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# A Cry for Resolution: Measuring the Effectiveness of Conflict Management and Resolution Processes in Ghana: A Case of Kusasi-Mamprusis Chieftaincy Conflicts

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the application of several dispute management and resolution strategies in the Bawku Traditional Area, the Bawku conflict has not yet been resolved. This study assessed the current interventions and suggested one to end the conflict. The study employs a sequential explanatory design within the pragmatist paradigm. The study found that the continued use of Track 1 interventions was unsuccessful in resolving the Bawku conflict. The formed Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee has proposed a symbolic burial of the okro stick to end the conflict. The results support the hypothesis that the traditional conflict resolution mechanism can serve as a remedy for chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana. The study recommended that the Government of Ghana, through the National Peace Council adopts the Gacaca conflict resolution approach to resolve the Bawku conflict. The government and other stakeholders must support the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee with allowances, permanent offices, and logistics to work effectively.

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# A Cry for Resolution: Measuring the Effectiveness of Conflict Management and Resolution Processes in Ghana: A Case of Kusasi-Mamprusis Chieftaincy Conflicts

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**Keywords:** conflict resolution, bawku traditional area, bawku inter-ethnic peace committee, ghana.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming more and more violent. Countries such as Syria, Libya, Nigeria,

Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Iraq are responsible for most of the worsening trends in armed conflict (Gates et al. 2016). Ghana has seen its share of violent clashes. A typical example of these conflicts is the Bawku chieftaincy conflict. The Bawku conflict is a struggle between Kusasis and Mamprusis over the occupancy of the Bawku throne as Bawkunaba (see Awedoba, 2009; Agyeman, 2021).

The available literature attributes the conflict to factors such as colonialism, access to farmland, ethnicity, struggle for chieftaincy, politics, urbanization, restoration of identity and recognition (Kendie et al., 2014; Osei-Kuffour et al., 2016). The conflict began in 1957, with flare-ups in 1980, 1984, 1985, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Despite the application of several dispute management and resolution strategies in the Bawku Traditional Area, the Bawku conflict has not yet been resolved. This study assessed the current interventions and suggested one to end the conflict. This study argues that the traditional conflict resolution mechanism can serve as a remedy for chieftaincy conflicts. The study was divided into four sections. Section one provides the background to the study. It sheds light on the current debates on conflict management and resolution. Section two examines the study context and methodological approaches. Section three presents the findings and discussions of the study and concludes the study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is crucial to analyze the conflict management and resolution literature to situate the study in the

context of local and global academic debates. According to Neuman (2000), a researcher must define terms to avoid ambiguity. The significant ideas at the heart of the study are covered in this part. The fundamental distinction between conflicts and disputes is that the former is more intense than the latter and less amenable to settlement. Conflict and dispute are both parts of the same continuum.

Groups start conflicts to further their objectives. The motivations for conflict may include entitlement, command over the state's institutions, access to resources, identity, recognition, and respect for or adherence to ideals. According to Braham (2013), conflict develops through the following phases: latent, escalation, de-escalation, and settlement. Tensions between the parties and their growing awareness of the issue are features of the latent phase (Tona, 2016). Conflicts grow and get violent if they are not resolved at this point. The following features describe the conflict rising stage: Increased use of litigation tactics by the parties, issues raised throughout the dispute, a fundamental question that was formerly specific has now become broader, and the parties' motivations.

This stage is regarded as a feeling of sustainable peace, and a healthy power relationship is established between parties (Dudouet, 2006). This stage is mediated by institutions such as State Courts, Civil Society Organizations, Community Groups, and Opinion Leaders. Tona (2016) stated that conflict is a many-sided incident and may not occur in a linear form. For instance, protracted conflicts appear to be resolved for some time and re-occur. The process conceived conflict resolution as too flexible and one-dimensional. However, conflict is a dynamic process with different phases. Fisher et al. (2000) findings show five stages of conflict as follows: pre-conflict stage, which is a period when the goals of the parties are incompatible, which could lead to open conflict. The second stage is the stage of hostility. This is characterized by sporadic aggression and a search for allies by parties, mobilization of resources, tense rapport, and divergence. The third stage is the stage of crisis,

which represents the highest degree of conflict. The fourth stage is the outcome stage. At this stage, a third party intervenes to resolve the conflict. At this stage, the level of intensity declined and the parties tried to determine and fix the root causes of the conflict.

### III. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION

Practitioners and academics have varied definitions of conflict management and resolution. Conflict resolution is a process of resolving conflicts from adversarial, fact-based, and legally binding decisions. Conflict management is applied in times of war, and conflict situations. Activities aimed to settle conflicts to ensure a lasting peace are referred to as conflict resolution. To resolve a conflict and create lasting peace, it is essential to uncover its underlying causes. Conflict can be used to promote progress once it has been handled. Cultural and structural violence are addressed through conflict resolution. According to Kaye and Béland (2009), conflict resolution aims to determine the parties' requirements and turn those needs into beneficial solutions.

Conflict resolution has 1 to 9 tracks, and when used all together, they are referred to as multi-track. The tactics or strategies used to resolve conflicts are called tracks. Preventive diplomacy is what Track 1 is known as (Sandole, 2010). The Track-one is connected to the state as the authorized means of promoting peace (Davies & Kaufman, 2002). Consultations, special envoys, mediation, and discussions are all part of the diplomatic track-one activities. Track one's primary flaw is that it uses punishments and psychological intimidation against the parties (see Adjei, 2016). According to Kaufman (2002), proponents of track-one diplomacy serve as the mediator in dispute resolution without including the parties in the negotiating process. The activities of non-state actors looking to settle disputes are covered in track two. Track two consists of unofficial discussions between individuals from rival organizations or governments to formulate plans, sway public opinion, and allocate people and material

resources in ways that advance conflict resolution (Montville 1987). The track two interventions allow group representatives to settle disputes in a non-threatening, non-coercive, and non-confrontational way (Azar, 1991).

Track two interventions were divided into three phases (1991). Workshops for problem-solving make up the initial phase. The goal of these workshops is to encourage the parties to a conflict to consider additional options for resolving their issues. The objective is to transform the disagreement from a zero-sum to a win-win situation. The second stage of track two diplomacies, according to Azar (1991), is the use of public opinion to change the attitudes and perceptions of the parties. The second track focuses on civil society organizations' efforts to resolve conflicts. To address the requirements of the opposing parties, track three entails offering employment possibilities. Track 4 promotes peace via individual action (Sandole, 2010). The fifth track focuses on promoting peace through grassroots non-governmental organizations' research, training, and education. Track 6 is thought of as promoting peace through advocacy. The seventh track examines the role that religious institutions play in resolving disputes. The eighth track discusses promoting peace by supplying resources. The ninth and final track discusses the function of the media in resolving disputes.

#### IV. WESTERN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Best (2006) asserts that the approach to settling a dispute is dependent upon understanding its root reasons. A mechanism that would most effectively address the root causes of conflict must also take into account cultural values and the nature of the dispute (Awedoba, 2009). Negotiation, mediation, conflict analysis, case evaluation, and arbitration are examples of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques. It entails the third party helping the parties in conflict reach non-binding conclusions. After a settlement has been reached, ADR is a non-traditional strategy that satisfies both sides (Best, 2006). Agyeman (2008) stated that intra-ethnic disputes benefit from conventional arbitration. An informal method of dispute resolution involving a third party's

intervention is mediation. Typically, there is no winner and defeat. This suggests that mediation can encourage peaceful co-existence between the disputing parties. Any mediation process must begin with a conflict assessment phase.

Conflict analysis deepens our understanding of the conflict through the assessment of the dynamics, parties, and profile of the conflict. Conflict assessment helps the parties and other stakeholders to get an insight as to the causes of the underlying conflict. Conflict analysis enables development practitioners to offer planned responses to manage conflicts. Conflict assessment is anchored on the following perspectives: The Harvard approach (HA), the Human Needs approach (HNA), and the conflict transformation theory (CTT). The Harvard approach stresses the differences between positions and interests.

The Human Needs system (HNA) asserts that conflicts are caused by the deprivation of human needs. For the conflict to be resolved, those needs should be provided to the parties (Burton, 1990; Rosenberg, 2001). The CTT perceived conflicts as a functional or dye-functional process in society, which comes naturally from human interactions. Sandole (2010) opines that conflict analysis should be done from the perspectives of the structure, actors, and dynamics. Conflict analysis should emphasize the context to provide insight into all aspects of the conflict. The critical components of conflict analysis are as follows: The profile focuses on the political, socio-economic, and cultural context of the conflict. The actors have to do with the conflicting parties and their interests, goals, and positions in the conflict. Dynamics factors stress the scenarios that can be charted from the other vital components of the conflict analysis.

Arbitration is the ADR method with legal representation outside the court. The arbitrator award tends to produce a winner and a loser. This implies that arbitration cannot foster peaceful co-existence among the feuding parties. The award may be entered as a judgment of the court. To have a fruitful arbitration certain factors must be met. Those conditions are outlined as follows;

date for the arbitration hearing, venue, procedures, submission of claims, and inspection of relevant documents to enable the arbitrator to prepare adequately for the whole exercise. Finally, security arrangements must be made to erase fear from the parties during the arbitration exercise.

Arbitration facilitates the peaceful resolution of disputes by avoiding hostility among the parties. That implies that the parties reach mutually satisfactory agreements that will result in a long-term resolution of the conflict. Conflict resolution can be approached in three ways. These are the following:

- Adjudicating right- The determination of what is a legally enforceable right.
- Reconciling interest- Satisfying the needs, concerns, and fears of the feuding parties.
- Reacting on power- Coercing someone to act.

The unwillingness of the parties to engage in such initiatives is one of several challenges confronting Western conflict resolution efforts. The western approach's major flaw is that it ignores local resources and peace-building capacities.

## V. TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Formal conflict resolution approaches can help us rebuild social trust in conflict-prone areas. Indigenous conflict resolution encourages parties to engage in dialogue to address their grievances. Formal conflict resolution is based on a win-win situation and strengthens the relationship between the parties. This also implies that the traditional conflict resolution mechanism is based on community participation, whereas the Western approach is based on litigation, which emphasizes the win-lose sum (Brock-Utne, 2001). Rwanda, Mozambique, and South Africa have used Gacaca, Amnesia, and Ubuntu to resolve conflicts (Issifu, 2015).

The analysis shows that traditional conflict resolution approaches encourage participation and provide a platform for conflicting parties to re-establish unity (Zartman, 2000). Indigenous conflict resolution promotes peaceful coexistence among groups and maintains social order (Yakubu, 1995). The following describes

indigenous conflict resolution efforts in a few African countries. Gacaca is a village court where members meet to settle disputes. The trials are not presided over by qualified judges, but rather by elderly members of the communities. In the Gacaca approach, parties are allowed to present their case in an old-style courtroom in a non-threatening manner. This allows the survivors to assess the consequences of the crimes committed. The Gacaca conflict resolution approach can be dangerous because of the lack of security personnel.

## VI. THE STUDY SETTINGS AND METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Bawku Traditional Area (BTA) in Upper East Region. The BTA cut across six political, and administrative districts: Bawku West, Binduri, Bawku East, Pusiga, Garu, and Tempene (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The BTA is bordered by Burkina Faso to the north, the Republic of Togo to the east, the Nabdam District to the west, and the Mamprusi East District to the south in Ghana's North-East Region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). From pre-colonial times to the present, the BTA has been known as the Kusaug Traditional Area. The White Volta divides the Kusaug Traditional Area in two. The eastern half is known as Agolle, while the western half is known as Atoende (see Opoku-Afari, 1957).

The Kusasis and Mamprusi are the two major ethnic groups in the area. Other ethnic groups include the Bisa, Moshie, Hausa, Busanga, Frafra, Kasena, and Dagombas. However, the people of all other ethnic groups combined do not even come close to the Kusasis ethnic group. The Kusasis, make up 45 percent of the people, followed by the Mamprusi at 25 percent, the Moshie at 15 percent, and the Hausa at 10 percent. All other ethnic groups account for 5 to 5% of the total population (GSS, 2012). The main protagonists of the Bawku chieftaincy conflict are the two largest ethnic groups, the Kusasis, and the Mamprusi. BTA was selected as a study area based on media reports and existing literature on the Bawku conflict.

The study followed a sequential explanatory approach within the framework of the pragmatist paradigm to examine the research questions. The system provides insights into findings that a single design might miss (Creswell et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2017). The research process began with an exploratory survey to establish a relationship for the primary data collection.

As part of the preliminary survey, secondary data on emerging trends in conflict resolution efforts

were collected from the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) and the Kusaug Traditional Council (KTC). The data collected were used to design the interview guidelines and the questionnaire. First, a quantitative survey was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the conflict resolution and management processes in the BTA. The potential respondents were distributed as follows (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Number of Households Surveyed in BTA*

Selected communities	Number of households	Number of households surveyed	Kth house
Bawku	9,738	136	264
Pusiga	1,187	17	32
Mognori	580	8	16
Zebila	1,724	24	47
Garu	1,096	15	30
Total	14,325	-	-

*Source, Authors Construct, 2019*

Systematic sampling was used to select every kth householder for the survey based on the randomly selected first householder. The traditional authorities, mainly Chiefs, the Police, and the Belim Wusa Development Agency were selected for in-depth interviews to authorize the quantitative data. The data collected were analyzed for the pattern of subjects and were used as narratives in the study. The study adhered to research ethics and safety approvals (WHO, 2001). Ethical permission was obtained from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) before the primary data collection exercise began. Respondents were informed of the confidentiality and anonymity principles. The questionnaires were administered and analyzed without the household identities.

## VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section is organized around specific research themes. It included police interventions, the Courts and Commission of Inquiry, and the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee. These issues are explored as follows.

### 3.1 Police Interventions

Issifu (2015) noted that the police are instrumental in peace-building processes in Ghana. The empirical data (see Table 2) show the effectiveness of police interventions in BTA.

*Table 2: The effectiveness of Police Interventions in BTA*

Ranking	Percentage
Poor	9.5
Average	21.5
Good	27.5
Very Good	25.5
Excellent	15.5
Total	<b>100</b>

*Source, Field Data, 2020*

Responses were obtained from the field using a five-point Likert scale index. The householders in each study area were given a scale of 1-5, where 1 = poor; 2 average; 3 = good 4 = excellent good, and 5 = perfect to measure the effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts in the area. 69% of households stated that they were satisfied with

the police operations. In an interview, one of the interviewees said,

*"The immediate interventions by police have always been the imposition of curfew in Bawku and its surroundings. In most instances, people were given two 2 hours to go to the market and come back. The District Security bans the riding of motorbikes in Bawku and its surroundings for three years. The Police have instituted social marketing strategy to retrieve all weapons from the people, only two people have submitted theirs, and an amount of 2000 Ghana cedis were given to each person".*

According to the officeholder, *"Police do not respond quickly whenever the conflict occurs and when you ask them, they will say that it is an ethnic matter, so we don't have to take sides. If they will not intervene, we will get the means of intervention by ourselves. God did not create their youth with iron and steel and created ours with clay and water. The police interventions do not touch the heart and minds of the people to resolve their differences. Thus, it only forces the masses to go and sleep when they are not willing to do so".*

#### *Court and Commission of Inquiry*

The laws of Ghana provide for a commission of inquiry (see Republic of Ghana, 1992). Article 280 subsection (2) states that the judgment of a commission of investigations is a decision of the High Court. In the empirical data (see Table 3), about 12% of households reported poor intervention by the Courts and Commission of Inquiry. This indicates that more than 60% of heads of household are satisfied with the Court's interventions.

**Table 3:** The effectiveness of Court and Commission of Inquiry Interventions

Ranking	Percentage
Poor	11.5
Average	22.5
Good	30.5
Very Good	19.5
Excellent	16.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source, Field Data, 2020*

The results show that a committee of inquiry was set up under Section 7(1) of the State Council (Northern Region) Order No. 5 of 1952 to investigate Abugurago Azoka's claims that he had been appointed head of the Kusaug traditional area. The committee reported that Abugurago Azoka was duly elected and installed as chief in the Kusaug Traditional Area. The governor-general issued a white paper supporting the committee's advice. Yirimea Mamprusi dismissed the commission's advice as he referred the matter to the Accra High Court. Accra High Court upheld Yirimea Mamprusi's allegation. The Commission also challenged the Accra High Court ruling by appealing to the West Africa Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal overturned the Accra High Court's judgment. This allowed the then President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, to enact the Chiefs Recognition Act 1959 to install the late Abugurago Azoka as Bawkunaba. However, on April 29, 2003, the Mamprusi filed a lawsuit against the Kusasis in the Supreme Court of Ghana.

Faced with overwhelming evidence against them, they later applied for permission to discontinue permission to go to court on the same matter at any time. The motion for discontinuity was granted without permission to go to court on the same issue under the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) Act 75 and Articles 270 and 277 of the 1992 Constitution. The commission of inquiry and court systems give people a legally enforceable right, but still are not effective in resolving chief disputes because they produce a winner and a loser, and this has increased the emotional impertinence of the Kusasis and Mamprusi ethnic group. For the court and commission of inquiry to be effective in resolving chieftaincy disputes, they must satisfy the needs, viewpoints, and concerns of the feuding parties.

#### *Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee*

The available literature shows that countries such as Rwanda, Mozambique, and South Africa have used Gacaca, Amnesia, and Ubuntu for conflict resolution (see Francis, 2006; Issifu, 2015). In the case of BTA, the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) was formed to resolve the

Bawku conflict. It comprises 20 members. The breakdown is as follows; six Kusasi, six Mamprusis, and two representatives from the other minority tribes in BTA, namely the Moshie, Hausa, Bisa, and Dagombas. This shows the commitment of both parties to settle their differences. The strength of this intervention is that it creates a platform to involve all parties in the settlement process. Table 4 shows the level of effectiveness of the BIEPC interventions.

*Table 4:* The effectiveness of Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee Interventions

Ranking	Percentage
Poor	18
Average	21
Good	21
Very Good	14
Excellent	26
Total	<b>100</b>

*Source, Field Data, 2020*

Approximately 18% of households indicated they were dissatisfied with the interventions of the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee. While 26% of households said they were happy with the interventions of the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee. This implies that significant proportions of heads of households are happy with the interventions of the BIEPC.

*According to the officeholder,*

*"The BIEPC has proposed a symbolic burial of the okro stick to resolve the conflict. The two groups, Kusasis, and the Mamprusis will make a promise and swear before a piece of okro that if in the course of their life they start a conflict, the tender should strike and kill them, after which they will bury the okro too end the conflict. The BIEPC has formed several committees to handle issues that trigger conflicts in the area, such as the land committee and festival committee. The committee has organized peace talks through churches and mosques, women's groups, and political parties on peacebuilding in Bawku".*

Another respondent said that *"the activities of the BIEPC have sowed negative peace in the area*

*since its inception in 2009. A serious dilemma facing the Committee has been the axiological positions of its members. That has erased the trust that people have in the Committee member. The committee has not been effective in injecting positive peace in BTA because it is faced with challenges such as permanent offices, logistical constraints, and lack of remuneration for its staffs".*

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study evaluates the conflict management and resolution process in the BTA. The study found that the continued use of Track 1 interventions was unsuccessful in resolving the Bawku conflict. The formed BIEPC has proposed a symbolic burial of the okro stick to end the conflict. The two ethnic groups, Kusasi, and the Mamprusis will make a pledge and swear in front of a piece of okro that if during their lifetime they start the conflict, let the tender hit and kill them, after which they will bury the okro save the end conflict. The BIEPC interventions have sowed negative peace in the region since its inception in 2009. The results support the hypothesis that the traditional conflict resolution mechanism can serve as a remedy for chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana. The study recommended that the Government of Ghana, through the National Peace Council adopts the Gacaca conflict resolution system to resolve the Bawku conflict. Also, the government and other stakeholders support the BIEPC with remuneration, permanent offices, and logistics to work effectively.

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