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Security and conflict: Appraising and interrogating security arrangements in the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

In 1991 and 1992, Kpandai and its environs in present-day Kpandai District in Northern Ghana were enmeshed in a violent inter-ethnic conflict between the Gonja and the Nawuri over allodial land rights. War broke out between the two ethnic groups in April 1991, June 1991 and May 1992. Prior to the conflict, many pre-emptive security measures were implemented to de-escalate the tension. The government also deplored a Police-Military Task Force to Kpandai and its environs to provide security disarm the combatants and maintain law and order. Similarly, measures were undertaken to de-escalate and bring an end to hostilities in the Salaga area when the conflict was extended to the vicinity in 1992 and 1994. The Police and Military peacekeepers showed professionalism as they remained neutral and used subtle measures such as firing warning shots to scare off combatants, disarming the warring factions, seizing arms, and dialoguing with the warring factions to bring an end to hostilities. Nevertheless, the peacekeepers found it difficult to contain, de-escalate and reduce the intensity of the conflict. This paper provides a perspective on security arrangements in the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. By assessing the security measures before, during and after the conflict, the paper argues that the measures were largely unsuccessful.

Keywords: Gonja; conflict; Nawuri; Northern Ghana; peacekeeping; resolution; security

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1. Introduction

In the early pre-colonial period, Kpandai and its environs in Northern Ghana were inhabited by the Nawuri (the autochthones) and the Gonja (the immigrants). The Nawuri claim autochthony and trace their origins to Afram plains and Larteh Akuapem in Southern Ghana. The Gonja, on the other hand, claimed descent from Ndewura Jakpa and his invading founders of the Gonja kingdom and traced their origins to Mande in present-day Mali. Oral accounts suggest that the Gonja peacefully entered into the Kpandai area as immigrants, but not as invaders, in the seventeenth Century, and that prior to their arrival, Kpandai and its environs were inhabited by the Nawuri. The accounts further suggest that the Gonja neither conquered the Nawuri nor did the two groups fight each other in the pre-colonial period. The two ethnic groups co-existed as political allies (Awedoba, 2009: 169; Mbowura, 2002: 26-29). In its report, the Ampiah Committee explained that the Nawuri:

Were an indigenous people in Alfai area who had complete autonomy and lived in friendly association with the Krachis and Nchumurus ... Nowhere in the evidence had it been stated that the Nawuris were at any time conquered by the Gonjas. The evidence holds that the Nawuris and the Gonjas were allies and fought together during the Asante invasion of the Area ...the ...ethnic groups existed as a loose association since they met in the now Eastern Gonja Area for common purposes; fighting the common enemies like Asantes and others and protecting their lands (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 61-62).

Overtime, the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja turned sour due to conflicting claims to allodial land rights in Kpandai and its environs. Both ethnic groups used history as 'weapons' to advance their claims. In the Kpandai area, as is the case of other Ghanaian societies, the modes of measuring allodial land rights are embedded in the historical traditions of the people. By right of autochthony and autonomy, allodial land rights in the Kpandai area in the pre-colonial period resided in the Nawuri. However, the area's encounters with the colonial enterprise led to the evolution of new constructs of allodial rights in land, which challenged established traditions and provided the opportunity for the immigrant Gonja community to appropriate land. In 1913 the Germans issued a warrant to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, the Gonja head chief in the Kpandai area then, making him the overlord of the area for the sake of political expediency (Brimah & Goody, 1967: 70; Dixon, 1955: 8). This began Gonja rule over the Nawuri, which was made irreversible when the British colonial authorities subsumed the Nawuri into the Gonja kingdom in 1932 following the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories (Annual Report on British Togoland, 1932: 6-7). This led to a series of encounters between the autochthonous Nawuri and their Gonja overlords over allodial rights in land, which expressed itself in social, political and economic debate in the colonial and post-colonial times.

By the dawn of independence in Ghana, Kpandai and its environs continued to remain as an integral part of the Gonja Traditional Area, which further strengthened Gonja claim that the land belonged to them. As the Nawuri and the Gonja continued to jostle each other over allodial land rights in the Kpandai area in the post-colonial times, and as the dispute remained unresolved, war between them became a possibility. This paper

appraises and interrogates security arrangements in the conflict to ascertain their roles in preventing, managing and de-escalating the conflict. It seeks to assess strengths and weaknesses of the security arrangements in the inter-ethnic conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991 and 1992.

2. Methodology

The approach adopted in this study is the orthodox approach to historical enquiry that combines archival research with published materials and oral evidence from the field. Data for the paper were qualitative derived from systematic enquiry, analyzed and interpreted to make a sense of conflict management and conflict resolution within specific historical contexts. Data was obtained from primary materials such as letters, memoranda, petitions and other official correspondences which pinpointed measures adopted to prevent, manage and resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. The report of the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry of 1991, known officially as *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuro Dispute*, which investigated the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was also utilized. Another category of source utilized was field research. Interviews were held with Gonja and Nawuri informants in Salaga and Kpandai and its environs, and data were obtained from oral narratives about the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Data from interviews were edited, scrutinized and compared to ascertain veracity, dichotomies and consistencies. Use was also made of data from existing literature. Literature on conflicts and the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in particular were gleaned and examined. Thus, this paper utilized data from a variety of sources, the contents of which were carefully scrutinized, compared, evaluated and synthesized.

3. The historical background and theoretical framework of inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana

Like most inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana, the root causes of the conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja have been traced to the colonial policy of amalgamation introduced in the Northern Territories in 1932, which subsumed the Nawuri under the Gonja as part of the colonial government's effort of rationalizing existing social and political structures for administrative purpose (Ladouceur, 1979: 43). It would appear that the British colonial officers were aware that the Nawuri were allodial owners of their territory, but they allowed the principle of political expediency to determine their decision to subsume them under the Gonja (Colonial Report of British Togoland, 1932: 10). The amalgamation created imbalances in Nawuri-Gonja relations as the Nawuri lost their autonomy, and were reduced to Gonja subjects. From the 1932 onwards, Gonja traditional authorities assumed positions as political middlemen and cultural brokers in the social space in Kpandai and its environs between the various ethnic groups and the colonial and post-colonial governments. Their views resonated in all discussions over chieftaincy and land ownership. As overlords, the Gonja imposed tributes on the Nawuri, recruited young men from among the Nawuri to fight for the British in World War II, and demanded labour services from them. This phenomenon was complicated by dichotomies in notions of land rights and allodial ownership of lands in Kpandai and its environs between

the Nawuri and the Gonja. The phenomenon reached a climax when a dispute over a parcel of land in Kpandai between a group of Nawuri and Gonja youth culminated in communal violence between the two ethnic groups in 1991.

Intellectual discourses on conflicts in Northern Ghana have more or less pointed accusing fingers at the colonial enterprise. There are two main schools of thought. The first school of thought explains Northern Ghana's turbulent and unstable political situation within the framework of the colonial enterprise. The proponents in this school of thought such as Bombande (2007), Brukum (2007, 2001, 1999 & 1995), and Peter Skalnik (1989, 1987 and 1983) argue that the colonial enterprise imposed notions of state and state power on Northern Ghana without taking into account the conceptual differences in outlook between centralized and non-centralized societies. They blame inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana on the colonial policy of Indirect Rule which led to the amalgamation of societies and unnatural union of different ethnic groups for the sake of political expediency. According to them, the root cause of the Nawuri-Gonja, Kusasi-Mamprusi, and Konkomba-Dagomba conflicts, for instance, are traced to the decision of the British colonial authorities to subsume the Nawuri under the Gonja, the Kusasi under the Mamprusi, and the Konkomba under the Dagomba, respectively, for the effective implementation of the policy of Indirect Rule. The amalgamation created lots of antagonisms, grievances and festering relations between these ethnic groups especially the hitherto so-called non-centralized societies and centralized political systems.

The second argument put forward by scholars such as Ladouceur (1979), Lentz (2007), Julia Jonsön (2007) and Talton (2010) constructs Northern Ghana's turbulent and unstable political situation within the framework of ethnic constructions, social space networks, land rights, education and educational empowerment, among others. This school of thought establishes the causes of conflicts in Northern Ghana beyond the colonial enterprise. The proponents acknowledge the role colonialism played in the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana, but consider the social and economic factors as preponderant. They argue that education, modernization, questions of allodial rights to land, the activities of ethnic youth associations, among others, fostered consciousness of identity, ethnicity and inequalities in Northern Ghana; an explanation of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana must necessarily take account of the role of ethnicity, identity and inequality. This paper shifts focus from the general historiography of conflicts in Northern Ghana. It critiques the security arrangements in the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

4. The conundrum of ethnic pluralism and security in Northern Ghana

Northern Ghana is an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous area – it consists of a medley of different ethnic groups of different cultural, historical and religious background. The ethnically plural structure in Northern Ghana poses a challenge to peaceful co-existence, and provides the opportunity for 'ethnic entrepreneurs' such as traditional political leaders, chiefs, youth association executives and leaders as well as the educated elite to provide the leadership for the mobilization of ethnic groups into collective actors. These 'ethnic entrepreneurs' exploit the local political order, history as well as social space networks such as activities of youth associations to mobilize individuals into collective actors. Ethnic pluralism in Northern Ghana creates

an environment for constant engagement of rival ethnic interests. In addition, ‘interactions between the state and society assume a constant engagement of rival interests in the contemporary political arena among various groups that have mobilized to secure public resources from those in authority at the political centre’ (Rothchild, 1997: 3). There is no gainsaying that the multi-ethnic nature of societies in Northern Ghana creates competition of cultures and clash of identity. The plural political structure creates conditions for ethnicity and the mobilization of cultures as resources for violent conflict. The result is that Northern Ghana has been enmeshed in inter-ethnic conflicts over the past three decades marked by phenomenal increases in mayhem and the destruction of lives and property. The causes of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana – whether inter or intra ethnic – are varied. They include competition for chieftaincy positions and litigation over rights of land tenure (Tsikata & Seini, 2004: 4). Other Scholars have explained inter-ethnic conflicts within the framework of the struggle for autonomy, litigation over land tenure system, chieftaincy disputes, competition for power and the demand for representation on local and national government bodies (Tonah, 2005: 101). Since 1980 Northern Ghana has witnessed intermittent eruptions of inter-ethnic conflicts and:

the tolls in terms of lives lost, injuries to residents, destruction of property including loss of critical social and economic infrastructure that the conflicts have caused have been staggering (Brukum, 2001: 1).

There have been wars between the Nanumba and the Konkomba in 1981, 1994 and 1995; between the Bimoba and the Konkomba in 1984, 1986 and 1989; between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991 and 1992; and between the Konkomba, the Nawuri, the Basari and the Nchumuru, on the one hand, and the Gonja on the other in 1992. Furthermore, over the past three decades, the Mamprusi and the Kusasi have fought about four times in Bawku.

International and local actors’ attention has been focused on dealing with conflicts in Africa. Conflict management and prevention are carried out by many actors (domestic and external) in the international arena to deal with conflict issues in Africa. The United Nations Organization, African Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), individual states or groups of states, Religious Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the use or deployment of security forces for peace-enforcement purposes. In the 1990s alone, “the United Nations Security Council has sent nine peacekeeping missions to Africa” (Zartman, 2000: 2). The continent itself has also played a prominent role in organizing peacekeeping forces to forestall conflicts in many parts of Africa (Zartman, 2000: 2). Ghana’s internal security experience shows that peacekeeping in conflict-torn areas has been the burden of the state. By and large, government’s response to conflicts in Northern Ghana took the form of the creation of a military-cum-police task force to maintain security, law and order, but in some instances it was done belatedly. For instance, in 1994 when inter-ethnic conflicts broke out in seven districts in the Northern Region of Ghana, Government intervention was made after ten days of fighting (Linde & Naylor, 1998: 40). The Government declared a state of emergency and peacekeeping troops were sent to the conflict districts (Linde & Naylor, 1998: 40). The delay was blamed on the lack of communication between districts and central government as well as the failure of Regional authorities to clearly acknowledge or quickly act upon reports submitted or transmitted by government officials, political leaders and chiefs in the local areas (Linde & Naylor, 1998: 41).

5. Security measures to de-escalate tension and prevent the outbreak of war

In April 1991, the Gonjaland Youth Association was scheduled to hold its conference in Kpandai but the Nawuri protested against such arrangement (Ampiah, 1991: part I 30). Underpinning the Nawuri protest was the festering question of allodial land rights in Kpandai and its environs. Their protest was against Gonja claim to allodial rights in Kpandai and its environs connoted by the designation "Gonjaland Youth Association." Ampiah (1991) suggests that the assertion of the Gonjaland Youth Association that Kpandai and its environs belonged to the Gonja "was so repugnant to the thinking of the Nawuris ... as to arouse in them old and smothered belligerent feelings and their objection to Gonja "overlordship".

Tension began to mount in the Kpandai area as Nawuri protests gathered momentum. From Kpandai, news of an imminent war between the Nawuri and the Gonja soon trickled down to Salaga, the district capital. Formal reports on the escalated tension in Kpandai were made to the Secretary of the East Gonja District at Salaga on 12 and 13 March 1991 (Memoranda – East Gonja District, 1991: 2). It is altruistic that the "most immediate emphasis on institutionalizing conflict management in Africa is bolstering the mechanism's role in collating information that can provide early warning of impending violent conflict and suggesting potential preventive intervention strategies that can forestall its outbreak" (Sisk in Smock & Crocker, 1995: 107). Accordingly, the National Security apparatus took measures to acquaint itself with any possible warning signs in order to de-escalate tension and forestall any possible outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja. First, the District Security Committee (DISEC) of the East Gonja District Assembly carried out a fact-finding mission to assess the security situation in Kpandai and its environs (DISEC Situational Report, 1991: 1-4), a measure which was in line with the conventional security measures to prevent conflicts (SUPRI UNESCO Handbook, 1998: 38). It held four separate meetings with the Gonja, the Nawuri, the Police and Cadres of the Kpandai Zonal Secretariat to find a compromise and to facilitate the peacefully convening of the Gonjaland Youth Association's in Kpandai (DISEC Situational Report, 1991: 1-4). At the meeting, the Nawuri stated unequivocally that they:

Were not prepared to compromise with the Gonjas any longer. They added that apart from abstaining from the Gonjaland Youth Conference to which they were invited, they would use force to stop the holding of the meeting in Kpandai" (Memorandum of the East Gonja District, 1991: 2).

In another situational report, DISEC suggested the change of venue of the Gonjaland Youth Association conference, the re-enforcement of security in the Kpandai area, the need for REGSEC to meet with the leadership of the Nawuri and the Gonja in Tamale to strike a compromise, and the interrogation of some Nawuri leaders (Nana Atorsah, Nana Mbimadong, Nana Oklapunye Oklas and Mr. John Asunke) whose presences and acts in the area were deemed as constituting threat to peace in the Kpandai area (DISEC Situational Report on Nawuri Threat, 1991: 4). To complement the investigations of DISEC, a second fact-finding mission was carried out by the Bureau of National Investigation (BNI) to determine the security situation in Kpandai and its environs. Its investigations concluded that there was threat to peace in the area

and that there were pointers to a possible outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja (Report of the BNI on Nawuri Threat, 1991: 1; Ampiah, 1991: part I, 31). In its report, the BNI emphasized that the:

...major issue at stake now is not necessarily the holding of the Gonjaland Youth Association Conference. The most important issue now to be resolved is 'the ownership of KPANDAI and surrounding area.' Due to claims by the Nawuris that KPANDAI and surrounding areas belong to them they are of the view that any conference tagged 'GONJALAND' should not take place there (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 31).

The report suggested potential preventive intervention strategies that could forestall an outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja. It stated:

on the impending Gonjaland Youth Association conference scheduled for 28th-30th March, 1991 at KPANDAI it is suggested that REGSEC meets both parties to the conflict to resolve issues. While the Nawuris are determined to disrupt the impending conference, the members of the Gonjaland Youth Association as well as some of their chiefs are bent on holding the said conference at KPANDAI to buttress their claim over KPANDAI. While it may not be very difficult to postpone the Gonjaland Association conference, changing the venue from KPANDAI could create further serious problems including violence ... (Report of the BNI on Nawuri Threat, 1991: 4).

It was further proposed that a sub-committee be formed at a later date to determine the ownership of Kpandai and other settlements in Alfai (Report of the BNI on Nawuri Threat, 1991: 5). Acting upon the recommendations of the BNI, REGSEC immediately established a sub-committee to resolve the dispute over allodial land rights in Kpandai and its environs, invited Nawuri and Gonja leaders to a meeting in Tamale at which it banned the holding of the Gonjaland Youth Association conference at Kpandai (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 33), and banned the rights of individuals to possess arms and ammunitions in the Kpandai area (Notes of REGSEC Sub-Committee, 1991: 3). It also "strongly cautioned both factions to exercise restraint and avoid any explosive situation (DISEC Situational Report on Nawuri Threat, 1991: 4). Finally, REGSEC also dispatched a number of Police personnel to Kpandai on 25 March 1991 to "strengthen the security of the area" and prevent any possible outbreak of communal violence (Memorandum of the East Gonja District, 1991: 3). The police searched Nawuri and Gonja homes for firearms and seized them on April 6, 1991. An entry in the Ghana Police Station Diary, Kpandai, for that day confirmed that a "search was made in some unspecified houses in Kpandai and a quantity of firearms was retrieved" (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 33).

The security measures outlined to prevent the conflict and de-escalate the tension were part and parcel of the global security system in search of peace, law and order. Nevertheless, the security measures did not prevent an outbreak of communal violence in Kpandai and its surrounding settlements. It would appear that there was little sophistication in the diagnoses of the security situation in Kpandai and its environs to make it possible for the security agents to succeed in the prevention of the conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The police could not act on intelligence to destroy the possible avenues of preparation for armed confrontation. At dawn of 7 April 1991, the Police received intelligence that the Gonja had offloaded

ammunition from the car of Mr. Alhaji Haruna to his house at midnight, but took no action. No attempts were made to seize the firearms, a major flaw that defeated the attempt of the police to disarm the Nawuri and the Gonja (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 34). For unknown reasons, the police found it difficult to maintain law and order in Kpandai. For instance, on 7th April 1991 Nawuri and Gonja youth engaged themselves in street fights, but the police found it difficult to disperse them; neither were arrests made (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 34). Around mid-morning of 7th April 1991, a street fight broke out between some Nawuri and Gonja women over arguments over allodial rights to lands in Kpandai and its environs. As the embers of the fight began to flicker out, an intense verbal confrontation ensued between some Nawuri and Gonja men over a piece of land previously acquired by the Roman Catholic Mission in Kpandai (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 33). The Kpandaiwura (the Nawuri chief of Kpandai) Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore objected to the attempted sale of the land to motor bike and bicycle mechanics. This resulted in destructive and bloody street fights between Nawuri and Gonja men. In the encounter, two Nawuri men – Kwame Beyifine and Samuel Ntiamoah – were reportedly stabbed by some Gonja men. Gonja casualties included Basiru Tahiru, Barichisu Abdulai and Kasim Lasseni (Ampiah, 1991: Exh. X8,1). The incident was reported to the police, but no arrests were made. Besides, police presence in Kpandai was hardly visible (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 34). The police only acted belatedly to ensure law and order when armed confrontations broke out after Anekor, a Nawuri and the war's first victim, was shot and killed by Asimani, a Gonja. They attempted to seize firearms and arrest belligerents, but their actions came too late and were ineffective.

6. Security measures during the conflict

The armed conflict that ensued between the Nawuri and the Gonja passed through three phases. The Gonja drove the Nawuri out of Kpandai and its environs in the first phase of the conflict in April 1991. The Nawuri regrouped and returned to the town in June the same year, attacked and drove the Gonja out. The resumption of the conflict was blamed on the security forces' "inactivity or acquiescence which enabled the Nawuri to re-enter the Kpandai area" (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 63). The Nawuri attack was inspired by a desire to revenge their defeat and loss of properties in the first phase of the war (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 36). The police patrolled Kpandai in their armoured car in the attempt to stop the violence. They also attempted to block access routes to Kpandai to prevent the Nawuri from penetrating into the town to attack the Gonja, but these attempts were unsuccessful. The renewal of hostilities was an apt illustration of the weakness of security measures outlined to de-escalate and de-intensify the conflict (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 63).

The Ampiah Committee raised question marks about security arrangements put in place to manage the conflict. It questioned how the Gonja warriors from Damango, Bole and other parts of Gonjaland passed unnoticed through Police barriers mounted at Tamale, Yendi and Salaga, to attack the Nawuri in Kpandai and its environs (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 63). According to the Committee (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 63), the laxity of the security probably resulted from the fact that Mr. John Bawah, the PNDC Regional Secretary and head of the Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) as well as Mr. John Seidu Karim, the PNDC District Secretary for Salaga and head of the District Security Committee (DISEC), were both ethnic Gonja.

Following the outbreak of war in the first and second phases of the conflict, a state of emergency was declared over Kpandai and its environs, and the task of maintaining peace in the area assigned to the Armed Forces. The military arrived in Kpandai on April 23, 1991, and their presence not only helped restore peace in the area but also enabled some ethnic Gonja to return to Kpandai to harvest their crops. The military effectively teamed up with the police to ensure law and order (Memorandum of DISEC, 1991: 4). The Military Task Force operated in Kpandai for six months and was withdrawn thereafter. Soon after the withdrawal of the task force, the Gonja returned to Kpandai and renewed the war against the Nawuri, thus beginning the third phase of the conflict (Mbowura, 2002: 188-189). In May 1992, the Gonja attempted to re-occupy Kpandai and its environs. Known as the third phase of the conflict, Gonja attempt to re-occupy Kpandai and its environs in May 1992 was unsuccessful and led to many casualties (Linde & Naylor, 1998: 35; *The Mirror*, 6 June, 1991: 7). The Gonja version was that they returned to Kpandai and its environs in May 1992 to tend to their farms (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: Appendix III, 4). On arrival, they reported to the police, who "ordered them to surrender their farm tools and weapons" (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: Appendix III, 4). The Gonja accuse the police of failing to provide them protection as they could not repel a combined attack of the Nawuri, Konkomba and the Bassari (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: Appendix III, 4). The Nawuri version, however, was that the Gonja penetrated into Kpandai in May 1992 to renew hostilities, but they were pursued by the allied army of the Nawuri, Konkomba and Bassari. Sensing a massacre, the Gonja warriors sought refuge at the Kpandai Police Station (*The Mirror*, 6 June 1991, 7). Both versions agree on the failure of the police to give protection and sanctuary to the Gonja returnees. The Nawuri and their allies pursued the Gonja to the Police Station and massacred them as the police, overawed and outnumbered, found it impossible to rescue them (Ampiah, 1991: Appendix 12, 1). Logistic and geographic factors also thwarted the rescuing attempts of the police. The police service in Kpandai had only one armoured car at its disposal at the time. Besides, the narrow strip of the compound of the Kpandai Police Station made it impossible to manoeuvre armoured car from one point to the other to disperse the overwhelming allied troops.

Unlike the first and second phases of the conflict, fighting in the third phase was not limited to the Kpandai area; it was extended to Salaga and its environs, the Gonja areas of the East Gonja District. The non-existence of the security apparatus in the villages around Salaga was catastrophic. The Konkomba took advantage of the weak security situation and massacred the Gonja in the Gonja villages of Kitoe, Kayeresu and Kulupi (*The Mirror*, 6 June, 1991: 7). In a small measure, the security apparatus succeeded in foiling the attempt by a combined army of the Nawuri, Konkomba, Bassari and Nchumuru from extending hostilities to Kpembe and Salaga in the third phase of the conflict. They were prevented from destroying these settlements by the timely arrival of military peacekeeping forces but not before some of the Konkomba warriors from the western side of Salaga had managed to make their way into that section of the town and destroyed much property.

In 1994, the Konkomba renewed hostilities against the Gonja in Salaga and its environs. Though the 1994 hostilities were part of the general inter-ethnic conflicts that erupted in the Northern Region of Ghana, they were also the unfinished business of the 1992 war. Following the fashion of the 1992 encounters, the Konkomba took advantage of the lack of effective security measures in Salaga and its environs to attack Gonja settlements in quick succession on 4th February 1994 (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: 13). The intensity and

escalation of the war were reduced due to the timely arrival of a platoon of peacekeeping soldiers the next day. By international convention, peacekeepers were usually neutral military personnel and/or civilians used to help warring parties to prevent, manage or resolve conflict between or within states. Normally, they are “permitted to use force only in self-defence. They normally operate with the consent of the parties to the conflict (SIPRI-UNESCO Handbook, 1998: 39). In line with this international convention, the peacekeeping military force deployed to manage the Konkomba-Gonja clashes in 1994 did not use force to bring an end to the fighting, a strategy which appeared disgusting to the Gonja (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: 13). Indeed, the peacekeepers “desisted from shooting at the Konkomba and rather preferred firing only warning shots and also arranging to talk to aggressors to lay down their arms (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: 13). The peacekeepers’ resort to dialogue to negotiate for peace was catastrophic. It is alleged that Lt. Agbanyo and a team of peacekeepers who attempted to go to Adampe, a settlement near Salaga, on 9th February 1991, to negotiate for peace were killed by the Konkomba (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: 13).

7. Security measures as conditions for the resolution of conflict

Between 1991 and 1996, three main attempts were made to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. These were the Bimbilla Na’s mediation effort in 1991, the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry of 1991, and the attempts of the collaborations of Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT), NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) from 1994 to 1996. These bodies utilized mediation, enquiry and negotiation, respectively, as mechanisms for resolving the differences between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Of these three mechanisms utilized to resolve the conflict, it was the resort to the Bimbilla Na for resolution that depended heavily on security arrangements in Kpandai and its environs.

At its meeting in Tamale on April 23, 1991, after the end of the first phase of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, REGSEC decided to visit Kpandai and its environs (Ampiah, 1991: par I, 34; Notes by REGSEC’s Sub-Committee Visit to Kpandai). A sub-committee was formed and was made up of Alhaji W.W. Zakari (PNDC Deputy Regional Secretary for Northern Region), Kwai Marfo (Regional Administrative Officer), Lt. Col. E.B. Sarfo (Commanding Officer of the Sixth Battalion), W. Kumi (Deputy Commissioner of Police), E.O. Mainu (Regional Crime Officer), Henyo (Assistant Director of the BNI, Northern Region), Abudulai N. Issah (Acting Regional Organising Assistant, CDRs), and W.O.I. (Rtd.) Sadiq (Regional Commander, CDO) [Notes by REGSEC’s Sub-Committee Visit to Kpandai, 1991: 1]. The Gonja and the Nawuri emphasized in their separate meetings with the REGSEC Sub-Committee that there was the need for REGSEC to meet the leadership of the two ethnic groups at a neutral place to resolve the conflict (Notes by REGSEC’s Sub-Committee Visit to Kpandai, 1991: 3). Consequently, REGSEC met representatives of the Nawuri and the Gonja at Tamale on May 7, 1991, to obtain first-hand information about the causes of the conflict and to outline the arrangements for its resolution (Ampiah, 1991: part I, 35). REGSEC referred the conflict to the Bimbilla Na, Na Attah Abarika, for resolution. A number of reasons influenced REGSEC’s decision. In the first place, both the Nawuri and the Gonja agreed in the meeting with REGSEC to submit themselves to the Bimbilla Na for mediation. Beyond the fact that Bimbilla Na Attah Abarika was at the time the President of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs

and could use his position to resolve the conflict (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: Appendix III, 3), it was highly probable that the decision to refer the Nawuri-Gonja conflict for him for resolution was dictated by geographical reasons. Of the major Mole-Dagbani and Gonja states in the Northern Region regarded as major, it is only Nanum that is in close proximity with the Kpandai area; it shares a common boundary with the Kpandai area to the North. It was presumed that as a close neighbour, the Bimbilla Na had a deeper historical insight into Nawuri-Gonja relations and therefore was in a better position to resolve the conflict.

Immediately, REGSEC put in place arrangements for the Bimbilla Na to meet the Nawuri and the Gonja. The PNDC District Secretaries for East Gonja and Bimbilla should team up with the Deputy Regional Administrative Officer and the Registrar of the Northern Region House of Chiefs to visit Kpandai on 25 May 1991 (Minutes of Meeting of REGSEC, 1991: 11). They were also mandated to inform and liaise with the Na Atta Abarika, the Bimbilla Na, to meet the Nawuri and the Gonja to resolve the conflict as soon as possible. Acting upon the orders of REGSEC, the Bimbilla Na met the representatives of the Nawuri and the Gonja at his palace in Bimbilla on 7 June 1991. The Gonja representatives in the meeting included Kanankulaiwura Alhaji Adam Issah, Lepo-wura Alhaji Salifu, Dusai-wura Alhaji Musah Jawula, Alhaji Tahiru Jawula and Alhaji Ibrahim Haruna (former PNP Northern Regional Minister). Nawuri representatives included Nana F.K. Atorsah, Nana J.K. Mbimadong, Nana Ayadong Bow, Nana Gyarkon Melebor, Nana Anasanchor, and Nana Anatu Ndenke. In the meeting, Na Atta Abarika, the Bimbilla Na impressed upon the factions to disarm, agree to a ceasefire and live in peace while efforts were made by him, the Government and other mediation bodies to resolve the question of the allodial rights to lands in Kpandai and its environs. He also impressed upon the Gonja to allow the Nawuri to return to Kpandai (Ampiah, 1991: Exh. C, 8; Memorandum of DISEC, 1991: 4). The indications were that the warring factions agreed to live in peace. The Gonja version is that "the Nawuris were given the green light to return to their villages as all Gonja defenders returned to their homes" (Gonja Memorandum, 1994: 4). Nawuri, however, hold that the Bimbilla Na's mediation efforts did not achieve the desired result because no ceasefire pact was signed, neither was an agreement reached for Nawuri return to the Kpandai area (Ampiah, 1991: part II, 106-107).

It would appear that apparent security lapses in Kpandai and the exigencies at the time accounted for the failure of the Bimbilla Na to resolve the conflict. The success of the Bimbilla Na to conclude a ceasefire agreement with the factions and to ensure the return of the Nawuri to Kpandai was contingent upon the security situation in the area. Unfortunately, two security lapses impeded his success. The first consisted of a series of persistent attacks at night by unidentified individuals against the Gonja in Kpandai (DISEC Memorandum to the Ampiah Committee, 1991: 4). The Gonja naturally blamed the attacks on the Nawuri, interpreted them as a breach of trust, refused to engage in further mediations, and turned their attention from mediation to vindictiveness (DISEC Memorandum to the Ampiah Committee, 1991: 4). The Police in Kpandai also found it difficult to disarm the Gonja as part of the mediation process to guarantee a peaceful return of the Nawuri at the end of the first phase of the conflict. The attempt of the police to disarm the Gonja seemed to have made matters worse as a strayed bullet from one of their men's rifle accidentally killed a Gonja warrior (DISEC Memorandum to the Ampiah Committee, 1991: 4). Enraged by the unintended action of the police, the Gonja refused to submit themselves to the disarming scheme. Eventually, the scheme was aborted, and the Bimbilla Na's attempt to resolve the conflict was jeopardized.

8. Building peace through resettlement scheme: The role of security

In 1992 REGSEC rolled out a resettlement scheme of the Gonja in Kpandai as part of the peace-building process. On 5 September 1992, the Gonja were escorted by an armed Security Task Force to Kpandai. The Gonja returnees were accommodated in the New Nkanchina Primary School as Gonja houses in Kpandai were destroyed in the wake of the conflict in 1991 and 1992. The scheme was short-lived, largely due to security reasons. After a couple of weeks, the Gonja were re-evacuated to Salaga. Nawuri version imputed the failure of the resettlement scheme to the lack of bedding facilities in the Primary School and the failure to integrate the Gonja returnees into the society. Beyond these reasons, the Gonja impute the failure of the resettlement scheme to lack of socialization, lack of freedom, and poor cuisine. The main reason, however, for the failure of the resettlement scheme was the lack of security. There was visible military presence in the New Nkanchina Primary School to protect the Gonja returnees, but it would appear that there were gaps in the security arrangements. Both Nawuri and Gonja respondents assert that some unidentified armed Nawuri warriors occasionally managed to sneak into the vicinity of the New Nkanchina Primary School and attempted to kill the Gonja returnees. Fearing for their lives, the Gonja returnees demanded an evacuation back to Salaga and its environs.

9. Conclusion

In line with international security system, networks of security measures were outlined to prevent, de-escalate and manage the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. The state deployed troops to the Kpandai area to prevent an outbreak of war, but despite the professionalism displayed by the security personnel, war broke out between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Attempts were also made to localize and de-escalate the conflict. The police patrolled the Kpandai area, made attempts to arrest the combatants and seize their weapons. Nevertheless, these measures were unsuccessful. At the core of the reasons for the renewal of hostilities in June 1991 and May 1992 was the weakness and laxity of security arrangements in Kpandai and its environs. Similarly, part of the reasons for the extremity of the massacre of the Gonja in the third phase of the conflict in May 1992 was the failure of the police to protect the Gonja warriors who sought refuge in the Kpandai Police Station. The late arrival of the military-police keeping force in Salaga and the lack of palpable security arrangements in the villages around Salaga did not only make the extension of hostilities to Salaga and its environs in 1992 and 1994 possible, but also made it relatively easy for the Konkomba to attack and kill the Gonja in the villages around Salaga. The failure of the state to resettle the Gonja in the Kpandai area at the end of the conflict was partly blamed on the poor nature of security arrangements.

Security arrangements in the Nawuri-Gonja conflict were not entirely bleak. Government response to the threat to peace in the Kpandai area prior to the outbreak of war in April 1991 was impressive. REGSEC and DISEC held a number of meetings with the Gonja and the Nawuri in a bid to de-escalate tension. Police personnel were deployed to the Kpandai area to augment the existing ones to keep peace. Government intensified security measures in the Kpandai and Salaga areas by deploying military peacekeepers to the area.

Largely, the peacekeepers showed neutrality and acted professionally to disarm the combatants, de-escalate conflict and bring an end to hostilities.

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