethnic conflict.

In resolving ethnic conflicts, we ought to look out for potentially underlying factors to the conflict rather than focusing so

1. See also Bar-Tal, D. (2004), Ethnos of conflict. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/ethos-of-conflict> and http://www.edu.haifa.ac.il/personal/gsalomon/Bar-Tal_Salomon_last%5B1%5D.pdf

much on ethnicity (Lipchitz & Crawford, 1995). Lipchitz & Crawford (1995) maintain that we should assess elements of multi-ethnic social contracts as well as political and economic factors and issues of power underlying the conflict. This requires setting up early-warning systems and using local NGOs to help in mediation efforts. Also, Irobi (2005) reckons that civil society groups and NGOs are very important in resolving ethnic conflicts since they are often trusted by conflicting parties to mediate. This trust gives NGOs the urge over state institutions to achieve successful resolution of a conflict. Agyeman (2008) recommends that ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict in Ghana can be resolved through:

- The de-politicisation of ethnic conflict resolution and mechanism processes
- Empowering and strengthening decentralized structures of governance at the local level to deal with conflict
- Strengthening and empowering the Traditional Councils, Regional and National Houses of Chiefs in their conflict resolution roles through proper funding.
- Establishing joint consultative committees comprising representatives from the warring factions in the resolution of ethnic conflicts.
- The use and involvement of local NGOs in conflict resolution instead of international organizations.
- The involvement and use of the youth and youth associations in ethnic conflict resolution. (Agyeman, 2008, p. 94-95).

In sum, these methods proposed by Agyeman are being pursued to resolve Bawku conflict which will be discussed below.

4. Empirical results and discussions

This section of the paper discusses the views of respondents on the peace process in the Bawku Traditional Area highlighting the conflict resolution methods used, their effectiveness and challenges and the prospects for peace in the area.

4.1 Non-resolution of the Bawku conflict

In this study, 82.7% of respondents mentioned that they are aware of resolution methods used in the past whilst 17.3% responded to the contrary. This indicates that many residents of the area know of measures that have been used to resolve the conflict. The approaches that have been used over the years in resolving the Bawku conflict which were identified by respondents include mediation, reconciliation, peace keeping, and arbitration.

One major approach that government has used over the years in attempting to resolve the conflict is peacekeeping which involves deploying security agencies made up of the police and the Rapid Deployment Force to the area. Respondents were aware that the security agencies made up of the police and the armies have been using joint patrols and swoops to retrieve illegal arms, mounting road blocks and maintaining law and order to keep the peace. A respondent remarked: "the army and the police have been moving around the entire town and various strategic places to respond to any outbreak of violence and to deal with perpetrators of the conflict". Opinion leaders and government functionaries also stated that the police and the army have been deploying peace keeping operations to the area since the 1980s whenever violence occurs to maintain peace. They also indicated that a permanent army base has been established at Bazua² for easy deployment in the events of violence. According to the police, over 300 men have been deployed to Bawku since 2007, and these men were deployed from five (5) regions namely the Upper East, Eastern, Upper West, Brong Ahafo and the Greater Accra regions³. The army was made up of the Rapid Deployment Force and the Air Borne Force.

Also, one of the approaches in managing conflicts whenever violence occurs is the imposition of curfews to mitigate the effects of the conflicts. In this study, respondents identified the persistent impositions of curfews as one of the ways that government employs in an attempt to resolve and manage the conflict. Curfews are essential in the management of conflict situations. Though these restrict the movements of people and bring some hardships to them, it helps in maintaining law and order and curbing violence.

The most frequent approach in resolving this conflict is mediation. Mediation, according to Godongs (2006), is most often a form of negotiation by third party intervention which is voluntary and neutral in helping conflicting parties to resolve their conflict. Respondents mentioned that many institutions have used various methods in mediating to resolve the conflict. They indicated that CSOs/NGOs have since 2001 been involved in mediation efforts in the conflict. These include a consortium of NGOs made up of the Catholic Relief Services, WANEP, World Vision, Action Aid and the inter-faith dialogue; the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010 facilitated by WANEP and supported by the UNDP, IBIS-West Africa and BEWDA; mediation of

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1. At the district, regional and national levels in Ghana, the traditional authorities have councils that look into chieftaincy issues including the arbitration, adjudication and settlements of chieftaincy conflicts.
 2. Bazua is a community located in the Bawku Municipal Assembly. It is about four kilometers from the Bawku Township.
 3. Ghana is administratively divided into 10 regions. Each region has a number of metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs) for local government participation.

BEWDA at the community level; the Inter-Faith Dialogue made of the churches and the Muslim community in Bawku and mediation efforts of Action Aid. This supports Lipchitz and Crawford (1995) and Irobi (2005) observation that resolving ethnic conflicts involves mediation efforts by local NGOs through setting up strong institutions like civil society organizations and early-warning systems. The NGOs/CSOs indicated that their mediation efforts involved the organization of mediation talks with the feuding parties and other tribes involving community leaders, opinion leaders and traditional leaders; the signing of peace accords among the various ethnic groups; and peace education for community members, youth groups and women groups.

Respondents also mentioned the mediation efforts of government functionaries such as the former president J. A. Kuffour in March 2008, the current president and vice, J. E. A. Mills and John Mahama respectively in 2009, and the National Security. Opinion leaders were of the view that these efforts by government in a way helped in calming down tensions in the wake of the violence in 2007 and 2009, but failed to provide a permanent solution to the conflict. Respondents did indicate the mediation work of the National Peace Council (NPC) led by Cardinal Appiah Turkson (the first chairman of the National Peace Council of Ghana) in 2008 which held peace education for various ethnic groups, mediation talks for ethnic opinion leaders and coalition of the views on the ways the conflict can be resolved. The FBOs indicated that a lot of education on peace involving the youth has also been organized. The Catholic Church has a peace building programme called Youth for Peace through which peace talks are regularly organized for youth groups. Workshops were organized at Garu, Pusiga, Zebilla and Bawku for the youth from all tribes. The Presbyterian Church organized peace talks across the ethnic groups through preaching and the organization of workshops for tribal leaders. FBOs equally do preaching and sensitizations in churches and mosques. They also do counseling for victims of the conflict- the injured, traumatized and bereaved families who have lost relations in the violence.

It also emerged that there is a formation of the current Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) which is made up of 20 members comprising various ethnic groups in the area: Kusasis, Mamprusis, Mossis, Busangas, Hausas, Dagombas and other tribes and co-chaired by both Mamprusis and Kusasis. The BIEPC was formed following the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010 which were facilitated by WANEP attended by all stakeholders. Committee members interviewed indicated that the committee was in the process of meeting the various factions to lay down their arms to stem down the violence in the area and also release seized lands back to their owners. A process of purifying the land was started through the "rites of the cult of the earth".

According to the security agencies and general respondents, since May 2010, there has been a ban on motor riding within the Bawku Municipality. This has helped to stem down the rate of violence and also curb the use of motor bikes to carry weapons to kill people. A respondent commented that: "although the ban on motor riding has made transportation difficult in the area, it has been used since May this year (2010) to stop people from carrying guns to shoot their opponents and easily escape".

The use of arbitration remains one of the main methods of attempting to resolve the conflict over the years. These arbitrations are mainly through the houses of chiefs and the court systems. According to a Mamprusi opinion leader, the National Chieftaincy Tribunal of the National House of Chiefs arbitrated in the Bawku case and gave its ruling on 20th May, 1982 in favour of the Mamprusis using laid down tradition. This was corroborated by a Kusasi opinion leader who, however, disagreed that the arbitration followed laid down tradition. This was also confirmed by the Report of the Ruling of the National Chieftaincy Tribunal of the National House of Chiefs (May 20, 1983). It was also revealed that the court system has been used as a means of trying to end the conflict. Respondents stated that since 1957, various rulings have been made by the courts with regard to the conflict. An opinion leader mentioned that: "the various court judgments included the divisional court ruling of 1957, the Court of Appeal ruling of 1958, and the Supreme Court ruling of 2003". This confirms Awedoba's (2009) assertion that the law courts have dealt with the issue since the 1950s.

A critical look at all these measures at resolving the conflict indicates that the conflict still remains unresolved. This is because the Bawku Traditional Area still remains a conflict-prone area and the stakes are still high and the main cause (the Bawku skin) of the conflict is still in dispute. I believed that most of these methods rather attempts at managing the conflict to reduce the spate of violence and killing than conflict resolution that will see the end of the conflict.

4.2 Evaluation of the conflict resolution methods

In the study, 80% of respondents believed that the resolution methods used in the past have not been effective in resolving the conflict while 20% stated that they were effective. Respondents said that the various methods used were not the right approach since most of these methods were temporary, ad-hoc, had no early warning systems and did not provide permanent solutions to the conflict. A respondent said that: "the measures / methods used to resolve the conflict sometimes only succeeded in calming the spate of violence but do not address the underlying issues in the conflict".

Many respondents believed that the past methods were not all-embracing and acceptable to all parties. This is because the

methods do not reflect the true issues in the conflict. Thus they do not point to the truth with regard to the underlying issues in the conflict. The methods are also biased and lack trust and transparency in the peace process. A Mamprusi opinion leader stated that: „The methods are not effective because there is lack of honesty, commitment and fairness in the approach to attaining peace in the area. They are also not all-inclusive, broad-based and there is lack of commitment for peace by some groups who want to see the conflict continue. This was why we withdrew from the BIEPC initially, since there was no transparency and fairness in the work of the committee.“

This confirms Kendie and Akudugu (2010, p. 6), opinion that “conflict resolution is only possible through cooperation and negotiation and the elimination of suspicion through transparent negotiations where all actors are seen as equal partners”. Respondents also mentioned that there is always no implementation of reports of peace agreements. They opined that no action is taken after the mediations and peace talks. Respondents also said that the measures over the years had not involved the residents and general public, especially the youth.

4.3 Challenges militating against the attainment of peace in the Bawku Traditional Area

There are usually a number of factors that protract conflicts. These factors become polarized making it difficult for the attainment of peace despite efforts made to resolve the conflicts. As observed by Azar’s (1990) protracted social conflict theory and Coleman’s (2000) description of protracted social conflict, a plethora of structural, cultural, ethnic, political, economic, religious, human needs as well as social factors challenge conflict resolution. In the study, respondents stated the following as challenges that militate against the attainment of lasting peace in the Bawku traditional area:

First of all, the interference of politicians, government and influential people from the area who keep supporting and fueling the conflict, mostly financially. The respondents claim that politicians at the national level and within the area have been using politics to perpetrate the conflict. They particularly mentioned the fact that both factions hide under both the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (the ruling party in Ghana since 2009) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) (the main opposition party) and have in fact been supported by both parties. This corroborates Lund (2003) assertion that there is naked political influence in the Bawku conflict that makes it difficult to resolve. This also supports Awedoba’s (2005) observation that governments of these political parties cannot be trusted to help resolve the conflict because of their past involvement.

Ethnic marginalization and lack of mutual respect for each other. The continuous defense of ethnic identity of the two factions leads to intense hatred, discrimination and stereotypes among the people. They cited the celebration of traditional festivals, specifically the Samanpeed and Damba festivals¹. Related to this is ethnic bashing, polarization, hate preaching, misinformation, rumour mongering and the transmission of false history to the youth. According to youth groups, elders and tribal leaders keep polarizing the area along ethnic lines by preaching hatred and transmitting false history about the issues in the conflict to the young ones. This tends to protract the conflict by creating deep seated suspicion making it difficult for the factions to negotiate a peace settlement. A member of the BIEPC said this is the greatest challenge of the committee.

Also, the proliferation of illegal and sophisticated arms / weapons. Many illegal and sophisticated arms like AK 47 and G3 assault rifles continue to be used in perpetrating violence. One of the security personnel said: “there are some weapons used in this conflict which we the security don’t even have. On one of the outbreaks of violence, a guy was firing a gun that we didn’t even know its name. Where they get these guns from is really puzzling and this is the major problem why the conflict cannot be resolved”.

Moreover, there is lack of neutrality and bias by the security agencies. The security agencies according to respondents remain very biased towards one faction – arresting them whilst members of the other factions who are known to have killed others walk about freely. Some Mamprusi respondents claim that their tribe mates have been arrested and remanded at the Navrongo Prisons² whereas Kusasis who have committed crimes were released and are walking around town. This results in impunity in the area as a result of the political support. A respondent stated that “people kill, loot and burn without getting punished. They even boast about how others die in the conflict”.

Non-implementation of peace agreements and reports due to lack of political will. According to respondents, decisions of the houses of chiefs, committees of enquiry, court actions/orders and peace agreements reached are always not abided by or implemented. Some heads of CSOs / NGOs said lack of political will makes it difficult for the implementation of peace agreements and mediation pacts and this is the greatest challenge to peace building in Bawku.

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1. Samanpeed is the main traditional festival celebrated by the Kusasis every December to mark the end of the harvesting season while Damba is celebrated by the Mamprusis. Although celebrated to mark the birth of Prophet Mohammed, Damba has assumed a traditional form.
 2. The prison is the largest in the Upper East Region (where Bawku is located). It is located in Navrongo, the capital of the Kassena-Nankana District.

Furthermore, mistrust of mediation and negotiation efforts due to bias of governments and some CSOs / NGOs. Some key informants mentioned that there is high suspicion and mistrust among some factions of the mediation and negotiation efforts of governments and some CSOs / NGOs. A Mamprusi opinion leader stated that "our withdrawal from the 2001 Damango Peace Initiative was due to bias and lack of confidence/trust in some of the NGOs and the way things were being handled".

In addition, criminal elements especially armed robbers taking advantage of the situation to operate. According to respondents, armed robbery is a major challenge to the peace process since many armed robbers take advantage of the conflict to rob and kill people. However, a Mamprusi respondent disagreed that it is armed robbers who do the robbing and killing. He questioned: "How is this armed robbery when people are identified by their tribe and robbed and killed? When for example, the robbery occurred on the Sankansi (major business town located in Togo, not far from Ghana's eastern border with Togo) road, it was only Mamprusis who were robbed and killed."

High illiteracy rate and unemployment in the area especially among the youth. An MP in the area said that high level of illiteracy is one factor that makes it difficult to resolve the conflict. A divisional chief interviewed asserted that apart from the high illiteracy rate, unemployment remains a challenge to the conflict because the youth continue to idle and are used continuously to perpetrate the violence. His assertion supports the Economic Theory of conflict which sees lack of employment as a major factor that propel people to fight (Collier, 2006).

Finally, the influence of other minority tribes in the area, especially the Mossis, Hausa and Bisas who tend to back factions in the conflicts. A respondent accused the other tribes of continuously 'beating war drums' through backing one faction both financially and physically. A Kusasi respondent stated that: "the Mossis at Possum¹ are even more involved in this conflict than the Mamprusis. They support the Mamprusis in perpetrating violence and contribute weapons to their cause in this conflict and even their pronouncements polarize the society. But for them, we and the Mamprusis could have resolved our issue amicably".

4.4 Ways of resolving the conflict

The study reveals that 53% of the respondents believed that the conflict can be resolved whereas 47% believed that it can never be resolved. Those who said the conflict cannot be resolved say that since the inception of the conflict, various methods have been used and have totally failed to bring a lasting solution to the conflict. Respondents mentioned the following as new ways of resolving the conflict:

Since the matter is about chieftaincy, it should be referred to the appropriate quarters. Thus, it should be referred to the National House of Chiefs to resolve it amicably or arbitrate on it, independent of government and politicians. This confirms Agyeman (2008) proposal that chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana can be resolved by strengthening and empowering the Traditional Councils, Regional and National Houses of Chiefs in their conflict resolution roles through proper funding.

The use of peace building activities which are new and more proactive than previous methods. These would include intensive peace education and campaigns in schools, community levels and in the media by sensitizing people, especially the youth, on the due processes of getting their grievances addressed. Also, mediation and negotiation processes must be done through trust and confidence building of the two factions by trustworthy mediators. The CSOs/NGOs mentioned that there is the need for periodic and sustained community stakeholder dialogue, consistent peace education targeting the youth through the formation of youth peace clubs and self negotiation between the factions using the inter-ethnic peace committee. An MP mentioned the need to identify the actual frontrunners (influential people) like the actual influential youth leaders and actively involve them in the negotiation process because often the CSOs/NGOs do not involve the 'true fore-runners' in this conflict.

The involvement of the Nayiri (king of all Mamprusis in Ghana who is headquartered in Nalerigu in the Northern Region of Ghana) in mediation and negotiation efforts. This is because the Nayiri plays an important role since he has absolute control over Mamprusis in Bawku and is therefore an integral part of the conflict. Mamprusi respondents and some Kusasi respondents stated that mediation efforts have always failed to involve and recognize the role of the Nayiri in the conflict.

The use of neutral parties from other countries and international bodies such as the UN, AU and ECOWAS. They believed that the bodies within the country don't have the capacity to find a solution to the conflict. A key respondent commented that: "I don't think that Ghana has the capability to help solve the conflict since the state has soiled its hands in the issue and lacks neutrality to resolve the conflict. The CSOs/NGOs have failed several times to resolve the conflict. Neutral bodies outside Ghana should be allowed to resolve the conflict for us."

1. Possum is a community found in the Bawku Township. The Mossi is the main ethnic group that resides in Possum. Note that the conflict has led to ethnic seclusion where each ethnic group resides in its own community.

The pursuit of traditional methods of resolving the conflict. This should be done by following the traditional methods started by the BIEPC. Thus, the pacification and blood cleansing rites (the rites of the earth cult). Some key informants also said that the use of the BIEPC is the only solution to the conflict. Clear pronouncement as to who own the chieftaincy. Some key informants said that the conflict can be resolved once and for all if there is a clear pronouncement as to who own the chieftaincy. One of them said: "the conflict can be resolved if the central government and the houses of chiefs tell the truth about the true owners of the land and chieftaincy in Bawku. They know who the usurpers are. So they must go ahead to declare who the real owners of the chieftaincy are to end this protracted conflict."

An assembly member said that the perceived NPP/NDC support must be seriously dealt with by letting leaders of these parties to pledge their support for the peace process in Bawku by openly withdrawing support for any of the factions in the conflict. He said that: "politicians do not want to isolate themselves from the conflict but keep playing the political card to win votes. If the NDC and the NPP stop supporting the Kusasis and the Mamprusis, they will stop fighting". A traditional chief said that: "the conflict can be resolved if the Bawku people are left alone to negotiate among themselves without any interference or support from politicians and other people".

Another opinion leader believes that the conflict can be resolved when there is the provision of employable opportunities in the area for the youth. These he said could be dry season farming and skills training in order to get the youth busy to prevent them from fighting and killing each other. Security personnel believe that the conflict can be resolved when the culture of impunity is dealt with. Justice must be given to people who break the peace irrespective of their tribe or political party. They also said that the two factions should use the law court to resolve the conflict rather than resort to violence

5. Conclusion and policy implications

The study of the Bawku conflict indicates that many challenges and bottlenecks confront the promotion of peace in the traditional area in spite of the many measures that have been instituted to resolve this protracted ethnic conflict to ensure co-existence and peace in the area. These challenges have made the conflict very protracted and needs to be confronted head-strong. The blatant political infiltrations by the state make the state not trust-worthy in its bid to lead any resolution and peace building efforts, and this remains the biggest challenge. Lack of trust in mediation efforts and the amassing and use of illegal arms by residents of not only Bawku, but other parts of the Traditional Area are also problems. With these challenges attaining peace in the Bawku Traditional Area is not only difficult, but very challenging to all stakeholders.

Government needs to strengthen and maintain security in the area to minimize the effects of conflict on local development efforts by ensuring impartiality in the work of the security agencies. Also, government must make efforts to deal decisively with the problem of impunity. The efforts of the security agencies in enforcing law and order must not be interfered with, especially in punishing perpetrators of violence from all factions without favour. There should be justice and equity in dealing with perpetrators of violence across the ethnic divide.

It is important to adopt traditional approaches which are acceptable and cultural-sensitive to all the tribes. The current BIEPC which is using traditional approaches/methods must be encouraged and supported to help build peace and finally resolve the conflict. It is equally crucial to identify challenges and weaknesses of the approaches/methods of the BIEPC and deal with them to ensure the participation of all ethnic groups and parties in the peace process.

Also, there is the need for government to fund the activities of peace building activities. The current Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) must be resourced and funded to help build peace and resolve the conflict. This is because one great challenge of the BIEPC is lack of funds to carry out its peace activities. Also, the seeming lack of transparency and fairness, perceived by the Mamprusis in particular, in dealing with issues in the area such as the celebration of traditional festivals need to be seriously dealt with through dialogue. The committee must also work independent of state or government inference. CSOs/NGOs must rather facilitate the activities of the committee towards self-negotiation. The involvement and inclusion of the Nayiri in all future negotiations and mediation efforts are paramount in the peace building and conflict resolution process. This is because of the power and recognition he has among the Mamprusis and can help to find a solution to the conflict.

Similarly, there is the need for a proper stakeholder analysis of actual parties in the conflict to engage them in the negotiation and mediation process. Very often, key stakeholders are not involved in the conflict resolution process and all need to be identified and brought on board in the resolution process. These stakeholders include youth and women groups and people from the other parts of the traditional area like Zebilla and Garu, who often are not included in mediation and negotiation processes.

Moreover, government needs to focus on the provision of economic opportunities in the area, especially among the youth. Unemployment is a major causative factor of conflict in the area. Providing employable and other opportunities for the youth can help to stem the trend of violence and build peace in the area.

The use of the court system (arbitration and adjudication) tends to polarize the area further and does not bring a resolution of the conflict. This is because the use of the court system since the 1950s has not helped to end the conflict, but rather polarize the area. Parties to the conflict must recognize the need to engage in dialogue rather than resorting to the court system for redress.

In a nutshell, it is also possible for the two ethnic groups (The Kusasis and Mamprusis) in this conflict to consider power sharing as an alternative. This power-sharing can be fashioned out such that either each group has its own chiefs which rule its people or the power is rotational between the two ethnic groups. This can be done through proper laid-down procedures and clear-cut rules about the power-sharing.

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