



**UiT**

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# **FIGHTING FOR PEACE: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE GUINEA FOWL WAR OF 1994**

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Master's in Peace and Conflict Transformation ... *May 2018*





## **DEDICATION**

To my parents:

Who with little formal education ensured that I got the basics to climb  
the academic ladder

To my precious wife:

Your support all the years we have met is priceless. You are one in a  
million.

To my beautiful diamond daughters:

Who I got in the period of my masters education, I assure you of my  
love and care

To all lovers of peace:

Do not give up in fighting for peace, peace is an expensive commodity  
whose prize is priceless.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a historical work on the relationship between ethnic groups in the Northern Part of Ghana. There have been several ethnic conflicts in Ghana since Ghana attained independence in 1957. My thesis focuses on the 1994 ethnic conflict between the Konkomba and the Nanumba which eventually attracted allies to both sides of the warring factions.

The Konkombas have had a history of violent conflict with different ethnic groups since colonial times. Before the 1994 GFW, there was the 1981 Pito war between the Konkomba and the Nanumba which had claimed several hundreds of lives. A repeat of another war between same adversaries a little over a decade raises serious concerns about governments role in preventing and finding lasting solutions to these ethnic armed conflicts.

Drawing on multiple sources of data such as newspaper reports, archival material, official documents from the Northern Region House of Chiefs and personal interviews, this thesis attempt to trace the causes of the 1994 GFW as perceived by both sides of the warring factions. These causes of the ethnic conflict which I discuss borders on chieftaincy, land ownership rights and access to a quasi-government institution.

My thesis also examines the actions, inactions and peace initiative of government before, during and after the war and how the government's decisions have either contributed to the realization of peace or saw to the continuation of violence. This thesis analyses government's response in terms of the provision of security and their efforts at constituting a commission of enquiry to find lasting solutions to the root causes of the Guinea Fowl.

**Master's Thesis, Title:**

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**Larry Ibrahim Mohammed**

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## **ABBREVIATION**

GFW: Guinea Fowl War

NHC: National House of Chiefs

NRHC: Northern Region House of Chiefs

RHC: Regional House of Chiefs

KOYA: Konkomba Youth Association

CSO: Civil Society Organization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

PPNT: Permanent Peace and Negotiation Team

NPI: Nairobi Peace Initiative

NDC: National Democratic Congress

PNDC: Provisional National Defense Council

NPP : New Patriotic Party

DAYA: Dagbon Youth Association

MP: Member of Parliament

## **FIGURES**

1. MAP of GHANA
2. MAP OF GHANA SHOWING TOWNS AFFECTED BY THE VIOLENCE OF THE GUINEA FOWL WAR

# CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Ghana as one of the most stable and peaceful states in Africa, has had a stable democracy since 1992 and witnessed peaceful hand over of power to different governments. Like other African countries, the period after independence was marked by turbulence and several military adventurisms leading to various coup d'état. This situation of numerous military adventurism testifies to the weak and fragile state which had characterized a lot of African countries after attaining independence. The success and return to civilian democratic rule have placed the nation with over 25 million people on a promising road towards peace and development. It was little surprise when in 2011 the World Bank moved Ghana from the status of a low income to a middle-income country, lending credence to the popular notion of democracy begetting development<sup>1</sup>. There have been a lot of reforms cutting across various segments of the nation. For instance, Ghana boast of a free media, modest infrastructural development, credible legislature and judiciary amongst many other things.

However, this peaceful nature of Ghana is not without threats and flashes of violence which corrodes the prize of peace the country enjoys. Ethnic tensions rooted in different historical factors as well as competition over land ownership have metamorphosed into different violent ethnic clashes

In this chapter, I will give the background to my study of the Guinea Fowl War, by looking Ethnic violence in Ghana. This chapter will also outline the research questions guiding this study and its relevance.

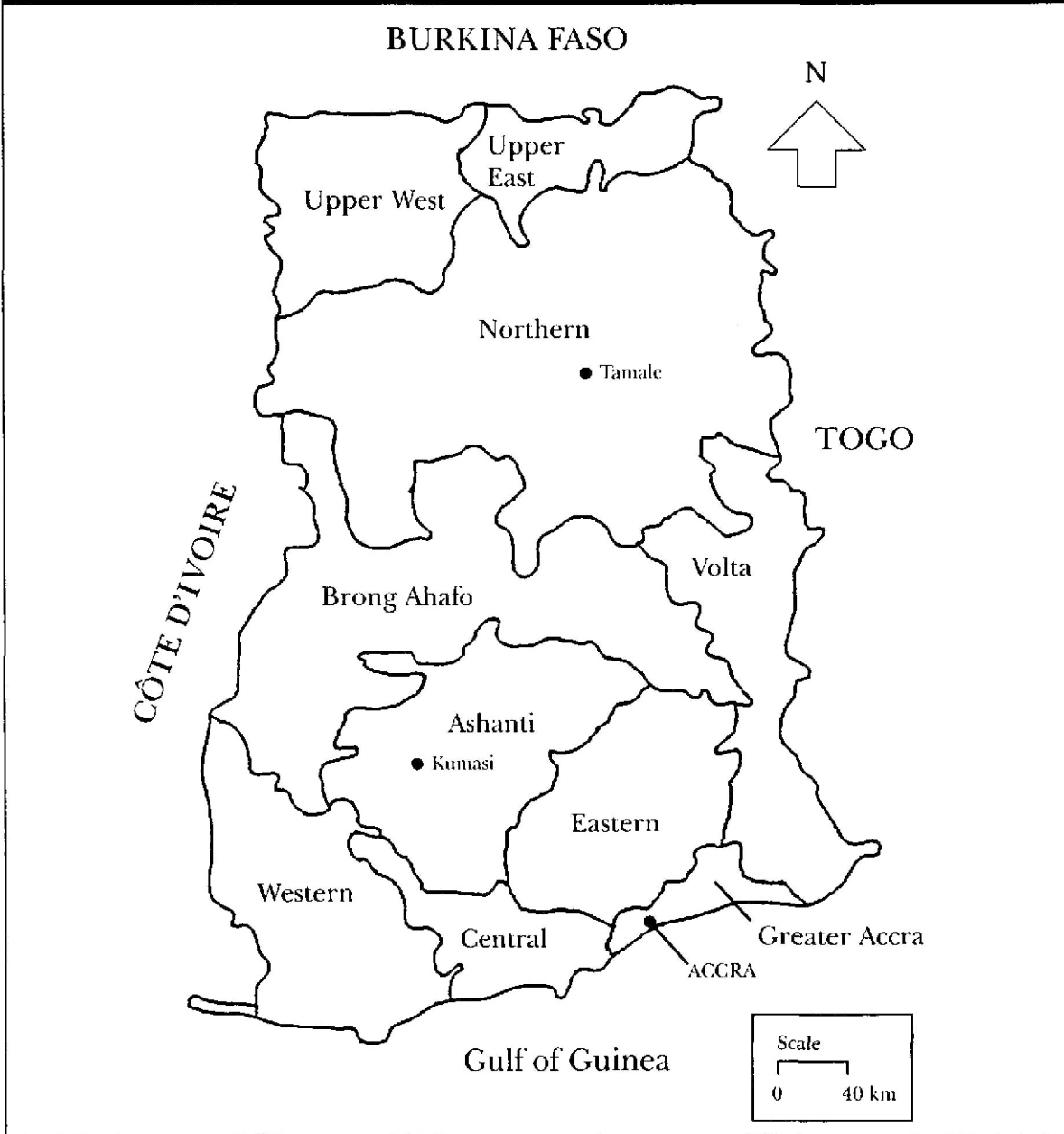
### 1.1.2 Background

Ghana has 10 Administrative Regions broadly categorized into the Southern, Middle and Northern belts. The Guinea Fowl War of 1994 took place in the Northern Region where there are

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<sup>1</sup> Worldbank, "Poverty Reduction in Ghana: Progress and Challenges," World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/publication/poverty-reduction-ghana-progress-challenges>.

Figure 1: Ghana's administrative Regions



about 18 ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> These ethnic groups have been categorized into two, namely the indigenous and the invading, all of which speak distinct languages. The Konkomba, the Nafeba, the Nawuri, the Chamba, the Vagala, the Baasare and a host of other groups have been established to be the original inhabitants of the Northern Region. On the other hand, it has been established that the Dagomba, Nanumba and the Gonja ethnic groups displaced and asserted their superiority since the 16<sup>th</sup> century by conquering the indigenous ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the indigenous groups, the invading ethnic groups had a well-established, centralized system of administration with chiefs as ethnic leaders. The British colonial government under its policy of indirect rule in Ghana recognized the authority of the invading ethnic groups over the indigenes and equipped them with relevant resources to administer various territories. For instance, the British colonial government provided colonial police to the chiefs of the invading ethnic groups to assist in maintaining law and order. They were also empowered to collect taxes on behalf of the colonial government and to establish a tribunal for trying local cases.<sup>4</sup> The chiefs of the invading ethnic groups were made responsible to the colonial government and continued to enjoy their support as far as they enjoyed the goodwill of the colonial government.

The post-independence period largely maintained the structures of the colonial government by associating state recognition and access to quasi-government institutions to ethnic groups to those who had had an established tradition of chieftaincy.<sup>5</sup> For example, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana makes provisions for the establishment of the National and the Regional Houses of Chiefs. The National House of Chiefs (NHC) is constitutionally mandated with the responsibility of advising other state institutions on traditional and cultural matters relating to the survival of the chieftaincy institution. Each of the 10 administrative region has a Regional House of Chiefs (RHC) to mimic the function of the NHC at the regional level. In the case of the Northern Region, only the paramount chiefs from the invading ethnic groups out of about the 18 ethnic groups have representation in the Northern Regional House of Chiefs (NRHC). Land ownership rights in the

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<sup>2</sup> N. J. K. Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 4/5 (2000). p.132

<sup>3</sup> Hippolyt A.S Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars," *The African Anthropologist*, Volume 10,, no. No. 1 (2003): 42.

<sup>4</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal."p.138

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010).

Northern Region is closely linked with the concept of chieftaincy and paramountcy. All lands in the three northern regions which were not public lands before the promulgation of the 1992 constitution was placed in the hands of the various paramount stools or skin.<sup>6</sup> By effect, only the paramount chiefs of the invading ethnic groups are recognized as the trustees of the land in the Northern Region rendering other indigenous ethnic groups who historically did not have the concept of chieftaincy to be sidelined. This constitutional framework has created a form of an ethnic exclusion<sup>7</sup> where access to resources in a modern state is based on ethnic classification. This phenomenon has resulted into several wars of emancipation<sup>8</sup>, a situation influenced by ethnic grievance arising because of the distribution of power according to ethnic affiliations.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 Intra and Inter-ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana

The Northern Region of Ghana has had over 20 ethnic conflicts since 1980.<sup>10</sup> These conflicts can broadly be classified as intra ethnic and inter-ethnic conflict. Intra-ethnic conflicts are primarily due to chieftaincy succession disputes amongst one or several groups of a royal clan arising after the death of their chief.<sup>11</sup> Two notorious cases of intra-ethnic conflicts in Ghana are the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute and the Bimbilla skin affair. The Dagbon chieftaincy disputes<sup>12</sup> saw the sophisticated use of arms resulting into the performative violence of beheading of the Ya- Naa<sup>13</sup> and the execution of the members of his household in March 2002<sup>14</sup>. In the case of the Nanumba, succession dispute between royals of the same royal gate to fill the vacant skin of the Bimbilla

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<sup>6</sup> The symbol of chieftaincy authority in the northern territory is the skin. Because chiefs sit on the skins of animals. In the case of southern Ghana, the symbol of authority of the chiefs is the stool.

<sup>7</sup> Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars."2003

<sup>8</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal," 132.

<sup>9</sup> Andreas Wimmer, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set," *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 2 (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal," 131.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Tonah & Alhassan Anamzoya, ed. *Introduction: Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana*, Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2016), 28.

<sup>12</sup> The Dagbon dispute is an intra-ethnic struggle between two royal gates-the Abudu and the Andani

<sup>13</sup> The Ya-Naa is the paramount chief and the overlord of the Dagomba people. His palace is based in Yendi

<sup>14</sup> Deborah Pellow, ed. *'Logics of Violence among the Dagomba in Northern Ghana'*. , Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2016), 39.



Naa<sup>15</sup> since 1999 has seen violent confrontations between kinsmen. <sup>16</sup> Inter-ethnic conflict, on the other hand is largely violent clashes between members of two or more ethnic groups. In Northern Ghana,<sup>17</sup> ethnic groups mainly classified as either indigenous or invading have usually clashed over issues of land ownership rights and chieftaincy.<sup>18</sup> The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen inter-ethnic conflicts between the Gonja and Nawuri (1991, 1992, 1994) the Nanumba and the Konkomba (1980, 1994, 1995), the Mamprusi and the Kusasi amongst others.<sup>19</sup>

### **1.2.1 An Introduction to the Guinea Fowl War of 1994**

The focus of this research is on the Guinea Fowl War of 1994. The war was fought between the Konkomba on the one hand and the Nanumba, Dagomba and Gonja on the other, over issues of chieftaincy, land rights and ethnic recognition.

As indicated, most of the inter-ethnic conflicts between the periods of 1980 to 1994 in the Northern regions have as one of the key drivers of the conflict to be related to land ownership rights intertwined with chieftaincy. Ethnic groups who feel marginalized and excluded in the possession of these lands are easily aggrieved especially so when they have the conviction of being the rightful owners of the lands they believe to have occupied first. The Konkomba ethnic group's desire to see an end to the existing status quo of ethnic relations in the Northern Region led to the Guinea Fowl War of 1994. The high regard for land ownership is not only limited to its economic functions but also related to some symbolic functions. In Northern Ghana, lands are believed to belong to the living and the non-living. Ethnic ancestors, the unborn and the current generation are charged with the responsibility of protecting their lands. The chiefs are thus held to be the custodians of these lands in trust for their ethnic people.

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<sup>15</sup> The Bimbilla Na is the paramount chief and the overlord of the Nanumba people. His palace is situated in Bimbilla

<sup>16</sup> A.K Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace* (Accra: Sub-Sahara Publishers, 2009), 180.

<sup>17</sup> Northern Ghana is used to refer to all the three northern administrative regions. They include the Northern Region, Upper East and Upper West Regions

<sup>18</sup> Anamzoya, *Introduction: Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana*, 17-19.

<sup>19</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal," 131.

In June 1993, the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) sent a petition to the National House of Chief requesting for the local Konkomba chief of Saboba<sup>20</sup> to be promoted to paramountcy status.<sup>21</sup> Amongst other things, the petition, with about 25 points justifying the request for paramountcy, listed cultural and linguistic differences and Konkomba population size as some of the key reasons for requesting for paramountcy.<sup>22</sup> However, the Ya-Naa rejected to hear the Konkomba petition when it was referred to him by the NHC charging that, the leadership of the Konkomba had violated protocol by sidestepping him at the regional to the national level. A situation which points to the relevance of symbolism in the traditional and cultural setup of the Dagomba people. The Ya-Naa interpreted this move as a show of disrespect and accused the KOYA of inhabiting ulterior motives. It will appear that the Konkomba were equally suspicious of the NRHC. The existing framework where the paramount chiefs within the Northern Region are all from the three invading ethnic groups mentioned earlier. Any request by the indigenous ethnic group for a paramountcy stool can be easily dismissed. Eventually, when the petition was re-routed to the Ya-Naa, it was an outright rejection of the request for the Konkomba Paramountcy. The KOYA petition with other coincidences and events resulted in a full-blown war in February 1994.

At the same time of the petition wrangle, relations between the Konkomba and the Nanumba on the other hand, has not been cordial. In 1981, tensions between a Nanumba and a Konkomba man in a drinking bar over a woman sparked the *Pito War* resulting in violent clashes.<sup>23</sup> In the case of the Guinea Fowl War, it is widely believed that a disagreement on the price of a guinea fowl between a Nanumba and a Konkomba in a village of Nakpayili near Bimbilla sparked the beginning of the 1994 war. This incident torched the candle to a fight which resulted in the loss of several hundreds of lives, tens of thousands displaced and more than 400 villages destroyed.<sup>24</sup> Whereas it is sensational to report about these flimsy triggers of ethnic wars, they do not convey the deep-rooted causes or conditions accounting for these violent clashes.

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<sup>20</sup> The Konkombas claim the town of Saboba as their ancestral home. Saboba falls under the jurisdiction of the Ya-Naa as the overlord of Dagbon

<sup>21</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, 170.

<sup>22</sup> Petr Skalnik, "Political Anthropology of History: The Case of Nanun, Northern Ghana," *Social Evolution & History* 13, no. 2 (2014): 60.

<sup>23</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal."

<sup>24</sup> Martijn Wienia, *Ominous Calm: Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana* (Leiden: African Studies Center, 2009), 78.

### 1.3 Problem statement

Successive governments, either military or civilian have played numerous role towards restoring calm and working to restore peace whenever these ethnic tensions degenerate into violence. Governments have deployed the police and the military to provide security in the hope of containing the spread of violence when they erupt. Providing security when conflicts arise provides the avenue for ceasefire and for peace talks to be commenced.<sup>25</sup> However various factors affect the effectiveness of government to provide and guarantee security when violence erupts. Key amongst them include professionalism of security personnel, availability of adequate security equipment and security know-how.<sup>26</sup> The capacity of the security task force to deliver their mandates is very Key to peace. In the case of the GFW, the mode of operation of the security task force to contain the violence has several lessons to offer on the state of Ghana's security institution. In this research, I will provide an assessment of the security measures of government, and how in some instances they produced some success whiles at other times made the violence even worse.

Apart from the security deployed to the conflict areas, governments often constitute committees of inquiry to investigate the causes of these ethnic conflicts and to suggest solutions to prevent resurfacing of the conflict. When the Guinea Fowl War erupted, the government commissioned a committee of enquiry called the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT) to investigate the causes of the eruption of violence and to suggest ways to resolve the conflict. In June 1994, a government-mediated ceasefire accord was reached by the PPNT in which the warring factions agreed to denounce the use of violence and to use appropriate state institutions to seek redress.<sup>27</sup> This however, did little to end hostilities as the war kept spreading to neighboring villages.

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<sup>25</sup> G. C. Berkhof, "Maintaining International Peace and Security: The Military Dimension," *Neth. Int. Law Rev.* 35, no. 3 (1988): 300.

<sup>26</sup> "Maintaining International Peace and Security: The Military Dimension."

<sup>27</sup> Daily Graphic, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1994 "Two factions sign ceasefire pact" story by Samuel Sarpong

After several challenges to the effort of the PPNT to negotiate for peace, a group of NGOs operating in the areas affected by the violence stepped offered to assist. They formed an inter NGO consortium and invited a Kenyan based conflict resolution think tank called the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) which act to help in finding lasting solutions to the GFW. A very significant step by the inter NGO consortium was the fact that they had gone the extra mile to concurrently mediate in other simmering ethnic tensions involving the indigenous and other invading ethnic groups<sup>28</sup> ongoing in the Northern Region. After a series of peace and reconciliation workshops held in Kumasi<sup>29</sup>, a peace accord was eventually finalized between the various ethnic groups on March 30, 1996.

Almost two decades after the war, it doesn't seem the tensions have gone away. Whereas there is relative peace between the warring factions, it is important to interrogate further the institutional and historical factors which acts as a fertile ground for flimsy trigger events to generate in violence. It is imperative to interrogate the conditions or factors which makes the government either capable or in capable of resolving such conflicts.

### **1.4.1 Research questions**

This research will address two research questions below

- What were the main causes of the GFW as perceived by both sides of the warring faction?
- What were the actions and inactions of the government before, during and after the war which contributed to peace or saw a continuation of violence?

### **1.4.2 Research objectives**

This research aims to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the conditions which makes ethnic conflicts inevitable whiles focusing on the GFW. It also seeks to provide explanations on why governments role is important in ethnic conflict especially in situations of ethnic discrimination.

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<sup>28</sup> There was an agreement between; the Konkombas-Baasares on the one hand and the Dagombas, Konkombas and Nanumbas, Konkombas and Gonjas, Gonjas and Nawuri and Baasares and Gonjas

<sup>29</sup> Kumasi is the regional capital of one of the administrative regions of Ghana called the Ashanti Region

## **1.5 Chapter outlay**

This study has 6 chapters. The first provides the background to the and an introduction to the Guinea Fowl War. It outlines the research problem and the research questions that this study attempts to interrogate. The second chapter will present the literature regarding ethnic violence in Ghana and provide the general conceptual framework for the discussions of ethnicity and ethnic violence. The succeeding chapter provides the details of the methodology used for this research. It assesses the various sources employed to investigate the research questions and recounts some of my experiences on the field. Drawing on numerous sources such as newspaper articles, archival materials, official documents from the Northern Regional House of Chiefs, oral interviews amongst others, chapters four and five will present and engage in analysis of the data collected. Whereas chapter four will discuss the main causes of the Guinea Fowl War, chapter five will assess the actions and inactions of government before, during and after the war. The chapter will also show how the actions of the government has on some instances generated calm while others have rather saw to the continuation of violence. Chapter 6 will provide a summary of the key points discussed in this thesis and provide the general conclusions and reflections arrived at after the analyses of the two research questions for this study.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I provided the background to the study and gave a brief overview of ethnic conflicts in Ghana and the Guinea Fowl. I also outlined my two research questions and presented the research problem.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section reviews related literature pertinent to the discussion of my research questions: on the main causes of the Guinea Fowl War and how the governments' actions and inactions could contribute to ethnic grievance.

### **PART 1 : Review of related literature**

## **2.2 Towards an Explanation of The Guinea Fowl War in Ghana**

There has been much research on the nature of ethnic conflicts in Ghana, especially in the Northern Region.<sup>30</sup> The causes of these ethnic conflicts have been on chieftaincy, chieftaincy succession disputes and land ownership. In the case of the Guinea Fowl War, diverse reasons have been cited as the main causes which saw to the brutalities between the Konkombas on the one hand and the Nanumbas, Dagombas, Gonja on the other.

After reviewing several academic materials, I have categorized the literature on the causes of the Guinea Fowl War into three schools of thought. They are the *colonial project school of thought*, *the ethnicity and social school of thought* and lastly, *the state-centric school of thought*.

### **2.2.1 The Colonialism Project School of Thought**

Colonialism through its various colonial policies has been cited as the main causes of many mishaps in Africa. This Ranges from selective infrastructural development of areas where natural resources could be exploited to setting up one ethnic group against the other. Brukum<sup>31</sup>, Skalnik

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<sup>30</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal."; Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*; Skalnik, "Political Anthropology of History: The Case of Nanun, Northern Ghana."; Cletus Kwaku Mbowura, ed. *End of War, No Resolution, No Lasting Peace: A Historical Study of Attempts at Managing and Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflicts*, Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal," 138.

<sup>32</sup>and Johnson<sup>33</sup> points to colonialism and its official policy of indirect rule to be responsible for the main cause of the numerous conflicts in Northern Ghana and the Guinea Fowl War in particular. For colonial expediency, the colonial government first created boundaries in the northern territory under its policy of amalgamation in 1932.<sup>34</sup> This exercise arbitrarily placed together different ethnic groups under one jurisdiction and allowed ethnic groups with a centralized chieftaincy tradition to dominate. In the process, the chiefly groups namely Nanumba, Dagomba, Mamprusi and Gonja received colonial support and were equipped with resources to collect taxes, administer local cases according to their traditions in their palaces. Brukum for example, has described the Guinea Fowl War as a war of emancipation where the Konkombas desire is to extricate themselves from the dominance of the Dagomba and Nanumba.<sup>35</sup> Similar feelings have accompanied other 'invading-indigenous' ethnic group struggles.<sup>36</sup> The authority given to one ethnic group over their neighbours by a foreign power have come a long way in sowing seeds of discords which are being contested and fought up to this day.

Scholars of the colonial project school of thought also argue that colonialism through its policy of indirect rule ensured that one group of the population were made to feel inferior while another got all the recognition, support and prestige that came with colonial support.<sup>37</sup> Social relations came to be perceived as a formalized form of ethnic segregation based on "traditional political structures, allowing domination to become more exploitative."<sup>38</sup> Thus, colonialism made it possible for prejudice to be generated and members of the ethnic groups which feel sidelined and marginalized to resent the new status quo that has traveled to the post-colonial era. For example, in 1940, some Konkombas killed the local Dagomba chief of Zebilli and members of his household under the protest that the British veterinary officer through local Dagomba chief arranged for their

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Skalnik, "Authority Versus Power: Democracy in Africa Must Include Original African Institutions," *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, no. nr 37-38 (1996): 171.

<sup>33</sup> Julia Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region," *Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Department of International Development, University of Oxford* CRISE WORKIN PAPER NO.38 (2007): 39.

<sup>34</sup> Mbowura, *End of War, No Resolution, No Lasting Peace: A Historical Study of Attempts at Managing and Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflicts*.

<sup>35</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal," 141.

<sup>36</sup> For instance, the violent ethnic conflicts between Mamprusi-Kusasi, Gonja-Nawuri have been described wars of emancipation

<sup>37</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region," 39.

<sup>38</sup> "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region," 14.

cattle to be vaccinated against rinderpest.<sup>39</sup> When the vaccines could not stop Konkomba cattle from dying, the Dagomba chief who ruled over his Konkomba neighbours was attacked for giving the “white men” the permission to carry out the inoculation.<sup>40</sup> This event shows how violence can erupt over some flimsy triggers because of deep-seated grievances.

However, the arguments of the *colonialism school of thought project* do not entirely account for the main reason bloodsheds keep occurring between ethnic groups decades after independence. Colonial governments through their policies created inequalities and divisions, sometimes based on wrong perceptions and misinterpretations of the local situation. It has been argued that before the indirect rule, centralized ethnic states after invading the indigenes allowed for an appreciable level of autonomy in their political relations.<sup>41</sup> The British misunderstood having an organized political structure to mean superiority over those who did not have a culture of chieftaincy. Modern governments after colonial rule have a lot to account for if they continue to work with the same mistaken assumptions as the colonial government by recognizing and associating paramountcy to access to land rights and quasi-government institutions to the exclusion of other ethnic groups.

### **2.2.2 The ethnicity and social school of thought**

The second school of thought on the main causes of ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana point to the construction of ethnicity and other powerful social factors such as access to education, economic struggles and land ownership issues. Ethnicity has been used in colonial and post-colonial periods in Ghana and indeed in other African states to distribute resources and apportion political status. Talton explains that social consciousness and unity of the Konkomba people in the pre-colonial and colonial period is markedly different to their sense of organization in the period from the 1970s to 1990s.<sup>42</sup> He posits that Konkomba during colonial rule were disunited under different clans but their movement towards unity became stronger in the late 1990s.

The Konkombas through education recognized that it was through the fostering of belongingness amongst themselves that had the power to challenge their “disenfranchisement and political

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<sup>39</sup> H.B Martinson, "The Hidden-History of Konkomba Wars in Northern Ghana," (Accra1994).

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*

<sup>41</sup> Skalnik, "Authority Versus Power: Democracy in Africa Must Include Original African Institutions."

<sup>42</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, 11.11



marginalization.”<sup>43</sup> As more people got access to education, social elitist movements became appealing. A direct consequence of that was the creation of the Konkomba Youth Association. Through education, leaders of KOYA worked in uniting Konkomba as one people and used modern secular avenues to ask for reforms through petitions and holding communal Konkomba meetings. For example, towards the build-up to the 1981 Pito War, the Konkombas in Bimbilla elected not to send their marital problems to Nanumba palaces and started hearing their own cases.<sup>44</sup> Again, when Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992 after 12 years of military rule, KOYA leadership petitioned the government through the National House of Chiefs to ask for the elevation of their chief in Saboba to a paramountcy status. These examples testify to the growing importance of the relevance of education in the social struggle of the Konkomba. Wienia observes that Wienia observed that KOYA created an ethnic line to pursue an agenda of inclusion through “politics of belonging”.<sup>45</sup>

Even though ethnicity and social school of thought give an alternative point of focus to the discussions on the main causes of ethnic conflicts between indigenous and invading ethnic groups, its explanations do not hold supreme. For instance, one of the thinkers of this school of thought opines that the frequent causes of the Konkomba-Nanumba and Konkomba-Dagomba wars are attributable to the violent nature of the Konkombas.<sup>46</sup> Martinson arrives at this conclusion citing instances of reprisal attacks by Konkombas in 1940 and 1946 in the Cow and Fish Wars respectively.<sup>47</sup> However, this assertion does not appreciate the fact that no one individual is born more violent than another. People are not violent or show more violence in any sense but act aggressively or non-aggressively because of some circumstances and relationship between them and another group.<sup>48</sup> Selecting historical episodes of rebellion to conclude on the biological makeup of a group of people is misplaced. In any case, Nanumba and Dagomba have also maimed and killed each other in periods of intra ethnic conflicts over chieftaincy titles.

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<sup>43</sup> *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, 192.

<sup>44</sup> Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars."

<sup>45</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana*, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Martinson, "The Hidden-History of Konkomba Wars in Northern Ghana."

<sup>47</sup> Explain cow and fish wars here

<sup>48</sup> David G. Campbell, *A Land of Ghosts : The Braided Lives of People and the Forest in Far Western Amazonia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

One significant exposition on the influence of ethnicity in conflicts within northern Ghana is advanced by Awedoba.<sup>49</sup> Ethnicity through differentiation takes a critical focus when people are treated either friendly or not based on the “us” and “them” belief. The importance of ethnicity in social relations is appreciated more in the local setting when the price of an item in a market seems to vary depending on one’s ethnic background.<sup>50</sup> In the case of the Guinea Fowl War, it took the misunderstanding between the price of a guinea fowl: one price for a kinsman and a different price for an ‘outsider’ to spark off the war.

Overall, this exposition may explain the trigger causes of the violent conflict but it does not explain why for example, a misunderstanding in one village would spread across different communities and even attract allies from different ethnic groups to the conflict beside Nanumba or Konkomba.

### **2.2.3 The State-Centric Approach school of thought**

The third school of thought on the main causes of ethnic conflicts in Ghana is found in the role of the State. From the literature I reviewed on ethnic conflicts in Ghana, I observed two levels of discussions regarding the role of the state in ethnic conflicts in general. Firstly, the state centric approach points to the actions of the executive arm of government in dealing with both intra and inter-ethnic groups.<sup>51</sup> To establish this point using the internal Dagomba chieftaincy disputes, Pellow asserts that in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, the current New Patriotic Party (NPP) are allied to the Andani royal gate while the Abudu gate is allied with the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC)<sup>52</sup>.

Pul also asserts that from 1951 to 1994, different governments have employed distinct relations with the traditional institution of chieftaincy.<sup>53</sup> In the case of Ghana, it appears that whenever a government is not supportive of the traditional chieftaincy institution, it offers some form of morale for ethnic groups who feel marginalized by the traditional chieftaincy system. Pul also observed that ethnic minorities minimize their agitation when governments in power and their

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<sup>49</sup> Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace*.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*

<sup>51</sup> Pellow, *Logics of Violence among the Dagomba in Northern Ghana*, 46.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 46

<sup>53</sup> Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars."

policies seem to favor the colonial status-quo but agitate if they observed a neutrality or antagonism of government to chieftaincy.<sup>54</sup>

The second aspect of the state centric approach school of thought analyses the non-personal structures of the state such as discriminatory laws or institution. While the first aspect of the state centric approach sees the executive arm of government meddling in both intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts based on the political party in power, the second aspect of the state centric approach to understanding causes of ethnic conflicts in Ghana is only related to inter-ethnic group relations.

The Pito War of 1980 between the Konkomba and the Nanumba, fought only a year after the third republic (1979-1981) seems to support this postulation. The elected president after the 1979 general elections, Dr. Hilla Liman was known for his antagonist stand on chieftaincy. Moreover, he belonged to one of the historically non-centralized states who did not have a system of paramountcy. However, a military coup d'état which abruptly ended the rule of Dr. Liman in 1981 and saw to the disbandment of the committee of enquiry commissioned to investigate into the causes of the Pito War.

In the case of the Guinea Fowl War : when Ghana returned from a 12-year military rule and promulgated a new constitution in 1992, the relationship between the state and traditional authority came with its implication. The constitution recognized the importance of traditional authorities and enshrined their significance by making a provision for the National House of Chiefs (NHC) and Regional House of Chiefs (RHC). The RHC will become responsible for all cultural and chieftaincy related issues within their administrative region and give advice to government on chieftaincy issues.<sup>55</sup> More significantly, for a chief to be recognized or gazetted by the state, the approval from the RHC was needed.<sup>56</sup> A factor which disadvantaged indigenous ethnic groups like the Konkomba, the Bimoba, the Nchumuru and the Kusasi. This reason has made the so-called indigenous-invading ethnic clashes in the fourth republic intense.

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<sup>54</sup> "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars."

<sup>55</sup> The 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, Article 274

<sup>56</sup> The 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, Article 270(3b)

## **PART B: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.3. Introduction**

This section will present underlying theoretical and conceptual understanding of ethnicity and violence, theories about the causes of ethnic conflicts and the role of the state in post war situations. I will examine the concept of ethnicity and its assumptions and how ethnicity has been mobilized for social action, which has caused war or violence. In doing so, I will also discuss how this term has been used and understood in the context of Ghana and how it differs or it is used synonymously with tribe.

#### **2.3.1 History and the use of social theory**

The relation between history and theory is have remain a thorny area. Different viewpoints exist as to whether history should incorporate theories or hypothesis in their quest for social enquiry. It has been argued that no historian can come to grasp with modern or pre-modern changes when they side step social theory.<sup>57</sup> Proponent of the use of theory in history asserts that social theory involves the use of hypothesis which are key to shaping our conceptual understanding of our societies because historical “theory is a means of interpretation.”<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, there are those who believe theory should have nothing to do with historical research.... Thinks that theoretical history is a kind of speculative history and should be left in the domain of philosophers and prophets.<sup>59</sup> The argument that theory has no relationship with history has been advanced to suggest that linking the two leads to determinism which denies the freedom to allow the historian sources to lead to a final conclusion.<sup>60</sup>

On the whole, the subject of history draws on whatever source or facts available. The importance of the use of social theory highlights the significance of inter-disciplinary studies where our ability to pick from different sources helps to engage in critical analyses. Tosh however cautions that the “the way forward is not to retreat into an untenable empiricism but to apply much higher standards

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<sup>57</sup> John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, Fifth Edition ed. (United Kingdom: Lonman, 2010), 215.

<sup>58</sup> *The Pursuit of History*.

<sup>59</sup> Aileen S. Kraditor, "American Radical Historians on Their Heritage," *Past and Present* LVI (1972).

<sup>60</sup> Isaiah Berlin, ed.; *Historical Inevitability*, 1954, *The Philosophy of History* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1974).

of testing theory.”<sup>61</sup> For example. In this study, the concept of ethnicity, violence and post war peace which incorporate in the analyses of this study come from anthropological and security perspectives. However, as some of my discussion point will show below, the understanding of the concepts and theories relating to the above concepts are by no means universal. Whereas these social theories explain some scenarios better, their definitions do not fit in other cases.

## 2.4 TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF ETHNICITY

Ethnicity is one such concept which defies one definition due to different conceptualizing of the word. Indeed, in different cultures, the term has been used to describe different people and sometimes even race. In the United States, for example, the category ethnic is used to refer to minority groups like Blacks Latinos and general immigrants. The use of the term has lumped some discrete and different individuals together as one group.<sup>62</sup> Also, Minorities and indigenous peoples, despite their individual differences are sometimes termed as ethnic groups. Eriksen in his attempt to capture the broad conceptual understanding of ethnicity has posited that ethnicity can be studied in five broad ways.<sup>63</sup> Namely, the study of Urban Minorities, Indigenous peoples and Minorities, Proto Nations or ethnonationality movement, ethnic in poly-ethnic societies and ethnicity in post slavery minority situation.<sup>64</sup> In Ghana, ethnicity according to these typologies can be construed mainly as interrogating the relations of ethnics in a poly-ethnic society.

Anthropologists have given different definitions and assumptions underlying the of the concept of ethnicity. For example, the concept has been associated with the positive feelings of association with a cultural group. <sup>65</sup> It has also been used to define people who share a common descent and peculiar customs and are united together by a common memory <sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 218.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Anthropological Perspectives* (London: London: Pluto Press, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Anthropological Perspectives*.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*

<sup>65</sup> Rex John, "The Growing Importance of the Concept of Ethnicity," in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (Polity Press, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> "The Growing Importance of the Concept of Ethnicity."

A key marker to the conceptualizing ethnicity, is in its relational approach.<sup>67</sup> Ethnic groups do not exist in isolation but must have some level of contact with other people. This accounted for the reason why modern anthropology has seen a shift from the use of the word “tribe” to ethnic. It has been posited the word tribe evokes a lack of development and isolation of a group.<sup>68</sup> In Ghana however, there is no such difference between this distinction as these words continue to be used interchangeably.

#### **2.4.1 Assumptions of ethnicity and the construct of ‘us and them’**

In this section I will examine two assumptions underlying the conception of ethnicity. That is ethnicity as ascriptive and ethnicity as a form of cultural difference. This section is important because of the debates in academia regarding the relationship between ethnicity and conflict.

#### **2.4.2 Ethnicity as Ascriptive**

One assumption that has fed into the debate of ethnicity as a tool for differentiation which sometimes is used for violence is description of ethnicity as ascriptive. Proponents of this idea posit that ethnicity is inherent and once born into cannot be changed. Through socialization, people from an ethnic group imbibe peculiar societal norms and practices which sets them apart from others. Each ethnic group may have a unique child rearing practice which equips its members with a unique identity. Loyalty to one’s ethnicity is therefore highly favored. A construction of differences from upbringing which shows itself in culture (a point that will be discussed after this) may make it easier for different groups to take up arms against each other.

However, the notion of ethnicity as being ascriptive has been challenged. For instance, Gunther<sup>69</sup>, has pointed out that the idea of ethnicity is not fixed and unchanging. She explains that the people of Omo in South Ethiopia and the Madi and the Acholi of Northern Uganda allow for people to change their ethnicity.<sup>70</sup> To a large degree one does not determine the race or ethnic group people are born into. This happens through an accident of fate. In the Ghanaian context, however

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<sup>67</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Anthropological Perspectives*.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Günther Schlee, *How Enemies Are Made : Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts* (New York: Berghahn, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> *How Enemies Are Made : Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts*.

voluntarily abdicating one's ethnicity does not seem practicable. To assume that one could easily cross carpet from Konkomba to Dagomba or Akan to Ewe will be far-fetched. That notwithstanding, there are cases where people from other ethnic groups have been assimilated through intermarriages or migration but this do not result in them losing their ethnicity. Also, constructing differences and establishing a linear link between the inherent nature of ethnicity and conflict may be difficult to justify in cases of intra-ethnic conflicts. People from the same ethnic groups with similar language, culture and ancestral background have engaged in fierce violence and killed each other. One of such is the royal gates<sup>71</sup> fights between members of the Dagomba ethnic group which eventually saw the beheading of their overlord.<sup>72</sup>

### 2.4.3 Ethnicity as Cultural Differences

Another assumption which furthers the construct of 'us' and 'them' dichotomy is reflected in the description of ethnicity as a concept that is defined by culture. The assertion is rife that as ethnic groups have distinct cultural makeup, they are bound to clash. Indeed, some have viewed the prove contest of democracy and authoritarianism as two cultures and have labelled the US invasion of Iraq in 2010 as a clash of cultures.<sup>73</sup>

Culture, which is commonly seen as the total way of life of a people and includes, but is not limited, to their thinking and how they feel. It is also being defined as a form of social heritage which is derived from one's association with the ethnic.<sup>74</sup> Culture therefore manifests itself from how a group of people dress, the languages they speak and in the rites that evolve with traditions to give them a unique outlook. In Africa, social functions are heavily laden with unique cultural practices. In Ghana for example, one can easily tell from which ethnic group someone is associated with by

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<sup>71</sup> The Dagomba ethnic group in the north of Ghana has two royal gates who are traditionally expected to nominated kings to replace a dead chief. These two royal gates have often engaged in several reprisal attacks against each other. One of such resulted in the beheading of the Overlord of Dagbon in 2008 where he was beheaded along with several of his retainers.

<sup>72</sup> Steve Tonah, "The Politicisation of a Chieftaincy Conflict: The Case of Dagbon, Northern Ghana," *Nordic journal of African studies [elektronisk ressurs]* 21 (2012).

<sup>73</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, "Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa," in *War and Peace in the 20th Century and Beyond* (WORLD SCIENTIFIC, 2011).

<sup>74</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, ed. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: New York Basic Books, 1973).

facial birth marks or even the names they are given. Ethnic groups are known to give special marks on the faces of their members to carve a distinction between them and others.

These distinction between the 'us' and 'them' is prevalent in different cultural practices and is intended for differentiations. Ethnic groups have clashed with one another during instances when they think they have been forced to embrace other cultures. Thus, the assertion is widely speculated that cultural diversified communities have huge tendencies to fight one another.<sup>75</sup>

The assumption that differences in culture can create and maintain differentiation cannot be wholly justified. There are cases where societies with near homogenous language and culture and even religion have clashed in violent ways. Ethnicity cannot be the only factor which promotes differences to the point of violent conflict or war. Even as the numerous ethnic groups in Ghana do show features of the two assumptions discussed above, ethnicity does not independently account for these ethnic clashes. The Guinea Fowl War has seen various ethnic groups form alliances to give support during the war to the warring factions.<sup>76</sup>

## **2.5 ETHNIC VIOLENCE VS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND CIVIL WAR**

From our discussions above, it becomes clear that ethnicity alone cannot be the causes for the numerous ethnic conflicts and wars. From the Rwandan genocide to the Mango and Guinea Fowl Wars, ethnicity has been used as a tool for differentiation to launch war amongst different ethnic groups. This brings us to the question whether these acts of violence can be described as Ethnic? conflicts or Wars?

Ethnic violence is widely seen as a form of ethnic conflict between two ethnic groups. These conflicts are reputed to be fueled by different causes and have seen various research on the topic to determine causation. For example, there is the greed and grievance schools of thought which links ethnic conflicts to fights over economic resources.<sup>77</sup> Other causes of ethnic violence

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<sup>75</sup> Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis," *World Pol.* 62, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>76</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal."

<sup>77</sup> Collier P and Hoeffler A. (2004) Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers* 56: 563-595.



has been linked armed proliferation and to the concept of minority rights.<sup>78</sup> Describing these conflicts as “ethnic” is seen as expanding the reach of ethnicity to connote negativity. Thus, we have seen a resurgence of new literature describing the phenomena of ethnic clash as communal. Communal violence is defined in many ways to mean “conflicts between two non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity.”<sup>79</sup>

Communal conflict is contrasted with Civil war in several ways. First, in communal violence none of the actors is believed to be in control of the state apparatus or wins the overt support of the government. Secondly, communal violence or conflicts involves distinct groups fighting each other towards controlling a disputed resource such as land or power.<sup>80</sup> In Civil Wars, the Government is a major actor in the violence as it is usually fighting rebel group(s).

In this paper, I hold the view that replacing ethnic conflicts with identity conflict is too broad to cater for specific situations such as the case of ethnic conflicts in Ghana. The definition of identity group provided here by Brosche does not differ from what people united in ethnicity share. Individuals in a community could have several identities but may not have different ethnicity. Whereas using communal or “identity” violence can have a potent advantage in discussing intergroup behaviors in general it may at the same time blur our discussion on specific cases such as the Guinea Fowl War. For example, one cannot identify himself as a member of a Konkomba and also the Nanumba ethnic group the same time. But it is probable that an individual in Bimbilla may be born Nanumba but also claim several identities like a farmer or hunter, a family head, a Muslim or Christian.

In this regard, I see the Guinea Fowl of 1994 as an Ethnic conflict following from the assumptions of the inherency of ethnicity and shared cultural practices. Acts of violence in this war took place in various villages across different districts. Granted that the spark of tension and subsequent violence in the Guinea Fowl War started by a communal grievance its desired results were to expand beyond a particular territory. Indeed, a phenomenon that has seen ethnic wars referred to as Ethno- Nationalist Wars.<sup>81</sup> Nationalism defies the idea of a struggle being contained within a

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<sup>78</sup> Zerihun A W. (2005) Ethnicity, belonging and identity among the Eastern Gurage of Ethiopia. *Ethnicities*: 1-19.

<sup>79</sup> Brosché J. (2015) *Causes of Communal Conflicts: Government Bias, Elites and Conditions for Cooperation*.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Cederman L-E, Wimmer A and Min B. (2010) Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis. *World Pol.* 62: 87-119.

territory and therefore people with nationalistic sentiments attached to a group may be duty bound to share in the struggles of their kins wherever they find themselves

In the academic spheres, there has been a call to distinguishing Ethnicity and Nationalism. However, some scholars see the two as intrinsically related.<sup>82</sup> Others have posited that, a distinction should be made between Ethnic Nationalism and Civil Nationalism<sup>83</sup>. They explain that, whereas Ethnic Nationalism is inherent which may not be changed, Civic Nationalism is similar to the concept of citizenship in a modern state and voluntary. Proponents of ethnic nationalism suggests that individuals attached to ethnic groups are motivated to take part in the struggle even when a particular conflict is not within their territory. This at least in part reflects the Guinea Fowl War where misunderstandings in the village of Napkayili between a Konkomba and a Nanumba spread across several districts and towns in the Northern Region.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the Daily Graphic carried a news article where Arms were impounded in a Market in Accra bound to be transported to the conflict area in the Northern region. A scenario which foretells how ethnic sentiments may cut across specific territories. Limiting the description of these clashes to a communal violence may underestimate how other these factors contribute to the magnitude of Ethnic violence.

Ethnic violence may have a relationship with Civil war, in that a minority or majority ethnic group could be up in arms against another ethnic group which has access or control of state apparatus as it happened in the Rwandan Genocide. The Rwandan case exemplifies the definition of a civil war but does influence by ethnicity. Sunni Minority struggles in Iraq and their resurgence is an example of a religious identity conflict which is also labeled as civil war. My definition of civil war civil war is as an internal activism which breeds conflicts or violence and fueled by various identities such as religion, minority rights struggles amongst others in a competition to control state apparatus.

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<sup>82</sup> Eriksen TH. (2010) *Ethnicity and nationalism : anthropological perspectives*, London: Pluto Press.

<sup>83</sup> John R. (2009) The Growing Importance of the concept of Ethnicity. In: Rex MGaJ (ed) *The Ethncity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*. Polity Press, 1-15.

<sup>84</sup> Brukum NJK. (2000) Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*: 131-147.

In my next section, I will present and discuss three different and yet related theories that this work will analyse in relation to the Guinea Fowl War of 1992. These theories interact with different part of my research questions.

## **2.6 THEORIES ON ETHNIC CONFLICTS AND WARS**

There are numerous quantitative and qualitative studies that have investigated the phenomenon of ethnic violence and civil wars in general. Whereas some studies have focused on the causes of these violent conflicts, others have rather focused on post conflict environments and how peace is sustained after an ethnic or civil war. My thesis aims at discussing three key issues as captured in my research questions. That is, I aimed at identifying the main causes of the Guinea Fowl War, finding out government's actions before during and after the war and evaluating the chances for peace or factors which threatens post war peace settlements. This thesis aims to discuss these themes in the light of the minority mobilization theory and other theories which highlights the role of the state or government towards maintaining peace within its borders.

### **2.6.1 Minority Mobilization and Conflict**

The minority mobilization conflict theory forwarded by Gur (1992) advances several arguments to explain the causes of ethnic protest or rebellion. It is rooted in the belief that an ethnic or identity group may mobilize for political action based on communal grievances.<sup>85</sup> By communal political action, the author explains that members of a group or their leaders may initiate a call towards protecting their interest or focus on influencing state authorities for the betterment of their group. Thus, this struggle may reflect itself in either nonviolent protest, violent protest or rebellion.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, Gur asserts that grievances which focus on preferential treatment and a feeling of hurting a group cultural identity lay the foundation for mobilization. This position contradicts the greed and grievance theories which rather focus on economic opportunities and resources.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945," *International Political Science Review* 14, no. 2 (1993).

<sup>86</sup> "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945."

<sup>87</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004).

Cultural identity and recognition is critical in mobilizing a group for political action. This political action, as hinted, could be through peaceful protest or armed rebellion. The nature of the modern state and the type of political system it has is also a critical determinant of how ethnic groups pursue their demands. The claim is made that states that practice democracy tends to evolve political and social institutions that cater for all groups. They are also seen to be better equipped to solve conflicts before it erupts into violence. This in a way extends the maxim of *democratic peace* argument to a local setting. The democratic peace maxim suggests that democratic states are less likely to go to war with each other as their internal democratic institutions would make it an arduous task of initiating a war.<sup>88</sup> As a result, Gur concludes that in democratic states, communal or ethnic struggles may resort to protests trusting the institutions of state to meet their aspirations. On the other hand, communal struggles would be violent with rebellion if a marginalized group asserts its demands in a non-democratic state.<sup>89</sup>

This finding offers interesting points of discussions and comparison regarding the Guinea Fowl War which the subsequent chapters of this thesis will analyze. The chapters to follow will seek to discuss areas where Gur's findings reinforce the perceived causes of the Guinea Fowl War and how this war may also reveal contradicting facts from what the minority mobilization theory explains. The exposition on minority mobilizing theory to conflict is significant because it goes beyond the face value of linking ethnicity to violence by sheer differentiation. It rather focuses on the conditions under which ethnic minorities rebel or protest under discrimination.<sup>90</sup>

Gur's work, however, has some limitations. For example, minority groups used in the study follow the logic of minorities with less numerical population. There are instances where minority does not connote less numbers but rather defined by their access or lack of access to political power and resources. The concept of minority in some parts of Ghana is most often not judged by the criterion of population of the said group but rather whether the said ethnic group had built empires in the past, as in through wars of conquest.<sup>91</sup> Thus the Konkomba for example are second to the Dagombas in population amongst eighteen other ethnic groups in the Northern Region of Ghana

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<sup>88</sup> Oliver Richmond, Oliver Richmond, and Astri Suhrke, "The Peace in Between: Post-War Violence and Peacebuilding," (2012).

<sup>89</sup> Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945."

<sup>90</sup> Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set."

<sup>91</sup> Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana, 1980-1999: An Appraisal."

but are considered minorities because of minimum or lack of representation on statutory customary institutions. More so, Gur's study lumps cases of ethnic and identity conflicts to include ethno-nationalist wars, ethnos class struggles, indigenous right movements and religious minorities. Thus, his variables are too wide for a uniform account of the causes of minority mobilization. Despite these challenges, the minority mobilization theory fits into my research question of exposing a potential or conditional cause of the Guinea Fowl War in Ghana. This thesis will also provide a qualitative dimension to the minority mobilization theory while at the same time limiting the focus of minority groups to ethnic relations which could be both communal and trans-communal.

### **2.6.2 Governments and Post War Peace**

The field of conflict resolution and transformation has enormous research regarding how peace is to be obtained after violence of war. Different peace strategies such as *conflict prevention, conflict management, resolution and transformation* have dominated the field of peace studies. Indeed, the task of resolving conflicts has produced different results in different conflict areas depending on which strategy is used. It is asserted that ethnic civil wars are even harder to resolve than ideological wars.<sup>92</sup> In this research, as one of my questions aims at analyzing the role of the government in the Guinea Fowl War, I elect to review articles and literature regarding the role governments play in ethnic or civil wars.

Governments all over the world are mandated with the responsibility of providing adequate security within their borders. There is also the claim that governments are not neutral actors in modern state.<sup>93</sup> And that their actions or inactions may serve to portray them as supporters of one against another during conflict. The machinery of government is composed of individuals who belong to different ethnic groups and these individuals can either use state apparatus to fight for peace or condone violence.

Gurses and Rost<sup>94</sup> have advanced two key roles of governments towards a lasting peace in the event of an ethnic war. Governments can use their powers to regulate and mediate among ethnic

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<sup>92</sup> Mehmet Gurses and Nicolas Rost, "Sustaining the Peace after Ethnic Civil Wars," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 5 (2013).

<sup>93</sup> Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis."

<sup>94</sup> Gurses and Rost, "Sustaining the Peace after Ethnic Civil Wars."

groups in conflict while at the same time laying out mechanisms for inter-ethnic cooperation. Secondly government can work towards realizing demands of aggrieved ethnic groups to prevent the relapse to war after a ceasefire. ethnic wars that are rooted in ethnic discrimination may be a product of a past historical phenomenon and may take time to correct. This may explain why many violent conflicts resurface within few years after a negotiated peace agreement, a scenario which has been described as the *conflict relapse* and has been a major source of concern for stakeholders in the field of peace.

Again, on the question of what guarantees peace after an ethnic war, Wimmer and Cederman<sup>95</sup> have also concluded that avoiding ethnic discrimination and providing institutional guarantees for political participation presents opportunities for post conflict peace. They defend the view that the risk of war recurrence is not tied to the number of fatalities after a war nor the duration of a war but rather how governments put an end to ethnic discrimination.<sup>96</sup> Thus to them, what happens after the war is more important than during the war. This conclusion presents a complex web of realities, especially so when a government is made up of individuals who belong to different ethnic groups and may be likely to favor one conflicting party against another. A scenario which has called to question whether governments alone can be trusted in providing leadership and key to ending such ethnic conflicts. Are other domestic stakeholders like community based social organizations or non-governmental organizations better in providing what it takes to sue for peace?

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the concept of ethnicity and examined two assumptions underlying the concept of ethnicity. I also looked at different discussions regarding how ethnic conflicts have been theorized and how it is related to civil war and communal violence.

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<sup>95</sup> Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis."

<sup>96</sup> "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis."

The second part of this chapter explored the minority mobilization theory as a cause of ethnic conflict while also highlighting the work of Wimmer and Gurr on the role of the government in returning to peace after an ethnic conflict.

My next discussion will be on the state of literary work on Ethnic conflicts in Ghana and the Guinea Fowl War.

## **CHAPTER THREE : METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology of this study. My research aims at answering two key research. Firstly, to find out the causes of the Guinea Fowl War as perceived by both sides of the warring faction. Secondly, to assess the actions and inactions of government during, before and after the war. This study employed a wide range of sources including secondary and primary sources in interrogating the research questions outlined. I approached my research with the aim of conducting a historic enquiry into the Guinea Fowl of 1994. In that regard, both my data collection and analysis were done following historical methodology.

### **3.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

For this study, two broad sources were used. I made use of both secondary and primary sources. Tosh has posited that; historical writing arises from the desire to re-create the past and the motivation to interpret it.<sup>97</sup> Embarking on this task requires not only varied sources as but also the ability to analyze data.

There are two key approaches to gathering data in history, they are the source-oriented approach and the problem-oriented approach.<sup>98</sup> The source-oriented approach suggests that the researcher proceeds to gather and draw the selected sources deemed valuable to be further studied. The problem-oriented approach starts by outlining a problem to be investigated through missed gaps in secondary sources and proceed to look for answers in primary materials.

In this research I aspire to answer some specific questions on the Guinea Fowl War by reviewing already forwarded secondary writings and to find clarification and contribute to the discussions by using varied primary and other secondary sources. This research also uses the theory-based case studies to analyzing in social enquiry. Druckman (2005) outlines four steps as a guide to achieving a good research according to this module. They include the selection of a case to be analyzed, developing a chronology, reviewing concepts and ideas relevant to the event and finally reaching

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<sup>97</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 149.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 120



a conclusion.<sup>99</sup> In this research, the case study to be examined is the Guinea Fowl War, i will develop a chronology of the various events leading to the war, analyze social concepts discussed in chapter two and present my final conclusion.

### **3.2.1 SECONDARY SOURCES**

Secondary sources of information were also used in this research. Particularly academic and scholarly publications, research papers presented at peace seminars, local NGOs records of peace initiatives amongst others. To start with there has been numerous publications surrounding the institution of chieftaincy in Ghana that offers important background knowledge. Various scholars including ethnographers have spent longer duration to study the traditions and culture of these ethnic groups. Indeed, during one of my visit on the field, one of my key informants who will not speak much referred me to Martijin Wiennia’s book “*Ominous calm. Autochony and sovereignty in Konkomba/ Nanumba violence and peace, Ghana*”. As he puts it, the “white man was here with us for 6 months”<sup>100</sup>.

Also, my use of other publications proved useful as it was difficult for me to lay my hands on some documents regarding past committees of enquiries regarding land and chieftaincy issues. It requires a lot of “connections”, time and influence to get access to these government papers as most of them were not published. Some of the local publications reviewed have engaged in extensive discussions of portions of these reports which I can draw upon.

### **3.2.2 PRIMARY SOURCES**

Primary sources of information are those materials that are produced in a contemporary time without the thought of posterity in mind.<sup>101</sup> To this end, information produced within a period are seen to reflect the daily happenings of that time and are not directly addressing what is yet to

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<sup>99</sup> Daniel Druckman, *Doing Research : Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2005).

<sup>100</sup> “Interview with Chief Abarika and his Elders’, interview by Ibrahim M Larry, 20th August, , 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*.

happen. For example, memoirs of colonial officials in Africa, diaries, are newspapers, artefacts amongst others. However, this definition of a primary source by Tosh(2010) does not seem adequate. This is because, some information that are produced within a time can be intentionally produced and stored to carry a pre-determined narrative and have an influence in the future. For example, there has been instances where governments have produced propaganda information and materials not only to influence events happening at a time but to also influence how an event will be constructed in the future. Primary records can sometimes be produced with a purposeful goal of leaving an information behind for a future generation. The crucial point of a primary source however is that, it records events within the time of their occurrence, as they unfold. The process of documenting these events can be objective or biased which has an influence on how such events are interpreted.

In this research, primary sources used include newspaper reports and feature articles during the war, obtaining information from eyewitnesses and active participants through interview accounts use of archival materials. British Colonial documents provide information on the colonial situation of the northern territory of Ghana. These documents, from observations of colonial officers relating to how different ethnic groups interacted with one another and official correspondence of colonial district commissioners to the central administration regarding uncovering positions of ethnic groups in conflict. Official documents from a quasi -government institution like the Regional House of Chiefs was also reviewed to address my research questions.

### *3.2.2 Newspapers*

In this study, I made extensive use of newspapers as one of my main sources of information to answering my research questions. The use of newspapers as a primary source offers critical perspective as a source for investigation. Firstly, it provides day to day records of events. Secondly, it offers a melting pot for the discussions of social as well as political views that are most relevant at a time<sup>102</sup>. Through newspaper editorials, various issues are raised that goes beyond routine reporting, and feature articles provide analysis that may challenge the status quo.

Newspapers are a popular source for information in Ghana. It is interesting to note that every newspaper in Ghana is commonly referred to as “graphic”. This is in recognition of the sterling

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<sup>102</sup> *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History.*

popularity and standards of the state-owned print house called “daily graphic”. For this study, I used two newspapers. The Daily Graphic Newspaper and the Ghanaian Times. My choice to use these state-owned presses is grounded on two reasons. Firstly, these two papers are the most widely read and circulated in Ghana due to the presence of offices across the 10 regions of Ghana. Secondly, the state-owned press is reputed to have a high quality of journalistic standards and known to recruit qualified journalists. It has been argued that state-owned media never tell the full story as they work to shield government from being seen as ineffective.

In the case of Ghana, the return to democratic governance in 1992 offered some sort of independence to the media. The new constitution made provision for the establishment of the National Media Commission (NMC) to guarantee the independence of the media. As a matter of fact, some of the newspaper editorials and feature articles reviewed did not mince words when talking about the relevant institutions of government, if their negative practices came to light. At the same time, the newspapers do not miss a chance to cover events where politicians are bound to appear. As my research analysis will show later, most of the peace processes and speeches made by relevant key stakeholders can be found in these newspapers.

However, the use of newspapers as a primary source is not without difficulties. Like other written sources, there is the problem of bias from the person reporting a story, as well as the fact that media houses pick and choose which stories they choose to publish in the dailies. This affects our confidence in whether everything that happened regarding the war was captured in the dailies. It is a frequent practice for state-owned media not to publish an issue that is seen to portray the government or state in a bad light, especially if the government does not have the capacity to deal with a problem.

### *3.2.3 Interviews*

One of the major anchors of qualitative research is the interview. Its importance is widely claimed to be the opportunity of the researcher to get into the world of the participants they interviewed, as informants are meant to express what they think and feel about a subject related to them. Moreover, the interview process leads us to the understanding of the mind and the construction of

the social realities of those interviewed.<sup>103</sup> In this regard, I conducted interviews with representatives of the two ethnic groups in the Guinea Fowl war towards understanding their collective narratives and version of events. I also interviewed a former government official to share his perspectives about ethnic conflicts in Ghana and how the government he dealt with them.

Various kinds of interview methods have been theorized. In my research, I used the semi-structured interview and focus group interview. Semi structured interviews are characterized by their flexibility in allowing informants or respondents to speak freely yet following with an interview guide.<sup>104</sup> The interview comprises a set of pre-determined questions to obtain information to fit the general purpose of study. This interview type allows for a follow up to be done on questions that needs more clarification and affords informants to respond directly to other opinions that seem to contradict their views.

Another interview method used for this research is the focus group interview. In this type of interview, a group consisting of four or more people are made to shed light on an issue, expressing different opinions or reinforcing the positions of each other<sup>105</sup>. It has been posited that, focus group interviews amongst others are helpful in several ways. One of its significance is that it helps accentuate a given topic by exploring it in depth. It also may reveal how different individuals respond to an issue as members of a collective group rather than from an individual perspective.<sup>106</sup>

For this study, I conducted five semi structured interviews and one focus group interview. With my semi structured interview, informants who would be able to give relevant information were carefully chosen. Thus, through purposive sampling; a mechanism where informants are chosen based on their capacity to provide adequate response to research questions as well as their association with a given topic<sup>107</sup>. For instance, my informants on both sides were actively involved in the processes and events leading to the Guinea Fowl.

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<sup>103</sup> Keith F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research : Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: Sage Publ., 2005).

<sup>104</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, ed. Alan Bryman, Chapter 1: The Nature and Process of Social Research (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>105</sup> *Social Research Methods*.

<sup>106</sup> *Social Research Methods*.

<sup>107</sup> Punch, *Introduction to Social Research : Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*.

Eye witnesses and active participants in the war from both the Konkomba and the Nanumba ethnic groups were interviewed and the account of their role in the peace process recorded. These interviews lasted between 30 to 80 minutes. Three out of the five interviews I conducted were recorded while the remaining two did not want to be on record. I also took notes of all my interviews with my informants on their mannerism and body language.

I conducted one focus group interview. I must say however, that it was not my initial plan to hold a focus group interview. I faced a situation that necessitated that I took the opportunity. I met with chief *Vonaa Ataa Abarika* of the Nanumba and his council of elders in Bimbilla. After a process of local consultation, I had to present Kolanuts to the council and go through other traditional routine before I could be granted an audience house. It is important to point out that before the interview was granted, the secretary of the Chief at the palace: Mr. Adam Mashar, was a retired educationist.

It is important to mention that meeting with these eyewitnesses helped in giving answers to ambiguities in some published materials and to fill some missing links about the sequence of events. Thus, respondents shared their experiences about the war by offering nuggets of information towards giving clarity to what happened. The respondents interviewed are widely recognized as the official mouthpiece of their respective ethnic groups. They were also active players during the war and took part in a series of programs that culminated into the signing of the peace agreement.

The use of interviews as qualitative methods in social science research is not without some challenges. Depending on where the interviews were conducted, the conditions in which an interview was granted could affect the quality of the interview response. Accounts of eye witnesses through interviews are not sacrosanct. Idiosyncrasies and bias of the narrators do come into sharp focus especially as some of the informants could be seen shying away from some questions that sought to probe their beliefs and allegiance. This scenario is often referred to as *impression management* in research<sup>108</sup>. Forgetfulness could also act as a barrier to gaining correct information

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<sup>108</sup> Druckman, *Doing Research : Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*.

from informants. Some of my informants could not remember names of some people in the peace process.

#### *3.2.4 Review of Official Documents*

Documents presents a wide array of angles in discussing a subject matter. Private and public documents are widely accepted as the two main categories of documents. Private letters, memoirs and individual speeches are example of private documents. Documents produced by state institutions and their agencies fall under the category of public official documents.<sup>109</sup> They include but are not limited to reports of committee of enquiries, official correspondence from public institutions, position papers amongst others. Review of official written documents is considered as very significant in that information generated by governments can be accessed as it is usually stored in the archives. Governmental offices and agencies do have registries and offices where they keep copies of documents for future references.

The 4<sup>th</sup> republican constitution of Ghana makes provision for the establishment of the Regional House of Chiefs (RHC) who are mandated to advice the government on issues of chieftaincy in their region. The war took place in towns and villages in the Northern Region of Ghana, thus fall within the authority of the northern RHC. Indeed, the secretariat of this institution serves as a melting pot for the collection of various documents regarding chieftaincy in the Northern Region. Key amongst them is the frequent petitions of accusations and counter allegations from various palaces. These petitions range from both intra and inter-ethnic conflicts. There are also reports of divergent accounts of conflict happenings on the ground. Indeed, having access to different points of view on local events within different districts from different ethnic groups offers a unique opportunity to interrogate various versions of truths. For example, in the case of an intra ethnic conflict, leaders of competing royal gates send petition to the secretariat with their claims in the hope of a redress or solution. This is also true on inter-ethnic conflicts and clashes.

Also, documents from the Regional House of Chiefs give a bird eye view on the relation between government, other institutions of state, such as the police and the military forces, and the traditional authorities. In my research, I came across several correspondences emerging from the secretariat of the Regional House of Chiefs to regional ministers, security agency heads and indeed to the

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<sup>109</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*.

President of the republic of Ghana. More so, significant information regarding context can be gleaned from this correspondence towards giving a holistic picture of events within the region and relations amongst different ethnic groups

### *3.2.5 Archival Materials*

Archives are one of the foremost places where historians look for information regarding their work. Archives if properly maintained offer a wide array of documents that can be used to reconstruct the past. To obtain an insight and background to the relations which existed between the various ethnic groups before and during the presence of the colonial government, the archives proved to be of immense importance.

As it has been argued elsewhere, indirect rule as a British colonial policy thrived on the notion of divide and rule, setting up one group against the other. Some ethnic groups received wide endorsement from colonial governments as they were empowered to extract taxes and forced labour from other non-chiefly tribes. The archives also contained information on the observation of colonial provincial and district personnel, eye witness accounts of social relations and conflict situations within the area and how it was solved.

I spent time at the Tamale Public Records and Archival Department (PRAAD) going through some materials from the colonial era including maps, financial accounts, records of colonial officer's memoirs amongst others.

## **3.4 SITE SELECTION**

Site selection just like sources follow from the research questions guiding us through the selected topic to be investigated. Indeed, empirical research is not only about going to the field but going to the right place where events happened or places that have direct links to what is being enquired upon<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*.

The visit to Ghana for this field work was carried in Accra, Tamale, Bimbilla and Saboba. Tamale, Bimbilla and Saboba are all in the Northern region of Ghana with Tamale being the regional capital. In Saboba, interviews were conducted with two informants. One Mr. Peter Waja, a trained teacher and an active participant in both the war and processes of negotiations towards peace agreement. The current Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) president who was then a government appointee in the district where the petition for paramountcy emerged, was also interviewed in Saboba. Saboba is important in this discussion because Konkombas' claim Saboba as their ancestral home. The petition also asked for the *Ubor*<sup>111</sup> of Saboba to be raised to paramountcy status.

Tamale as the regional capital has several government offices that produced and kept important documents regarding the administration of the region where hostilities happened. For instance, important documents were reviewed in the Regional House of Chiefs- A constitutional body mandated with the task of advising government on traditional matters in the region. Petitions, complaints and reports on many incidences in the region are sent to the Regional House of Chiefs for redress. Thus, a study into the Guinea Fowl war benefitted a lot from insights obtained by reviewing many documents regarding chieftaincy in general and information about the conflict.

Bimbilla is the home of the Nanumbas', and intense fighting is reported to have happened here. In Bimbilla, two semi-structured was conducted and a focus interview with the Chief and his elders. These interviews provided information regarding Nanumba relations with their Konkomba neighbours, before, during and after the war.

In Accra, Ghana's capital, I met with an immediate past top government official who according to him signed the petition in 1993 to the government which asked for paramountcy for the Konkomba people. Incidentally, it was the same government that he had just served as a politician. The interview with this informant revealed a lot of significant information for analysis. The informant spoke on issues related to the government's conduct from the perspective of a politician and recounting his involvement during the war. His account I found instructive as I will share later in my observation and conclusion.

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<sup>111</sup> Ubor is a title used for chiefs by the people of Konkomba.



There was also an interview with a former presidential press secretary of the Hilla Liman Government (1979-1981). This interview was conducted to have a sneak peep at how past governments approached the issue about conflicts in the northern region. It will be recalled that, in 1980, there was the Pito War involving Nanumba and Konkomba.

Finally, I spent time at the Institute of African Studies(IAS) Library at the University of Ghana, Legon, also in Accra, reviewing academic publications on ethnic conflicts and resolution processes in Ghana. This library had a collection of periodicals and other compilations that speak to the heart of the various ethnic skirmishes. Lastly, the Balme library, also at the University of Ghana, offered immense assistance as they provided compilation of newspapers dating from 1980 to the period of the guinea fowl war.

### **3.5 PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

As indicated, semi structured interview and a focus group interview was adopted for this research. This study set out to interview stakeholders or identified leaders of the key ethnic groups involved in the war and the processes leading to eventual signing of the peace accord. Thus, for example, i recorded the account of Kenneth Wujanji, the then Konkomba Youth Association president who signed the petition for paramountcy on behalf of the Konkomba people was heard and his role in the whole events were recorded. Also interviewed were two other informants from KOYA amongst them is the current KOYA president who coincidentally was government representative as District Chief Executive when the war started. Thus, informants where meticulously selected due to their past experiences and the role they played in the War.

Also interviewed was a lead member of the Nanumba tribe who was a part in the peace agreement process and one informant who fought in this war. A focus group interview with one of the chief's and his elders on issues regarding Konkomba -Nanumba relations and how the two have been coexisting after the war. These sessions provided valuable information, and significant observations were made. It is important to state that, I made frantic efforts to meet with the Nanumba youth association president but that did not yield any results as he couldn't make time from his schedule to meet me. I intended to pick his thoughts on one or two issues regarding the

state of peace amongst the two groups. With this said, I am confident that the data gathered so far is comprehensive enough to shed lights on. Lastly as indicated above, I met with one politician closer to the

### **3.6 POSITIONALITY**

Dieffenbach (2009) has asserted that, the philosophical positioning of the researcher couple with his ideologies and intellectual rigor could affect the outcome of the nature of enquiry of the researcher.<sup>112</sup> I belong to the Chamba ethnic group in Ghana. As one of the small ethnic groups in the Nanumba North in the Northern Region of Ghana, I was received without difficulty from the Konkombas and the Nanumbas.

### **3.6 CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD**

The process of selecting and arranging for an interview is a time-consuming process. Whereas mapping out and selecting interviewees may be easy, the process of meeting with them proves much more difficult. Security and trust issues play a key role in the accessibility of informants. For example, one of the persons I interviewed had occupied a political position in the previous government (2012-2016), agreeing to be interviewed in his home took me through various security drills to ensure I was credible.

One of my informants, having agreed to speak with me, ignored my calls when I travelled over 800kms to Bimbilla. I arrived in Bimbilla at a time when there was a state of emergency, and curfew imposed from 8:00 am to 8:00pm<sup>113</sup> The town of Bimbilla is under military surveillance and patrol as intra ethnic conflict between royal gates has left the town in a state of conflict. This generally made speaking to as many people possible, and even when I met with one of the chiefs in contention to the Bimbilla Naa skin, he acknowledged that he could not speak much because of their current and was sad about their fighting amongst themselves.

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<sup>113</sup> An improvement before I came there. Months before I travelled to Ghana, it was from 6:00am to 6:00pm. This showed that the situation had somewhat gotten better.

I travelled a total of 1500 kilometers from Accra to Saboba, Bimbilla and Tamale. Bad roads travelling up North did not make the journey as something to look forward to. In fact, my journey back from Saboba was a struggle as there was no commercial vehicle returning to Saboba. Myself and my assistant had to lobby to be allowed a chance to perch on the roof top of a lorry sharing company with sheep and bags of cereals. Bad roads have dissuaded many researchers to go to these communities, as it was very tiring and uncomfortable traveling these roads.

At the regional house of chiefs in Tamale one could observe a lack of skill in how official documents were handled. Mixed up documents made searching for relevant information tedious. There was no proper indexing of files. I believed if basic office procedures were followed, days spent combing through dust studded files would have been reduced significantly. One of the observations I made was the fact that some documents which one expects to find in the registry of the Regional House of Chiefs were conspicuously missing. This I will discuss more in my findings and general observations.

At the regional archives, one could also observe that some of the documents were fragile, an attempt to make copies or by sheer handling could result in them tearing apart. Some of the documents seen have parts of them missing or torn away as some were more than a century old. This to an extent limited my scope in ensuring that everything that must be captured for this study was covered.

It was also part of my plans to review audio visual recordings of incidents reported by media houses. However, bureaucracy and lack of forthcoming contact personnel made this not possible. Having met with the GBC representatives in Tamale, their promise was as good as their disappointment towards providing this information.

Reviewing old newspapers was not without its share of difficulties. My coming to the library for newspapers coincided with the Universities plan to fumigate the stores to rid away pests. Had to wait for several days until I could get access to newspapers. Going through the papers came with their unique feeling. As a matter of fact, they generally give an idea of the state of the nation's discussions around that time. Feature articles and editorials were important source of commentary on national events and most of them dealt with the conflict. It is important to state that the availability of an event catalogue by the library could have made newspaper review less hectic.

However, as the libraries in Ghana do not have such a facility, going through the dailies year after year was not an option but a necessity towards ensuring that nothing was missed.

Moreover, a research of this scale needs much more time and resources that I had are very much limited. Every government office runs on some sort of bureaucracy which does limit research time. Travelling to three different sites was costly, especially as I had to go with a travel guide who knows the terrain more than myself. As indicated in my site selection, we travelled from Accra to Yendi, to Saboba, to Bimbilla, and then to Tamale. These travels involved planning for accommodation, food etc.

Lastly, I tried to meet with some of the key government actors who were engaged in getting the agreement towards seeing the end to hostilities. Majority of them had kicked the bucket and the few ones I got connected with here unable to speak in coherent terms due to old age. Hopefully, the newspaper reports I am reviewing may capture their words in quotations.

Despite these challenges, I hold the view that, enough data has been collected for this study through newspapers, official documents, archival materials and interviews. Secondary sources utilized provided further information regarding local context and background necessary for a data analysis and interpretations.

### **3.7 Limitation to this study**

This study did not interview any member from the Dagomba and Gonja ethnic group. I got my information regarding their positions in the Guinea Fowl War from primary written sources in the Northern Region House of Chiefs, the newspapers and from secondary sources. During my data collection I felt that if I had interviewed a member of the Dagomba ethnic group, I could have a more nuanced point of view. I was pleasantly surprised when one of my informants informed me that, they did not have any land problems with the Nanumba but they have land issues with the Dagombas. On the whole, I am of deep conviction that, the depth and varied nature of my sources makes this product of enquiry academically acceptable.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter gave an overview of the data and sources used for this research. I used both primary and secondary sources of information in conducting this study. Apart from academic publications, I used newspaper articles from the Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times, archival materials, documents from the Northern Region House of Chiefs and conducted oral interviews.

# CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF THE GUINEA FOWL WAR

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be presenting and discussing issues related to one of my research questions, which is the causes of the Guinea Fowl War as perceived by both sides of the warring factions. The chapter is basically divided into two sections, one part looks at the historical discussion (colonial and post-colonial) of relations between ethnic groups in the northern region in relation to indigeneity, chieftaincy and land. The second part examines the events, claims and counter claims regarding the causes of the Guinea Fowl War.

## 4.2 THE GUINEA FOWL WAR

### 4.2.1 The Trigger at Nakpayili Market

*“Corpses of children and adults litter the streets, some with arrows stuck in their heads, neck and bowels, others with their intestines gushed out. Some, having been burned by the fire that had been set to their villages, serve as meals for the few dogs scurrying about in the abandoned villages.”<sup>114</sup>*

These were the words of the Ghanaian Times newspaper report a fortnight after the Guinea Fowl War had erupted. On Tuesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1994, in Nakpayili -a village seven miles from Bimbilla, a misunderstanding between two people from the Konkomba and Nanumba ethnic groups over the purchase of a guinea fowl will see it degenerated into a full-scale war. Different accounts of the story on the event abounds due to exaggerations of hearsay. Generally, the story of the event goes as follows:

It was a market day in Nakpayili and two Konkomba men, one seller and the other the buyer bargaining over the price of a guinea fowl. Suddenly there appeared another buyer interested in the same guinea fowl who was a Nanumba and offering to pay a higher price than what the Konkomba was offering. Amidst this bargain of price, an argument ensued between the two buyers

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<sup>114</sup> The Ghanaian Times, Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February 1994 “Carnage in the North As children, pregnant women slaughtered” by Gayheart Edem Mensah, Yendi.

as the Konkomba man thought that the Nanumba man offering a higher bid was flouting his riches. According to the KOYA president<sup>115</sup> who narrated the side of the story from the Konkomba side to me, the quarrel degenerated into a scuffle and the Nanumba man was overpowered in a fight like a traditional wrestling bout which attracted onlookers from the crowd in the market. The following day, the Konkomba man was visited on his farm by the Nanumba man with a gun in the hope of retribution for his humiliating defeat the day before. In the struggle, the gun went off and the Nanumba man was shot and killed. Soon thereafter, news made round in the villages that the “war Konkombas have been talking about had started”.<sup>116</sup>

The Nanumba version of the story gives an inverse account. My Nanumba informant told me that it was rather the Konkomba man was floored in the market and his son visited the Nanumba man on his farm.<sup>117</sup> The accounts of my Nanumba seems to be in line with accounts of the war provided by Talton.<sup>118</sup> Be that as it may, these different narrations from the Konkomba and the Nanumba feeds into the syndrome of *impression management* where interviewees tend to present a favourable story of themselves.<sup>119</sup> It also speaks to the difficulty of oral tradition is capturing events largely influenced through hearsay.

To think that the events in the market as recounted is enough to ensure that a market misunderstanding would come to engulf several villages, will seem far-fetched. Certain conditions and events before the market incidence had for several months helped to create a certain narrative about an impending war<sup>120</sup>. As one of my informants puts it, the war was an amalgamation of coincidences which reflects itself in a petition sent to the government by KOYA, misinterpretation of the actions of KOYA by the Dagomba, as well as arms race, building of alliances amongst others.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Philip Dubabi, interview by Ibrahim Larry, 18th August, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid*

<sup>117</sup> Alhassan Dasana, interview by Ibrahim M Larry, 19th August, 2017.

<sup>118</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>119</sup> Druckman, *Doing Research : Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*.

<sup>120</sup> Dasana, "Personal Interview Held in Bimbilla."

<sup>121</sup> Dubabi, "Personal Interview with Koya President."

Below I will discuss these coincidences in detail and reveal the outcomes of the incidences prior to the tussle in the Nakpayili market as well as those that led to the start of the war in 1994 and later to the cessation of hostilities.

## **PART 1**

### **4.3 HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF ETHNICITIES IN NORTHERN GHANA**

#### **4.3.1 The ‘Invading Vs the Indigenous’**

As pointed out in my introduction chapter, the northern territory of Ghana is home to three administrative regions, namely the Northern Region, the Upper East and the Upper West Region. Each of these regions have their separate administrative capitals headed by a government appointed regional minister and district chief executives at the regional and the district levels respectively. There are about 30 ethnic groups in the Northern territory of Ghana<sup>122</sup>. These ethnic groups are spread across the three different regions in the northern territory and with diverse traditions and culture. Yet there is a common tendency for statements to be made which portrays the various ethnic groups in the Northern territory as a homogenous group lumping them together as “North”. Whereas some of these ethnic groups share mutually intelligible languages and the culture majority of them do not.<sup>123</sup>

These groups are broadly categorized as either the invading or the indigenous groups. The invading groups in the northern territory consist of the Mamprusi, the Dagomba the Nanumba<sup>124</sup> and the Gonjas. Some of the notable indigenous ethnic group includes, the Baasare, Chamba, Konkomba, Bimoba, Vagala, Sissala, Tumpulensi and a host of others. Historical accounts trace the arrival of the first invading ethnic group, the Mole Dagbani to the Gold Coast in the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>125</sup>. Arriving

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<sup>122</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>123</sup> "‘North’ Is Wrong," *Daily Graphic*, Friday March 11, 1994.

<sup>124</sup> The Mamprusi, Dagomba and the Nanumba are collectively referred to as the Mole Dagbani. They all trace their history of origin to one warrior called Tohajie-meaning the red hunter who first settled at Pusuga in the now upper east region of Ghana.

<sup>125</sup> Anamzoya, *Introduction: Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana*.



on horse backs, the invading ethnic groups overwhelmed the local indigenous populations as they lacked a central political authority and used crude weapons in their warfare. As a result of this defeat the invading ethnic groups politically dominated the local people they defeated, demanded as a present the hind legs of animals they hunted to the chiefs of the invading ethnic groups and occasionally engaged in farming for their new landlords.<sup>126</sup>

It is significant to point out that, the relations between these groups were not always acrimonious, despite the defeat of the indigenes they nevertheless exercised a high degree of independence, especially in areas of traditional practices and also access to resources such as lands<sup>127</sup>. The Konkomba and other indigenes had the concept of a *tendana*- an earth priest, vested with spiritual and religious functions<sup>128</sup>. In addition, the *tendana* served as arbiter between different family heads whenever there was a domestic dispute.<sup>129</sup> The significance of the *tendana* despite the fact that they were displaced by their invading ethnic groups can be found in the role they played in the allocation of lands to other strangers of their land. In 1932 when a group of Lobi crossed the border into British Togoland to escape the French repressive colonial policy, the Lobi people were allowed to settle on Ganja land having obtained the consent of the local *tendana*. The Chief commissioner in reporting to the Colonial secretary of what he thought was striking observed that "*it is also interesting fact that although these Lobis who have settled here are under the orders of the Gonja chiefs they obtained their lands from the vagalla tindanas.*"<sup>130</sup>

The evidence above points to the mutual respect between the invading and indigenous group as there seems to be a clear demarcation of religious spiritual duties and political functions. These spiritual-religious duties of giving permission for the use of lands were handled by the *tendana* as the "earth priest". The role of the *tendana* however varied insignificance depending upon the particular invading territory. The colonial evidence above is at variance with a claim of one of my Nanumba informants, he opined that the Nanumba used much coercive powers to subdue the indigenous *tindanas* and subsequently created new ones from their tribe.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Kenneth Wujanji, interview by Ibrahim M Larry, 17th August, 2017, 2017.

<sup>127</sup> Skalnik, "Authority Versus Power: Democracy in Africa Must Include Original African Institutions."

<sup>128</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, p.16.

<sup>129</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>130</sup> Letter to His Honourable, the Colonial Secretary from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale, 16th September 1932; Letter to His Honourable, the Colonial Secretary from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale.

<sup>131</sup> Dasana, "Personal Interview Held in Bimbilla."

The use of such labels such as ‘indigenous’ or ‘invading’ is a modern construct as I will be discussing below. There was no conception of indigenous and invading ethnic groups in the colonial regime. What influenced most relations between the local people and colonial government was which ethnic group had a centralized political system which the colonial government could use in their administration of the colony and protectorate. Otherwise they were all referred to as natives in the colonial period.

#### **4.3.2 Identity Creation and Its Impact on Ethnic Classification**

The use of the labels indigenes or invading have become a major feature of historical writing in explaining the relations between the different ethnic groups in northern Ghana. These labels which have been coined by historians to represent distinctions between ethnic groups have come to define how identities have been formed and protected in Northern Ghana.<sup>132</sup> Ethnic groups who consider themselves as indigenous have demanded recognition and inclusion in the affairs of the modern states. On the other hand, the invading ethnic groups tend to insist on protecting the privileges and resources they enjoy which they opine they are entitled by right.<sup>133</sup>

Konkomba Indigenous claims have been questioned by ethnic groups such as the Nanumba and the Dagombas. For example, both the Nanumba and Dagomba make the claim that Konkomba are not originally from Ghana, but rather indigenes to Togo.<sup>134</sup> This assertion has been fiercely challenged by the Konkomba as well as various academic works<sup>135</sup>. A leading member of KOYA not only refuted the charge of their “Togolese” claims but also denied that they were vanquished and subdued by the Mole Dagbani. Insisting that:

*they(mole-Dagbani) should be realistic and tell us from which battle did they conquer the Konkomba... What is recorded is that of 1939 where they were brutally driven away as they imposed a chief on us and we resisted<sup>136</sup>*

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<sup>132</sup> Anamzoya, *Introduction: Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana*.

<sup>133</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region."

<sup>134</sup>The history of the Gbewaa states.

<sup>135</sup>Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*. See also Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars." , Cliff Maasole, "The Land Factor in the Konkomba-Nanumba Crisis of 1981," *Ghana Journal of Development Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>136</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

Despite this challenge of legitimacy, what is clear from available historical records point to the displacement of the indigenous ethnic groups by invading tribes whose relations in terms of who owns which resources has changed with time. It is also important to state that, whereas an ethnic group can be identified to be an 'indigene' of a particular area, they could also pass out for 'migrants' in some territories, especially if they are not the first to inhabit the place<sup>137</sup>. The Konkomba are known to be the indigenous inhabitants of the Dagbon traditional area but their migration to Nanumba lands was as a result of their farming activities by which time those lands were already occupied by the Nanumbas.<sup>138</sup>

It is crucial to point out that, these labels have come to be associated with some form of an identity which has characterized the relations between different ethnic groups after the attainment of independence in 1957. Thus, various governments, both civil and military, have witnessed activism from these ethnic groups either towards asking for reforms, as in the case of the indigenous groups or those who have engaged in actions to the preserve of their dominance<sup>139</sup>.

#### **4.3.3 Land Ownership and the Native Land Ordinance in the Northern Territory**

In their efforts to reduce the cost of colonial administration, the British colonial government introduced the system of the indirect rule in Gold Coast in the 1920s following its success in Northern Nigeria. Its core tenets were the use of traditional institutions to rule the local people. In northern Ghana, indirect rule meant that, the colonial government looked for ethnic groups who had some form of political organization, namely chiefs, which could be used for the purposes of native administration. In areas where there was no history of chiefs, warrant chiefs or artificial chiefs were created. As the invading ethnic groups such as the Mole Dagbani and the Gonja had a well-established political system, the colonial establishment settled to administer the local people with their support. Below I will discuss how access to and use of lands were practiced in the colonial period. This discussion is important towards understanding the various arguments that have been used by post-colonial rule on each ethnic group's right to land ownership.

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<sup>137</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Anthropological Perspectives*.

<sup>138</sup> Peter Waja, interview by Ibrahim M Larry, 18th August 2017.

<sup>139</sup> Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars."

Land no doubt is an important natural resource in the lives of people. In the 1920s the colonial government who hitherto had not concentrated on the northern territories made a conscious effort to produce a legal document to spell out the modalities for acquiring and selling lands. In a memorandum accompanying the draft Land Ordinance, the chief commissioner for the Northern territories noted that the *Northern territories land and the Native Land Ordinance of 1927* would primarily “*safeguard existing native rights to land*”.<sup>140</sup> In sum, the native land ordinance had two important effects. Firstly, it recognized the importance of customary law in the use of lands. Secondly it conferred on the resident-colonial governor all land titles in the northern territory. It is important to note that despite this requirement, the governor’s rights over this land was delegated to the district commissioners who oversaw the distribution of occupancy certificates to new tenants. Colonial officers have argued that, the importance of enacting the native land ordinance was needful in order to protect the native people from scrambling for unoccupied lands when the development of the northern lands starts<sup>141</sup>. It will seem that the colonial government was grappling with issues of land litigation in the southern part of the Gold Coast and were therefore determined to avoid that. Thus, they thought that the native land ordinance will further avoid the “*evils of litigation attendant on such scramble*” of lands.<sup>142</sup>

Another reason which influenced the colonial government in working to promulgate the native lands ordinance was the conception that, the local African chiefs did not have the right appreciation of the value of their lands.<sup>143</sup> The colonial officials alleged that chiefs had sold large tracts of lands to strangers on ludicrous amounts. This was seen to endanger the colonial government’s interest of developing the resources in those regions as it would be “*rapid once it begun*”<sup>144</sup>. It was therefore necessary to protect the lands from the influx of non-natives.

One crucial discussion regarding the native land ordinance was on the definition of a native. It appears, from official exchanges that colonial officers did grapple with the working definition of the term ‘native’. For example, the ordinance defined a native as:

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<sup>140</sup> Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner, Northern Territories to (Ag) Colonial Secretary, ND -; Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner, Northern Territories to (Ag) Colonial Secretary.

<sup>141</sup> Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner, Northern Territories to (Ag) Colonial Secretary.

<sup>142</sup> Minutes of his Excellency the Governor dated 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1927 (Tamale Archives)

<sup>143</sup> Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner, Northern Territories to (Ag) Colonial Secretary. (Tamale Archives)

<sup>144</sup> *ibid*

*a person whose parents are or were member of some tribe or tribe indigenous to the protectorate or of some tribe or tribes indigenous to the Northern section of Togoland under British Mandate and any descendant or such person*<sup>145</sup>

In the discussions of who an indigenous is, it becomes clear that the colonial government did not make a distinction between the centralized ethnic groups and the ethnic groups originally inhabiting the territory before the influx of other groups. The phrase ‘tribe indigenous’ as it appears in the definition of ‘native’ is used to connote all ethnic groups both indigenous, like the Konkomba and the Dagomba from an invading tribe. Thus, the conception of ‘indigenous’ in the colonial times is markedly different from how the word has been used to refer to ethnic groups who were defeated by the invading groups.

An important point for this section is to explore the legal methods of land acquisition in the northern territories. The Native Ordinance of 1927 highlighted two forms under which lands could be said to have been legally occupied. Firstly, it recognized the rights of members of the ‘tribes’ who have occupied this land prior to colonial rule. The reference to the word ‘indigenous’ in the definition of a native was therefore in relation to ‘all locals’ irrespective of the modern construct of the ‘invading’ and ‘indigenous’ labels to describe politically centralized and non-centralized ethnic groups.

Secondly the ordinance also recognized the legal rights of:

*any person who shall have obtained a certificate from the Governor...which certificate the Governor is hereby authorized to grant, at his discretion to any native of Africa who shall have declared his intention of making the protectorate his permanent domicile abode who shall have satisfied the Governor that he has obtained the consent of the native community concerned.*<sup>146</sup>

Thus, it becomes clear that, desire for non-natives to occupy a territory does not only require the issuance of a certificate by the governor to that effect but also needed some sort of acceptance by the local people. In the occupation and use of land in the colonial period, a distinction is made between lands which have been obtained for domestic use such as habitation or farming by locals from lands which are occupied by ‘non-natives and other unoccupied lands. Whiles the governor had little influence and control over lands already occupied by natives due to native customary law, a non-native’s control of any land needed the consent from the community concerned albeit

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<sup>145</sup> Northern territories land and the Native Land Ordinance of 1927(promulgated January 1928) p.2

<sup>146</sup> Ibid

not mandatory. Even though such consent from the people is non-binding, an important point worthy of contemplation is the question of why the ordinance did not refer to obtaining consent from the chiefs but rather the ‘native community concerned’ as provided in the ordinance? It seems that the colonial government was adequately aware of the local situation of cooperation between the tindana as a representative of the indigenous ethnic groups with those of the chiefs from the invading group.

The British colonial policy of indirect rule engaged in a patron-client relationship with chiefs of centralized ethnic groups.<sup>147</sup> Even when the then colonial secretary observed that: “applications for land are, I understand, made not to the chief and his council but the tindana (priests of the earth god) ...”<sup>148</sup>, the colonial government’s engagement in terms of native administration has always been with the invading tribes. The governor is empowered to pay half of rents received on lands lying within a town to the chief, while the other half is expended on the governor’s prerogative.<sup>149</sup> A further question arises as to whether the payments of rents to the chiefs by the colonial government made them the “rightful owners” of the land? This has been a source of contention between ethnic groups from centralized and non-centralized states as we will see in later sections of this chapter when we discuss the perspectives of the warring factions on the causes of the GFW. It is important to note also that the Native Land Ordinance was later repealed in 1933 to change the use of the word ‘native lands’ to ‘public lands’. The principles of the native land ordinance continued in the northern territories until 1979 when the military government of the Supreme Military Council (SMC) supervised the transferring of the lands in the northern region to the invading ethnic groups.

In the next section, I will present a critical perspective of the institution of chieftaincy and how it has acted as a conduit for ethnic conflicts in northern region.

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<sup>147</sup> Mbowura, *End of War, No Resolution, No Lasting Peace: A Historical Study of Attempts at Managing and Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflicts*.

<sup>148</sup> Importance of of tindana

<sup>149</sup> Minutes of the political conference held at Tamale upon the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1933

## **4.4 CHIEFTAINCY IN NORTHERN GHANA AFTER COLONIAL RULE**

The institution of chieftaincy has played an important feature in the history of Ghana. Long before colonialism chiefs performed political, spiritual, economic, legislative and military function of their societies. They made laws, decided on cases and were commanders in chief of their armies in the era of inter-ethnic wars and wars of expansion.

### **4.4.1 The Chieftaincy Institution and Land in Northern Ghana**

The attainment of Ghana's independence in 1957 marked a turning point between the chiefs and the state in several ways. Foremost, it meant that the existing patron-client relationship which existed between the chiefs and the colonial masters were going to be severed. Secondly, educated elites will play a prominent role in the administration of the new state (Ghana) with modern institution such as the House of parliament, Judiciary and authority of rule now given to elected leaders as opposed to inherited royals. Some educated elites in the colonial period who wanted self-government did not have a smooth relationship with chiefs who until now had enjoyed the largess of native administration. The independence constitution took away the powers and functions of the traditional rulers and consigned them to the back seat of informal leadership grappling with communal arbitration and mobilizing their communities for development projects.<sup>150</sup> Further, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) government abolished the native authority tribunals in 1958. The native tribunals were courts which were presided over by the chiefs in their towns in administering justice. As a result, the chieftaincy institution within a year after independence in 1957 had lost their formal powers of performing legislative, judicial and even governmental duties. Their importance became customary and without any strong representation within the setup of a new independent nation.

Governments that have taken over after Nkrumah's CPP have approached the issue of chieftaincy differently. From 1966 to 1992, Ghana has experienced 5 different military rules. Coincidentally, these military governments have led the process for drafting and subsequent promulgating a new

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<sup>150</sup> Nana A. Brempong and Mariano Pavanello, *Chiefs in Development in Ghana* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 2006).

constitution. It has been argued that the recognition of chieftaincy and their change in status in the later constitution was also influenced by two other factors. Firstly, it has been argued that the institution of chieftaincy had seen a rise in value as Ghanaians irrespective of their social class had become interested in succession to stools or skins.<sup>151</sup> In this regard, people with high education who hitherto would be preoccupied with formal secular institutions became interested in occupying traditional seats. Secondly, the point has been advanced that the rise of chieftaincy to relevance lies in how traditional authorities have been able to market their traditions and cultures, especially during festival celebration which has created some form of “fever” that has seized the nation. Most importantly, these festivals have been an opportunity to bring members of the community together and to attract sponsorships from the private sector<sup>152</sup>. Thus, the constitution of 1969, 1979 and 1992 had given chiefs an appreciable amount of recognition and independence. For example, the 1979 constitution under article 176 prevented parliament from passing a law which authorizes anybody the right to give or withdraw recognition of a chief.<sup>153</sup> This provision contrast with the 1961 provisions on chieftaincy under President Nkrumah which stipulated a recognition of a chief by the minister for local government.

It is important to note that, most of the indigenous groups, especially the Konkomba, have usually pointed at the Supreme Military Council (SMC) government for their woes in terms of land distribution and access. In 1978 the military government increasingly came under harsh pressure from civil society to hand over the reins of power to a civilian government. In their bid to hold on to power, the SMC headed by I.K Acheampong proffered a type of government called Union government (unigov). The *unigov* as it was popularly called would be a form of a civilian government which would see the military metamorphose into a civilian rule not through competitive elections but a referendum in forming a coalition made up of the chiefs, military, and some civilian professionals.<sup>154</sup>

Chiefs in the northern region who belonged to the invading ethnic groups were determined to milk this opportunity by asking that lands in the northern territories be placed in their care as opposed

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<sup>151</sup> *Chiefs in Development in Ghana.*

<sup>152</sup> *ibid*

<sup>153</sup> The 1979 Republican Constitution Article 176 (2)

<sup>154</sup> “Full Text of the Attorney-General’s Address on Radio and Television Broadcast on the Work of the Adhoc Committee on Union Government, Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1977



to the government. Indeed, some “enlightened northern chiefs and intellectuals” had vowed to support the referendum for a ‘Yes’ vote if the SMC government was ready to acquiesce to their wish.<sup>155</sup> A reason which saw to the inauguration of the ‘Committee on Ownership of Land and Positions of Tenants in the Northern and Upper Regions. The committee headed by I. R. Alhassan has come to be popularly known as the Alhassan Committee. The committee recommended amongst others that the state should hand over all lands in the Northern Region to the invading ethnic groups. Eventually the Legislative instruments of 1963, No. 87 and 109 was repealed to hand over the ownership of northern lands to the various skins.<sup>156</sup> One of my Konkomba informant could not hide his emotions saying that;

*“Acheampong was the problem, everything will curse the man in his grave. He wanted to win the support of chiefs in his ‘unigov’, you help me and I will help you. Support me with the ‘unigov’ arrangement and I will give the northern lands back to you...”<sup>157</sup> For people like Peter Waja, colonialism had nothing to do with the Guinea Fowl War. He seems convinced that “greedy people like politicians” are to blame as “...he (I.K Acheampong) quickly dispersed the lands between the four” invading tribes.<sup>158</sup>*

#### **4.4.2 The 1992 Constitution and Its Frame Work on Chieftaincy**

Ghana in 1992 promulgated a new constitution after the military Provincial National Defense Council(PNDC) had ruled from 1981 to 1992. The new constitution, determined to chart a new path after 11 years of military rule also made a provision for the institution of chieftaincy with some modification from previous constitutions. The constitution defines a chief as someone who:

*...hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with relevant customary law and usage<sup>159</sup>*

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<sup>155</sup> Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars."p.59

<sup>156</sup> ibid

<sup>157</sup> Waja, "Personal Interview."

<sup>158</sup> "Personal Interview."

<sup>159</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican Constitution of Ghana, Article (277)

Indeed, debates on the incorporation of chieftaincy in the modern state elicited diverse debate as to which role the chieftaincy institution could play in a modern era. The constituent assembly received varied submissions on chieftaincy in the process of fashioning out the 1992 constitution. Whereas some opined that chieftaincy was doomed to failure and their relevance was fast evaporating, there were some strong sentiments calling for an increased role of chiefs in the affairs of the modern state.

However, the institution of chieftaincy in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic has generated much more controversy and conflict. The institution has been plagued with cancerous accusations including selling a piece of land to multiple buyers, engaging in internal royal family feuds and sometimes been involved in a display of stark illiteracy. An observer going through the dailies from the period of 1992-1996 cannot help but to conclude that chieftaincy is a lawless institution. In contrast to the stereotype that chieftaincy disputes are much common in the new region newspaper reports of the years under review tell a different story. To illustrate a few points. In August 1994, the *Daily Graphic* reported of a case of one Nana Somua Mireku Nyampong III being remanded in prison custody together with 23 other suspects for acts of vandalism in a case of intra chieftaincy dispute.<sup>160</sup> There was another story of one chief Nana Oppong Sarfo Agyeman II, Chief of Baworo sentenced to six month's imprisonments with hard labour for stealing three electric poles to be used by the community.<sup>161</sup> There was a more ludicrous story of a chief imposing a curfew on his people under the explanation that the new streetlights that was installed for the community was promoting licentious life style. It took a protest from the youth in the community to get the curfew lifted.<sup>162</sup>

Despite some of these draw-backs to the good name of chiefs, the institution has survived different challenges. In the period of the Guinea Fowl War, there were some isolated cases of chiefs being reported in the press for good reasons. One notable one is the case of a chief who saved a church from being attacked by an angry mob.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Daily Graphic, Wednesday, August 3, 1994 "Asakraka chief remanded in custody"

<sup>161</sup> Daily Graphic, Wednesday August 24, 1994 "Chief Jailed for theft"

<sup>162</sup> Ghanaian Times, Thursday February 3, 1994 "Chief Lift Curfew on Techiman-Tanaso...due to peoples protest"

<sup>163</sup> Daily Graphic , Tuesday March 29, 1994 " Chief save church from angry mob"

Moreover, The importance of the chieftaincy institution is seen not only in its existence and guarantee in the constitution, but also placing representatives of chiefs on important state institutions such as the Council of State, National and Regional Houses of chiefs and amongst others.

In order to protect the chiefs from coloring their neutrality, the constitution precluded chiefs from taking part in active politics.<sup>164</sup> It was the hope of the framers of the constitution to preserve the august nature of the chieftaincy institution and not to compromise the respect they enjoyed from members of their communities who may have different political affiliations. However, the independence of chiefs under the current constitution has been thorny. Even as the constitution seeks to insulate chiefs from partisan politics and control from the state on the one hand, it also requires that chiefs who have been selected through customary laws also have to be recognized by the government through its gazette.<sup>165</sup> This process does not only afford the government the opportunity to allocate resources and incentives but also give the government some influence in playing out a divide and rule tactics with chieftaincy. Governments may readily support candidatures of chiefs which share similar aspirations with them as they have the powers to either gazette a chief or not. On one occasion, the editorial of the daily graphic captures some of the problems with the government gazette of chiefs. It noted that the main weakness of the government gazette of chiefs finds expression in people lobbying the government.<sup>166</sup> This phenomenon has seen contestations between two factions and the one who gets the support of government gets to be gazetted. In this regard the constitution does not absolutely absolve chiefs from getting entangled in politics. On the one hand, it is customary law which makes a chief and the other, a chief needs some official recognition by the state through a gazette.

#### **4.4.2.11992 Constitution and framework on Land**

As I have previously said, the concept of chieftaincy and paramountcy comes with land. In this regard, the constitution makes it clear, what public lands are and which lands are for chiefs based on customary law. The work of the Alhassan committee which saw to the repeal of the Lands Act

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<sup>164</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican Constitution of Ghana, Article 276(1)

<sup>165</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 270 (3B) When a chief is gazetted, it means his name is entered into the government's official list as traditional representative of his people.

<sup>166</sup> The Daily Graphic Friday 29 1994.

in 1979 found an expression in the 1992 constitution. In no ambiguous terms Article 257 (3) “...declared that all lands in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana which immediately before the coming into force of this Constitution were vested in the Government of Ghana are not public lands...”<sup>167</sup>. The significance of this clause is that, invading ethnic groups in the Northern Region, by virtue of their “claim” to these lands by ‘conquest’, exercised control and ownership over the lands to the detriment of the other indigenous groups in the region. At this point, it is important to clarify that, even though these lands have been entrusted to the invading groups, government of Ghana by a general rule has powers to cause a customary land to be used as government lands especially in the case of a discovery of minerals. In an era of population growth and stringent economic needs, demands for lands for farming and other economic purposes has become very crucial for people’s survival and sustenance; a reason the Konkomba demand for lands has been aggressive <sup>168</sup>.

When the Konkomba decided to send a petition to the government instead of the Regional House of Chiefs, it will appear that they knew what the Nanumba and the other invading ethnic groups thought about their demands for lands. They had no confidence of the Regional House of Chiefs as they thought that its membership was not going to consider their application because of bias.<sup>169</sup> In this case the Konkomba addressed their petition to the government through the National House of Chiefs (NHC), side stepping the regional body.

Below I will briefly discuss the status, nature and functions of the of the national and the regional houses of chiefs as prescribed by the constitution and how it has also acted as a cause of the of the guinea fowl war.

#### **4.4.3 The National and the Regional House of Chiefs**

Access to state political institutions by chiefs have risen the competition and conflicts over chieftaincy across Ghana.<sup>170</sup> Across the country, agitations for representation on these bodies has become a key focus of traditional councils as these exposes them to institutions of power and prestige. Articles 271 and 274 of the 1992 constitution spells out the powers and functions of the

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<sup>167</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 257 (3)

<sup>168</sup> "Focus Group Interview."

<sup>169</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>170</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region."

National and Regional houses respectively. The National House of Chiefs is basically mandated to perform three functions. Firstly, they are to advise government or any person on matters relating to chieftaincy. Secondly, they are tasked with the study and codification of customary law, especially on lines of succession and lastly, they are to work on eliminating traditional customs that are seen as outmoded.<sup>171</sup> The act of parliament under the Chieftaincy Act 759 stipulates the functions of the regional house of chiefs in a replica form as was prescribed for the NHC. Each of these houses elect a member from within themselves to be president of the house for a specified period of time.

An important provision in the 1992 constitution is the provisions for chiefs to be part of statutory boards and commissions linked to important resource or political power. The President of the NHC serves as a member of the Council of Elders- the highest advisory body to the president.<sup>172</sup> Gaining access to the corridors of power offers a unique opportunity for ethnic groups whose members are in constant touch with political authority. At the regional level, the RHC does not only send a representative to the prison council or two of its members on the regional coordinating council but also have a representation on the Lands Commission. The land commission manages all public lands and also formulate relevant policy to ensure that both public stool or skin lands are developed in line with government developmental agenda.<sup>173</sup> The exclusion of the indigenous tribes from any of these bodies as a result of the fact that they do not have a credible chieftaincy institution or even worse, no lands of their own in order to be considered members of the RHC became a worry to them. This was interpreted to mean lack of recognition by the Konkomba<sup>174</sup>. Thus, a fundamental lacuna in our traditional system has been made to affect access to several quasi political institutions in a modern democratic era. Access to these institutions have caused a lot of acrimony between members of ethnic groups fighting for legitimacy and other indigenous groups whose only hope of getting access to these institutions is by creating a replica of chieftaincy institutions which hitherto was not part of their culture.

The various houses of chiefs have monopolized and cordoned any call by other ethnic groups who did not directly benefit or practiced chieftaincy during colonial or pre-colonial times from being

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<sup>171</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican 1992 Constitution of Ghana Article 272 (a-c)

<sup>172</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican 1992 Constitution of Ghana Article 892b

<sup>173</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Republican 1992 Constitution of Ghana Article 258 (1a-c) land commission

<sup>174</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

considered for paramountcy. On one of such debates, the president of the National House of chiefs had remarked that “only traditional councils which existed by amalgamation, treaties or by special arrangements backed by authentic history and with necessary documentary evidence could petition the National House of Chiefs for necessary action.”<sup>175</sup> In a statement signed by the president of Eastern Regional House of Chiefs, the house admonished the National House of Chiefs to consider receiving only “petitions in respect of cases for restoration and not for elevation or creation” of any new paramountcy or traditional councils.<sup>176</sup> Statements such as these from both the National and the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs even though targeted at some specific communities who wanted an upgrade from *divisional chiefs* to paramountcy status, it did convey the general idea to the Konkomba and other the indigenous groups with similar aspirations of how their request will be treated.

In the next session, I will give an account of the start of the events leading to the Guinea Fowl. I will further discuss the main causes of the conflict as perceived by both sides of the warring faction

## **PART 2**

### **4.5 THE KOYA PETITION TO GOVERNMENT**

In June 1993, the leadership of KOYA submitted a petition to the government through the National House of Chiefs for elevating their chief in Soboba to paramountcy status. The Konkombas’ who, having taken note of their numerical strengthen in the northern region after the population census of 1984, have grown convinced that there was the need for a change in the status quo.<sup>177</sup> The population numbers put them second after the Dagombas, and they were more than the other invading tribes who enjoyed paramountcy namely, the Nanumba, Mamprusi and Gonja. Thus, the Konkomba thought that they deserved the rights to be recognized as a solid ethnic group who could enjoy the same privileges as the invading ethnic groups enjoyed. The Konkomba further argued

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<sup>175</sup> Ghanaian Times Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April 1994 “House of Chiefs probes conflicts in 2 regions” GNA

<sup>176</sup> The Daily Graphic, Monday May 30<sup>th</sup> 1994 “Resolving Disputes: Statement by E/R House of Chiefs” p7.

<sup>177</sup>Dubabi, "Personal Interview with Koya President."

that, times have changed and it was important that all colonial relics were abandoned. To continue to recognize and grant superiority to others on the basis of colonial antecedent was to the Konkomba a reinvention of history which “comes with a lot of headaches”<sup>178</sup>. To this effect, the petition sought to get the chief of Soboba who was appointed by the Ya-Naa to be elevated to paramountcy status. The net result of this will be that the Konkomba will extricate themselves from the rule or control of the Ya-Naa. Besides the Konkomba have since made the claim that they are indigenous settlers in Ghana referring to Soboba as their ancestral home.<sup>179</sup>

The Dagombas as the rulers of Dagbon<sup>180</sup> on their part argued that, their rights to rule the whole of the territory stems from the fact that they acquired their territory by *rights of conquest*.<sup>181</sup> In a press statement by the Dagbon Youth Association (DAYA), the group had remarked that, their claim to the territory of Eastern Dagbon since in the 15<sup>th</sup> century had been established historically and documented.<sup>182</sup> The allusion to historical documents to establish a claim points to some academic and historical write-ups about the migration story of the Mole-Dagbani vanquishing indigenous people they encountered when they first arrived. Dagombas, Nanumbas, Mamprusi and Gonja have for a long time asserted their supremacy to the lands in the northern territory through conquest. It is noteworthy to observe that, the right to occupy and claim a land based on conquest had frequent mention from the invading ethnic groups as a result of the memoirs of a colonial officer by name R.J.K Pogucki. As the assistant Commissioner of Lands in 1956/1957, Pogucki noted four different ways in which land acquisitions in the northern territories can be claimed. He mentioned that one could claim ownership of a land as a result of occupation since time immemorial, long occupation, conquest and transfer<sup>183</sup>. The invading ethnic groups have mostly hanged on to the acquisition of their lands by conquest to claim legitimacy of the territories they occupy today. At the same time when the Konkomba claimed the rights to the lands they currently occupied through *long occupation* or *occupation since time immemorial*, the charge has been to brand them as migrants from Togo. As Peter Waja noted when I asked him about the claim of their origin from Togo, he intoned that the situation where an artificial boundary divides a group

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<sup>178</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>179</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>180</sup> Dagbon is used to refer to the lands which are under the control of the YA-NAA. Lands under the Bimbilla-Na are referred to as Nanum lands while that of the Yagbon-wura of Gonja is Gonjaland.

<sup>181</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>182</sup> “Dagbon Youth call for probe into causes of conflict” by Gariba Ibrahim Ghanaian Times Thursday Feb 17, 1994

<sup>183</sup> Martinson, "The Hidden-History of Konkomba Wars in Northern Ghana."p77

of people is not only peculiar to their case is not only he remarked that; “Yes we strike a border with Togo and there could be Konkombas at the other side of the border so what? Eves strike a border with Togo and there are a lot of them there, Kusasi with Burkina Faso. Are they all migrant?”<sup>184</sup> To Konkomba leaders, that assertion is only a ploy to exclude them from benefiting from what they are entitled to<sup>185</sup>.

The Ya-Naa as the overall ruler of Dagbon also asserted that, the Konkombas migrated from Togo and that if the Konkombas did not like to be a part of his ‘establishment’ they were at liberty to move to Togo. Adding that; “they cannot be giving land in Dabgon to establish a second home in addition to their home in Togo”<sup>186</sup>. It is important to point out that, the Konkomba chief in Soboba has for a long time been incorporated under the Dagbon traditional council which is headed by the Ya-Naa<sup>187</sup>. Indeed, Talton suggests that this incorporation of Saboba chief was carried out since the 1950s.<sup>188</sup>In a rejoinder to dispel some kind of misinformation regarding Konkomba-Dagomba relations stated that the Soboba-Na enjoyed the position of a divisional chief, a stature he attained by his elevation to that status by the Ya-Naa in 1989.<sup>189</sup> This suggests therefore that the Konkomba chief has for a long time been under the Dagbon traditional area and even got promotions from the time Soboba was incorporated in the Dagbon traditional area. The irony is that whiles this charge of Togolese were proffered on Konkomba by the Ya-Naa, he had allowed the Konkomba chief of Soboba to serve under his traditional council as a sub divisional chief.

The question worthy of investigating is finding out the reason the KOYA decided to petition government in December 1993 having been told by the Alhassan committee that they had lost any basis to claim any lands having lost them through conquest? A number of factors might have accounted for this move. Foremost, there was the Nawuri- Gonja conflict over the rightful owner of a parcel of land in Kpandai. The Nawuris (an indigenous group) had protested against the Gonja(invading) holding their annual youth conference in Kpandai. Counter claims to right of ownership of Kpandai degenerated and escalated in a violent conflict between the two ethnic

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<sup>184</sup> Waja, "Personal Interview."

<sup>185</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>186</sup> I. Mahama, *History and Traditions of Dagbon* (GILLBT, 2004); Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, p.171.

<sup>187</sup> Daily Graphic , Wednesday March 23, 1994 “Defusing the Storm-Rejoinder”

<sup>188</sup>Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>189</sup> Daily Graphic , Wednesday March 23, 1994 “Defusing the Storm-Rejoinder”



groups. The government inaugurated a committee of enquiry popularly referred to as the Justice Ampiah committee which submitted its report in January 1992 and made over thirty-one findings<sup>190</sup>. Amongst those findings was one seen to be a landmark not only for the benefit of the Nawuris but also to all other indigenous ethnic groups. The report concluded that the cause of the Nawuri-Gonja was the failure of the Gonjas to recognize Nawuri chiefs and their right to be in their own traditional area. The committee also established that the Gonjas had not ruled over the Nawuris in the pre-colonial times but only got coopted within Gonja rule when indirect rule was introduced in the northern territories in the 1920s. As a result of this finding, the committee recommended to government to accord recognition to the Nawuris claim of Kpandai, create a different traditional council for the Nawuris and elevate the *Nawuriwura* to paramount status<sup>191</sup>.

This findings of the Ampiah committee was very significant to the struggles of other indigenous ethnic groups especially the Konkomba, as they had long nursed the sentiments of weaning themselves off the Dagombas.

The second factor which might have given the Konkomba the impetuosity to petition Government through the National House of chiefs was the return of Ghana to democratic rule in 1992. After 12 years with military rule, the PNDC government initiated a process that saw the promulgation of a new constitution and the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic. With the idea of their huge numbers at the back of their mind, the Konkombas have come to realize the strength of their numbers during the electioneering and got three of their own elected as Members of Parliament. Multi-party and competitive system of governance was seen as a breakthrough by the Konkombas. They thought that if in the past they were sidelined in the traditional sense, modern democracy with universal adult suffrage which sees importance in numbers could offer a unique opportunity to ask for reforms. Thus, in their petition, they cited their growing population which was more than the Nanumbas, the Mamprusi and the Gonjas. As Kenneth Wujanji disclosed, they thought a new democratic nation gave them the ambience to petition government through a constitutional body—the National House of Chiefs<sup>192</sup>. However, a clash between modern democratic tenets and

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<sup>190</sup> Mbowura, *End of War, No Resolution, No Lasting Peace: A Historical Study of Attempts at Managing and Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflicts*.

<sup>191</sup> The Justice Ampiah Committee Report on the Causes of the Gonja-Nawuri conflict. (Ampiah 1992: Part 1 74-77) cited in *End of War, No Resolution, No Lasting Peace: A Historical Study of Attempts at Managing and Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflicts*.

<sup>192</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

traditional values came to play out as the Ya-Naa chided the Konkomba for disrespecting his authority by petitioning the National House of Chiefs directly.<sup>193</sup> In the traditional setting, the way an action is carried also symbolic importance and thus are interpreted in many different ways. Whereas to the Konkombas felt they were honoring their civil duty by petitioning a higher office in charge of chieftaincy at the national level, the traditional approach would have been to go through the overlord of the area. Indeed, side stepping the Ya-Naa attracted sharp doubts on the real intentions of the Konkomba. A feature article in the daily graphic on 8 March 1995 quizzes why the call for paramountcy was not done by the chiefs of Konkomba but rather the educated elites of the Konkomba Youth Association<sup>194</sup>. The writer observed that the petition requesting for paramountcy is “only a smokescreen for the realization of Konkomba territorial ambitions or designs in the region, since a paramountcy must rest on land which the Konkomba do not have.”<sup>195</sup> The petition sent by the Konkomba for a paramountcy status opened the flood gates for a lot of interpretations which culminated into different actions and reactions

In my next discussion, I will attempt to find out how the different parties to the conflict approach the issues surrounding the petition and how that manifested itself in different forms of violence.

#### **4.6 The Wounds of The Pito War 1981**

The end of the 1981 clash between the Konkomba and Nanumba was not the end of the massive ethnic show down is a reasonable conclusion, witnessing the numbers of fatalities and displaced people at the aftermath of the war. The cessation of open hostilities and the fact that there was not a formal peace agreement between the warring factions meant that some went home with festering wounds. Subsequent events after the Pito War have shown that the root causes of this conflict have not been unearthed and settled. Disagreements and mutual suspicions continued to be a feature of the two ethnic groups who lived as each other’s neighbors. In August 1984, Chief Abarika II, the Paramount Chief of Nanumba-the Bimbilla Na, petitioned the Regional PNDC Secretary<sup>196</sup> to pay close attention to activities of some Konkomba, who position themselves as chiefs in Nanum lands and by effect spreading mayhem. The paramount chief lamented on how

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<sup>193</sup> "Focus Group Interview."

<sup>194</sup> "“Defusing the Storm-Rejoinder”,” *Daily Graphic*, Wednesday, March 23 1994.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid*

<sup>196</sup> The Regional Secretary is the equivalent of the Regional minister in charge of the region. In the military regime, they were referred to as secretaries.

Konkombas in the village of Gbungbaliga have become war mongers and mobilized a group of Konkomba youth to physically abuse a Nanum man. The Bimbilla-Na complaining confessed that he “gets disturbed that for a period of four years a few individuals could disregard the central government and hold fellow countrymen at ransom as well as disorganize productivity”<sup>197</sup> Also add the killing of the animal in ritual by the Konkombas which a petition was sent. (22<sup>nd</sup> November 1989)

Five years later, chief Abarika I I’s apprehension and suspicion of the Konkomba became even more strong. This time, he went the extra mile asking the PNDC Regional secretary to arrest and interrogate three Konkomba clan heads who he alleged have arrogated to themselves the positions and powers of chiefs. He noted with immense concern how rumors can quickly translate to a reality of action stating to the Regional Secretary that “in 1981 we took same as rumuor and only became true, so I want us to learn from our mistakes by not allowing the rumuor to be true again.”<sup>198</sup> True to chief Abarika’s words his suspicion and apprehension would become real when KOYA delivered to the National House of Chiefs their petition for a paramountcy. Thus, when the triggering events occurred, both parties had laid in ambush waiting for a spark to battle it out. Within three weeks of the GFW more than 150,000 were said to have been displaced and about 260 villages burnt.<sup>199</sup> The conflict had spread from the Bimbilla area to several districts in Yendi, Salaga, Zabzugu Tatale, Gushegu Karaga, Saboba-Cheroponi and the Nalerigu district.

#### **4.7 The Outburst in Parliament**

In understanding the causes of the GFW, discussions in parliament in Accra reveals information on the perception of both factions in the war. Allegations and counter allegations were ferociously made and tensions in the house had risen several times in the course of parliamentary debates. One instructive observation points to the fact that even when the members of parliament representing both Konkombas, the Dagombas and the Nanumbas were from one political party their emotions and outburst speaks to a deep-seated rift between the Konkombas on the one hand

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<sup>197</sup> “Petition against continued Konkomba unrest in the Nanumba traditional council area” 15<sup>th</sup> August 1986 (Northern region House of Chiefs)

<sup>198</sup> Abarika Attah II to the PNDC Regional Secretary “RE-NANUMBA/KONKOMBA CONFLICT” 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1989

<sup>199</sup> Daily Graphic, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1994

and the other Members of parliament(MP) from the invading ethnic groups. Indeed, this reveals much about how ethnic differences can cut across other temporary identities such as political party affiliations. Even when the parliamentarians debated issues regarding the ongoing war at that time, members of parliament of the same political party were openly antagonistic to each other and made emotion-flaring statements.

Parliamentary proceedings on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1994 reveals cases of animosity, bias and stereotype amongst the different warring factions. Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, MP for Bimbilla remarked that the violence, destruction and vandalism that has been perpetuated by the Konkomba since they started fighting the people of the Northern Region have been unimaginable. He noted that the desire of the Konkomba “to acquire land and paramountcy status for their chiefs by force of arms was unacceptable both in international law and domestic law”<sup>200</sup>. Indeed, the deputy majority leader Alhaji BA Fuseini repeated the claim of Konkombas being from Togo and that the Konkomba is not an indigenous tribe in Ghana. The deputy majority leader made allegations of Konkomba atrocities citing a case of poisoning water sources in order to inflict pains on the members of the invading ethnic groups.<sup>201</sup>

The allegations and counter allegations, most of them without any proof ended up flaring passions resulting in heated exchanges in the floor of parliament. For example, one of the three Konkomba MPs, Moses Mabengba in parliament warned that, for everyone Konkomba killed, ten will be killed by Konkombas as retaliation.<sup>202</sup> He reminded the Deputy Majority Leader of the fact that they were the second largest in the northern region and that their demand for a paramountcy “was a legitimate right and one of the surest ways of easing tensions in the region.”<sup>203</sup>. He opined that the best way to end these confrontations is by ending the situation where political and traditional power is wielded by only four out of the fifteen ethnic groups in the region. To him that situation was not only unacceptable but also “undemocratic and not practicable in modern Ghana”<sup>204</sup>. Parliament as a microcosm of the population of the country with elected representatives convey the feelings of

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<sup>200</sup> Ghanaian Times Thursday, February 10 1994 “TENSION IN PARLIAMENT...As MPs debate Konkomba-Nanumba conflict” by R. Harry Reynolds& Francis Gasu cover page

<sup>201</sup> ibid

<sup>202</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>203</sup> The Ghanaian Times Thursday, February 10 1994 “TENSION IN PARLIAMENT...As MPs debate Konkomba-Nanumba conflict” by R. Harry Reynolds & Francis Gasu cover page

<sup>204</sup> ibid

both side of the warring factions. Even when tensions in the house calmed down and both the Konkomba MPs and the Dagomba MPs were called to apologize to the house for their heated exchanges, their views and opinions on the causes of the violent clash remained unchanged. Honorable B.A Fuseini reminded the house that he was doing his job as a parliamentarian and was only “conveying the real feelings of his constituents.”<sup>205</sup>Mabengba re-emphasized that, the Konkombas concern is in working to remove the root causes of the persistent clashes which have “characterized relationship between various ethnic groups in the northern region”<sup>206</sup>.

#### **4.8 Ethnic Alliance and The Arms Race**

Meanwhile as tensions between the warring factions continue in the house of parliament, violent clashes and sporadic attacks became more pronounced and each side of the factions attracted allies to support them in the fight. The Konkomba were believed to have gotten support of other indigenous groups like the Baasare, the Nawuris and the Bimoba on the one hand, while the Dagomba, Nanumba the Mamprusi and the Gonja joined forces. I refer to the former the ‘indigenous allied forces’ and the latter ‘invading allied forces’. The other indigenous groups saw in the struggles of the Konkomba people a fruit which could benefit all of them towards their struggles for recognition and obtaining paramountcy. On the other hand, the other allied invading forces joined to fight back what they have conceived as challenging their supremacy and overturning history. More than that, success by the indigenous allied forces would mean a reduction in their share of economic resources such as the vast land they controlled and in their access to quasi-state institutions with all of its attending influence. Thus, on the one hand was the conception of the war and struggles for recognition, a war of freedom, while the other party saw it as a mutiny which had to be repressed. News reports in the dailies were quick to report on how ethnic groups who hitherto were not part of the war had started carrying out acts of atrocities against the Konkomba. One report noted that “the whole eastern part of the of Northern region stretching from

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<sup>205</sup> Daily Graphic, Wednesday March 2, 1994 “Moves to avert ethnic violence” by Debrah Fynn

<sup>206</sup> ibid

Gushegu, Tamale, Salaga and Makango has thus become a battle zone as these three ethnic groups<sup>207</sup> fight the Konkomba who have settled all over the place”<sup>208</sup>

A possible explanation to the creation of an alliance between the invading tribes might have come from a general sense of apprehension from the individual invading tribe communities. Following the push of the Gonjas away from Kpandai town by the Nawuris, a group called the Concern Citizens Association wrote a letter to the paramount chiefs in the Northern Region House of Chiefs (NRHC) on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1992. The association warned the chiefs about the effect of the alleged alliance of the Konkomba and Baasare in supporting the Nawuri’s to have victory over the Gonjas. The letter note that the aim of the indigenous allied group was to acquire the whole of the eastern part of the northern region and “also to get a seat in the regional house of chiefs”<sup>209</sup>. In advising the paramount chiefs, the Concern Citizens Association’s advice was for the “four majority tribes viz Dagombas, Gonjas, Mamprusi and the Nanumbas (*to*) collectively form a strong military power.”<sup>210</sup> In my opinion this letter did not only prophesize the Guinea fowl war of 1994, which was written almost twenty months before the war, but it also conveyed the perception underlying what drive these ethnic groups to pick up arms for battle.

Perhaps what was more revealing was the reports of arms which were used by both sides of the warring factions. There were evidence and reports of the movement of arms in large quantities from different part of the country, making their way to the conflict zones. Indeed, the assertion has been made that the various youth associations of these ethnic groups gathered resources from Accra to send to their groups in the war area. This highlights the influence of a kind of a ‘domestic diaspora’ where members of the various groups located in Accra, the capital coordinate to buy and supply arms to their relatives in the northern region. A very popular market in Accra, known for the sale of Yams called the Konkomba *market* was a hub of arms gathering and collection. One month into the conflict, the police got an information about arms been sent from the Konkomba market in Accra to relatives in the conflict areas. On one of numerous operations that was conducted by the police at the Konkomba yam market found about 21 short guns, 18 of which

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<sup>207</sup> Referring to the Dagomba, Nanumba and the Gonja

<sup>208</sup> Ghanaian Times “Fighting up North worsens” by Gariba Ibrahim. Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February 1994 cover page

<sup>209</sup> “Concerned citizens association, letter to paramount chiefs” 16<sup>th</sup> June 1992 (regional house of chiefs registry)

<sup>210</sup> *ibid*

were imported and 18 cartridges<sup>211</sup> with as much as 1849 rounds of ammunition hidden in the ceiling of the traders.<sup>212</sup> Out of the 30 arrested “17 were Konkomba 3 were Dagombas 1 Kusasi, others from other tribes”.<sup>213</sup> This phenomena of mobilizing arms to be sent to conflict areas in no small quantities ensured that hostilities continued as road blocks were mounted and innocent people got attacked and killed. Whereas some of these arms mobilized were impounded before they could get to their final destinations, many more got to their intended destinations and were used to commit several forms of atrocities. Arms gathering and proliferation arising from mutual suspicion has contributed to the situation where ethnic groups by their actions have preferred arms challenge rather than solving their problems through dialogue

#### **4.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I presented my discussions into the causes of the Guinea Fowl War in two sections. The first part explored the historical relations between the various ethnic groups in the northern region and how the identities and the labels of ‘indigenes’ and ‘invading’ have influenced access to and control of resources. This part briefly discussed the institution of chieftaincy with relations to land and other quasi-state institutions The second part of this chapter presented and discussed the events which occasioned the GFW and what both sides of the warring faction perceive as the main causes of the clash.

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<sup>211</sup> The Daily Graphic “Police seize arms at Konkomba market in Accra” by Efam Awo Dovi p3 Saturday 5march 1994

<sup>212</sup> The Ghanaian times Sat march 5, 1994 cover page, “police uncover arms cache at yam market 30 suspect arrested”

<sup>213</sup> *ibid*

## **CHAPTER 5: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE GUINEA FOWL WAR**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In my preceding chapter, I examined the main causes of the Guinea Fowl War (GFW) as perceived by the main parties of the war. They primarily fought over issues regarding land rights, recognition and access to political power, the chapter showed how the idea of a collective identity such as ‘invading’ or ‘indigenous’ has contributed to the formation of alliances. In this chapter, I will discuss the actions, inactions and initiatives of the government before, during and after the cessation of the war and how some of these actions and initiatives might have contributed to peace or saw to the continuation of violence.

### **5.2 Defining government**

The term government has most often been used to describe the use of power. A simple conception of government is seeing it in relation to the three traditional arms of the state, namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. On the other hand, due to competitive multi-party elections and increasing complexities of governance, the Executive arm of government has received much prominence. In the case of Ghana, the head of the Executive-the President, is charged with formulating and implementation policies. As a commander in chief of the National Army, but he does not only concern himself with security matters but also endowed with the powers of appointment. For example, the president oversees the appointment of ministers, heads of commissions and boards and prosecuting development agenda as prescribed under the directive principles of state policy.<sup>214</sup> In this essay except for the limited I captured of parliament, my

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<sup>214</sup> The 1992 fourth Republican constitution Chapter 6 “The Directive Principles of State Policy”



discussions of government refer to the Executive arm of government at the time and its appointees such as heads of agencies, departments, the police and the army.

## **5.2 MANAGING THE GUINEA FOWL WAR**

The assertion that the state is largely responsible for the security and protection of its citizenry is without question. The President as the head of state is ultimately entrusted with the task of protecting lives and properties, the resolution of conflicts when they occur and implementing peace-building measures to forestall a further recurrence.<sup>215</sup> Over the years, we have seen an increasing trend in conflict areas where various governments concentrate on providing security to the neglect of finding solutions to the root causes of violence.<sup>216</sup> In this section, I will concentrate on governments actions and inactions in providing security to its citizens and government efforts in averting and containing of the violence in the Guinea Fowl War.

### **5.2.1 Security prior to the Guinea Fowl War**

The government has an extensive apparatus with regards to the provision of security in the Ghana. Article 83 of the 1992 constitution stipulates the membership of the National Security Council which includes the president, the vice president and heads of the various security agencies.<sup>217</sup> At the highest level, the National Security Council is mandated with the task of “considering and taking appropriate measures to safeguard the internal and external security of Ghana.”<sup>218</sup> A well-structured decentralized security system is replicated both at the regional and the district levels<sup>219</sup>. The import is these measures is to ensure security at all levels and also support the government’s task of intelligence gathering.

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<sup>215</sup> Anamzoya, *Introduction: Managing Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana*, P.31.

<sup>216</sup> Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace*; Alex J Bellamy, Paul D Williams, and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Polity, 2010).

<sup>217</sup> The 1992 Constitution of Ghana under article 83 list about a membership of 13 forming the National Security Council

<sup>218</sup> The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 84(a) “The National Security Council”

<sup>219</sup> Security and Intelligence Agencies Act 526 also provides for a body responsible to security at the Regional and District levels. The president appoints regional ministers and District Chief Executive Officers as heads and Chairman of both the Regional and District Security Councils

Various historical evidence, which I have come across during my fieldwork, suggest that the GFW could have been averted by the government before reaching its disturbing proportions. It has been a common practice for the regional minister or the district chief executive to either request to be briefed by a chief or call the traditional council to order. This happens in cases of communal disturbances and normally come with a call for investigation. On the other hand, too, the traditional councils headed by a chief also inform the government's representative either at the regional or district level on happenings which threatens peace and security. I will give two examples to support this claim.

In 1986 when conflict broke out between the Konkombas and the Bimoba, the Provincial National Defense Council (PNDC) district secretary, Mr. Zac Ishmael Abu, was forthright in his scolding. He noted in his letter to the to the chief that: *“chieftaincy conflicts within the district are getting out of hand and urgent and early steps must be taken to normalize the existing state of affairs.”*<sup>220</sup> The second example is that of the Bimbilla Na in 1989 regarding his suspicion of some Konkomba, fomenting trouble in Bimbilla. The overlord of the Nanumba people-the Bimbilla, had written to the Regional PNDC secretary complaining about the activities of some Konkomba leaders who were sowing seeds of discords in Bimbilla.<sup>221</sup> The Bimbilla Na had alleged that some three Konkomba rebels, *“claimed themselves as Chiefs”*<sup>222</sup> and urged the Regional Secretary to take *“immediate action, for we are all after peace.”*<sup>223</sup> The question which begs for an answer is whether government through its representatives acted or rather escalated issues to members of the national security to act in preventing the suspicions from turning into real violence.

When tensions began to soar in 1993 after KOYA had submitted their petition to the government through the National House of Chiefs, suspicions and anticipations of war was much pronounced. One Dagomba historian, Alhaji Sulemana Alhassan had informed Julia Jonson that:

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<sup>220</sup> “Chieftaincy in the Konkomba/Bimoba Conflict Area” PNDC District Secretary to the Registrar MTC Nalerigu 12<sup>th</sup> December 1986

<sup>221</sup> Petition from Abarika

<sup>222</sup> *ibid*

<sup>223</sup> *ibid*

The youth in Yendi town they started harassing the Konkombas every time they came to market. They started harassing them and warned them: 'if you come out against us we are going to let out women catch you with their bare hands' ... 'we will chain you and we will whip you, we will do this and we will do this...' <sup>224</sup>

In all of these happenings, there was little or no preemptive action from government to calm nerves and assure the public of peace. Can it be said that the government intelligence did not know the effect of the Konkomba's petition especially in light of past ethnic conflicts between the Konkombas and members of the allied invading forces especially after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in 1991? Even the leadership of the Konkomba had anticipated that their petition may snowball into an open confrontation. The signee of the Konkomba petition informed me:

*it was not like we did not know I knew it was going to happen, but I had a dilemma, I could not tell the Konkombas when they asked me whether it was going to happen or not. But I tell them you should be ready, it doesn't happen(sighs) if that does, it should not take us by surprise.* <sup>225</sup>

One wonders whether the heads of both the regional and the district security councils did not anticipate or have the incline about the looming danger. In early January 1993, the (ag) District Chief Executive dispatched a letter to the Regional Minister reporting the murder of two boys at Sogon, village five miles from Bimbilla. The report had it that, a Nanumba schoolboy had killed his classmate which solicited retribution from the father of the victim to kill the Nanumba boy. An event which sparked tensions and series of statements and from the youth associations of both the Konkomba and the Nanumba. <sup>226</sup>

By far, one of the most notorious incidences which should have attracted the outrage of the government to act was the attack and ransacking of the Bimbilla district police station by some youth in the area. On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 1994, the police, on a regular barrier duty intercepted 88 packets of gun cartridges on a bus to Bimbilla. According to the press release by the police, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ASP) Andrew Awuni, said the GPRTU<sup>227</sup> chairman at Bimbilla "went to town and organized a mob which went and forcefully seized the cartridges from the

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<sup>224</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region." P.31

<sup>225</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>226</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana.*

<sup>227</sup> The Ghana Private Roads and Transportation Union(GPRTU) is a localized association of drivers and public transport owners.

*security personnel at the barrier.*”<sup>228</sup> He further stated that the mob was repelled but not until they had taken some of the cartridges from the police.<sup>229</sup> As if not enough, the group of youth from Bimbilla attacked the main Bimbilla District police station, where they ransacked the armory and burnt police properties. When a team of newsmen visited Bimbilla town on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January 1994, the police revealed that 500 rifles which were seized in the 1981 Pito War between the Konkomba and the Nanumba were stolen from the armory. He also noted that “*a number of AK47s, four submachine guns, five-mark 4s 50 tear gas and 300 packers of ammunition*” were also stolen from the exhibit room.<sup>230</sup>

This spectacle in Bimbilla raises serious questions about the professionalism and credibility of the police from this report. Why would the rifles, number about 500 seized during an ethnic conflict still be kept by the police in Bimbilla 13 years after the 1981 Pito War? Were the police not having enough weapons for their policing duties to necessitate that the arms seized were used by the police for their operations? Why were the seized arms not destroyed and burnt as it happens in the practice of disarmament?<sup>231</sup> In any case, if the police had wanted to carry further investigations on those who acquired those guns which were seized, would it have been safe to keep about 500 rifles in a district police station for over a decade without any action on those arms?

Even more worrying was the allegations of the Bimbilla Na when he told the journalists during the press briefing by the police that “*the attack although unfortunate was not surprising because he had initially informed the Regional Minister about the activities of the alleged leader of the mob, but the warning was ignored.*”<sup>232</sup>

If the track record of the Bimbilla Na is to go by, we may impugn a clear lack of action by political authority and the Regional security council to work on intelligence which was shared with them. Martijn Wienia asserted that the attack on the police station was carried out by a Nanumba mob because “*according to them, the police had turned a blind eye to massive Konkomba smuggling*

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<sup>228</sup> Ghanaian Times Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January 1994 “Mob attacks security men, burns Bimbilla police post” Gariba Ibrahim, Tamale

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Daily Graphic Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 1994 “Bimbilla is Calm”

<sup>231</sup> Robert Muggah, “No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (Ddr) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts,” *The Round Table* 94, no. 379 (2005).

<sup>232</sup> Daily Graphic Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 1992” Bimbilla is Calm” cover page

*from the Konkomba Market in Accra.*"<sup>233</sup> However, Wienia's assertion raises some questions on claim of the Bimbilla Na. Would the Bimbilla Na have reported his kinsmen to the regional minister if the action of the ring leaders was to protect the Nanumba people from the arms that the Konkomba were smuggling to Bimbilla? Or the Bimbilla Na was just doing the rightful thing to do by reporting security threats to the regional minister even against his own people? Be that as it may the events right from the attempt at smuggling packets of gun cartridges and later to the attack on the police just seven days before the outbreak of the Guinea Fowl War, raises serious questions about the nature of the government's security system to pre-empt and deal with security threat.

Amidst all these spectacles of chaos, confusion and heated tensions, the political will to act seemed feeble. Security precautions had not been tightened and politicians had become noted for talking their way out of every situation. Deputy Speaker of Parliament and MP for Bimbilla, the Ghanaian Times reported Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas to have said that, "*the government was doing all it could to prevent any clash between the people and the security agencies and to restore peace and normalcy to the area.*"<sup>234</sup> Unfortunately, it will seem government was not doing enough. Only some few days after Dr. Chambas had assured of government's action, a market disagreement in Nakpayili over the price of a guinea fowl degenerated and spread mayhem across several towns and districts.

Below I will discuss the actions/inactions of government at the outbreak of the Guinea Fowl war and examine how it either contributed to peace or saw the continuation of violence.

## **5.2.2 Governments efforts at providing security and containment of violence**

If the government did not anticipate the effects of its inactions in the wake of the tensions preceding the Guinea Far War, the swiftness with which both sides of the warring factions engaged in the brutal killing was too loud to be ignored. In one of the villages, for example, the dailies reported that the entire village of Adibo was torched down and its residents murdered, leaving behind an

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<sup>233</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana.*

<sup>234</sup> Ghanaian Times Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 1994 "Bimbilla back to normal but

old woman of “*about 80 years and her dog*” captured on the front page of the Ghanaian times.<sup>235</sup> From my review of the dailies, I observed three different but interconnected trends of actions by the government at the outbreak of the war.

Firstly, the government declared a state of emergency in all the districts affected by the war and dispatched a combined police and military in an operation code named; “*Operation Gongong*”. Secondly, there were series of political visits to the conflict areas by both members of the executive and the legislature. Interestingly, speeches made by politicians, during their visit at different forums and some other actions, influenced the tempo of the war. Lastly, during the conflict, the government commissioned a seven-member committee under the name of Permanent Negotiations team to investigate the causes of the violence and work to forestall peace. At a point, all these three factors were running concurrently which produced different sets of actions and reactions. Below I discuss these efforts of the government.

#### **5.2.2.1 state of emergency and related matters**

The President of the Republic of Ghana at the time, Jerry John Rawlings, under an executive instrument declared a state of emergency in the conflict-affected states. On February 10, 1994, the House of Parliament in honoring its constitutional mandate supported the proclamation of the president across seven districts<sup>236</sup> which had become engulfed in a blood bath.<sup>237</sup> The state of emergency, initially proclaimed for seven days was extended to last for three months after some as violence continued. The government also dispatched a joint military and police task force to maintain peace and order in the districts affected. The minister of interior Col E. M Osei Mensah had expressed hope that the state of emergency will ensure that, the task force objective of ending hostilities and disarming combatants in the war area become feasible.<sup>238</sup>

In a measure to ensure that the conflict didn’t attract the flow of arms and mercenaries across the borders from neighboring countries, the government had ordered for the closure of all border,

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<sup>235</sup> Ghanaian Times Monday February 14<sup>th</sup> 1994 “Carnage in the North as children, pregnant women slaughtered”

<sup>236</sup> The district engulfed in fighting included Yendi, Nanumba, Gushegu, Saboba-Chereponi, Karaga, East Gonja and Zabzugu Tatale

<sup>237</sup> Ghanaian Times Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1994 “State of Emergency declared in seven districts” by Harry Raynolds and Francis Gasu

<sup>238</sup> Ghanaian Times, Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1994 “Parliament approves State of Emergency”

immigration and customs posts in the districts of east Mamprusi, Saboba-Chereponi and Zabzugu Tatala.<sup>239</sup> The President in exercising his authority under the emergency powers act 1994, declared that *“no person shall manufacture, procure, possess, or carry any arms or ammunition in the conflict area of the northern region currently under curfew.”*<sup>240</sup>

It will appear that this move by the government was to assuage the concerns of the section of the population who for a long time suspected that the Konkombas always had support from their kinsmen across the border.

The task force began work in earnest to contain the violence. Soon there were some positive results of the security working to not only stop the movement of arms but also militarily engage factions in the war. The tasked force coordinated to intercept smuggled arms and ammunition coming from every angle of the country. They had also made modest success in stopping the bussing of allied forces. For instance, the police had impounded a large consignment of arms which was traveling from Accra to Kpassa<sup>241</sup> and arrested seven Konkomba men in connection with the attempted smuggle.<sup>242</sup> There were several other successes by the police in this regard.<sup>243</sup>

#### **5.2.2.2 Allegations of favouratism**

Despite the positive efforts at containing the spread of violence, the government security team suffered a charge of favoritism. Each of the warring factions accused the military and the police of bias. In fact, some Konkombas went as far as alleging that people within government especially those within the allied invading forces were divulging intelligence to their people and facilitating the smuggling of the arms themselves. The various accusations fueled more suspicion and only made the conflict situation even more acute. The Konkomba Youth Association issued a release

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<sup>239</sup> Ghanaian Times, Saturday February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1994 “Border posts closed”

<sup>240</sup> Ghanaian Times, Monday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1994 “Fire arms banned in N.R conflict zone” by Times reporter.

<sup>241</sup> Kpassa is a town in the northern volta region closer to the districts around Bimbilla in the Northern Region

<sup>242</sup> Ghanaian Times Saturday February 12, 1994 “Police impound large consignment of arms... Bound for the war zone” from Kush Agudetse,

<sup>243</sup> On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, the police also intercepted a lorry filled with Gonjas carrying weapons of different nature near Salaga. Just the following day on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the task force returned fire and dispossessed some group of Konkomba engaged in indiscriminate shooting of inhabitant of Banja village. There was also the report of an arrest of some Dagombas who had gone on rampaged burning down the Konkomba villages at Katani and their arms seized

to the media after a member of the task force had accused them of committing atrocities. Their release to the press and captured by the *Ghanaian Times* noted that “As leader of the intervention force, the Brigade Commander’s warnings should have been directed at all the warring factions and not only the Konkombas”.<sup>244</sup> After often times, the Konkombas have often alleged bias as a result of the fact that they have less of their people in top government positions and even less in the security institutions which had made them more susceptible to discrimination during the 1994 conflict.<sup>245</sup>

There were as many as 12 parliamentarians from the invading allied forces and three from the Konkomba in parliament. The Konkombas had no member of their ethnic group as a minister of state unlike some members from the Dagomba or Nanumba ethnic group.<sup>246</sup> By virtue of their positions in government, they were able to have access to important information even at cabinet level which always put them a step ahead of them. For instance, Alhaji B.A Fuseini, minister, the Northern Regional Minister was a Dagomba while the Deputy Foreign Affairs minister Dr. Ibn Chambas was also from Nanumba. Pul had described this privilege of members of the invading ethnic group over the Konkombas as the example of an “ethnic infiltration, annexation and usage of public offices and/state power and resources for ethnic interest.”<sup>247</sup> He further noted that: “marginalized ethnic groups have cited several instances where seemingly innocuous national institutional structures, systems and political processes have been used against them, overtly or covertly.”<sup>248</sup>

It would seem that for the leadership of the Task force mandated to calm lives and maintain property the perceived charge of favoritism and bias against them smacks off unprofessionalism. The tasked force came out publicly to appeal for calm amidst the allegations and accusation of

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<sup>244</sup> Ghanaian Times February 10<sup>th</sup> “Konkombas respond to Task Force Commander” P.3

<sup>245</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ." (Personal Interview), 2017

<sup>246</sup> For instance, the Member of Parliament for Tamale? Alhaji BA Fuseini was the Regional Minister. Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, MP for Bimbilla and first deputy speaker of parliament became deputy foreign affairs minister. t

<sup>247</sup> Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars." p 70

<sup>248</sup> "Exclusion, Association and Violence : Trends and Triggers in Northern Ghana's Konkomba-Dagomba Wars." p.70



bias. The taskforce commander, noted that *“it is not true that we favour one ethnic group against the other in the process of disarming.”*<sup>249</sup>

Several months into the war, it became necessary for an emergent solution to be fashioned out. Governments budget was reeling from the increasing cost of containing violence and taking care of refugees and displaced people. It was time for a political action to bring the warring factions to the table. Perhaps, the Deputy Commander of the Task Force in charge of operations task force Lt. Col Richy Debrah was right when he told the members of parliament that the war “does not require only military solution but needed political initiative as well.”<sup>250</sup>

### **5.3 The Attempts at ceasefire**

The scale of atrocities had worsened to be allowed to continue. The accusations of political machination and security personnel involvement in the conflicts were not dying down. For instance, the editorial of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper had written about a grenade explosion around the Konkomba Market in Accra and the suspects arrested wore military camouflage dresses.<sup>251</sup> The government came under intense pressure to find a solution to the war, most of these calls were asking for an investigative peace committee. The Asantehene<sup>252</sup> had on his own volition invited members of the warring factions to get them to renounce violence on three occasions.<sup>253</sup> There were press releases and statements from political parties, student unions and members of the clergy.<sup>254</sup> Even more, worrying to the government was the cost of keeping the task force which had been estimated to cost 3.6 billion cedis for three months and was expected to rise as a number of displaced population increased.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ghanaian Times, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1994 “NR task force denies charge of favouritism” GNA

<sup>250</sup> Ghanaian Times, Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup> 1994 “N.R MPs briefed on ethnic conflict” by Fred Osei-Agyeman and Gariba Ibrahim

<sup>251</sup> Daily Graphic Wednesday March 2 1994 “No Conflict is Small”

<sup>252</sup> One of the most venerated traditional and powerful chiefs in Ghana based in Kumasi, Ghana’s second biggest city after Accra.

<sup>253</sup> Ghanaian Times, Thursday March 10, 1992 “Asantehene Mediates in Northern Conflict”

<sup>254</sup> Ghanaian Times, Saturday February 12, 1992 “NPP advocates Commission of Enquiry into Conflict”

<sup>255</sup> Daily Graphic. Thursday, Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 1994 “Cost of ops in conflict areas to go up” GNA

MAP SHOWING DISTRICTS AND TOWNS AFFECTED BY THE WAR



The first significant step from the government towards achieving a ceasefire was the setting up of a ministerial task force headed by the minister of interior, Col E. M Osei Owusu (rtd). After holding a series of separate peace talks, the government delegation issued a communique to the effect that parties to the war had agreed to renounce violence as a means of achieving their objectives. More importantly, the communique underscored the importance of the “cessation of provocative and inflammatory statements...”<sup>256</sup>and asked members of the warring factions to disarm themselves.<sup>257</sup> Whereas the disarmament exercise and the call for a cessation of violence initially showed positive signs, this security initiative of ceasefire was unsuccessful. From my data, I observed three main reasons why the call for disarmament and cessation of violence could not yield the desired results. Foremost, is the timing of the release of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict report. The second reason is the fact that disarmament was largely done in a *laisse faire* manner by the government and thirdly political statements by government appointees did not inspire confidence enough for warring factions to put down their arms. These reasons are further discussed below.

### **5.3.1 The release of the Ampiah Committee Report (Nawuri-Gonja Conflict)**

The call for disarmament had started trickling some compliance when the reports on the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict (1991) was released. As we recall in our discussions in chapter four, government had commissioned the Justice Ampiah Committee to look into the causes of the war between the Gonja and the Nawuri over the ownership of the land of Kpandai. The committee had suggested to the Government to recognize the Nawuri rights to the land in Kpandai, to “elevate the Nawuri chief to paramountcy status and to create a separate district Assembly for the Nawuri and Nchumuru areas...”<sup>258</sup> Even though the report was submitted to the government in December 1991 nothing was made public until the government caused it to be aired on TV and Radio on march 29, 1994.<sup>259</sup>

The timing of the release of the report by the government was in many respects bad especially so, when the recommendation of the report in many respects is similar to the Konkomba petition for paramountcy which had resulted in the start of the war. Thus, the Gonjas and their allies were not

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<sup>256</sup> Daily Graphic, Thursday April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1994 “Factions Renounce Violence”

<sup>257</sup> Ibid

<sup>258</sup> Mbowura, *End of War, No Resolution, No Lasting Peace: A Historical Study of Attempts at Managing and Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflicts*.p.206

<sup>259</sup> Daily Graphic Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1994 “Do not accept Ampiah report”

going to give up their arms readily as that would be seen as a defeat to their claims. Again, one wonders why the government had to wait for almost two years before acting on making the report public? The Gonjas were explicit in interpreting this sudden government action as a deliberate biased act against their claims to the ownership of the lands at Kpandai. Thus, they called on the government to reject the Justice Ampiah Committee report, declaring that any “cessation of Gonja land to the Nawuris and Nchumuru (together) with the creation of a hostile traditional council on it(land) is totally unacceptable.”<sup>260</sup> On the contrary, the Konkombas and other indigenous ethnic groups were emboldened by this report and saw it as a motivation to keep fighting for the goal of achieving a recognition and ultimately create and manage their own traditional councils.<sup>261</sup>

### **5.3.2 The *laissez-faire* attitude of government to disarmament**

Secondly, the call by the minister for the warring factions to disarm themselves was most shocking. The exercise of disarmament is not to be construed as simply laying down arms or turning in weapons to a designated body. Disarmament also includes taking active data of weapons retrieved and seeing to the destruction of these arms.<sup>262</sup> Thus a disarmament programme involves actions which actively encourages weapons to be voluntarily submitted and working to actively assure warring factions that those arms collected will be in safe hands and not going to end up with any of the warring factions. It was, therefore, a huge surprise for the task force to leave the responsibility of disarmament to the leaders of the warring factions.<sup>263</sup> When disarmament is done in a *laissez-faire* attitude, (*bring in your arms when you desire*) warring factions could take advantage of any situation or event which they interpret to be disadvantageous to them and thus can withhold the desire to willingly turn up their arms as in the case of the Gonja when the Nawuri-Gonja conflict report was released to the public. The Government ought to ensure that there is not only the drive to collect these weapons but also to decide what to do with these weapons after they are collected from the warring factions.

In most Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes after civil war, weapons seized or collected during disarmament are often destroyed to prevent the situation of a

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<sup>260</sup> Daily Graphic Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1994 “Do not accept Ampiah report”

<sup>261</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."2017 (Personal Interview) Accra

<sup>262</sup> R. Paris and T.D. Sisk, *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (Taylor & Francis, 2009).

<sup>263</sup> Daily Graphic, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1994 “Two factions sign ceasefire pact” story by Samuel Sarpong

conflict relapse.<sup>264</sup> Even though the disarmament exercise is carried as the first stage of the DDR project<sup>265</sup> in a civil war, its motif and rationale equally apply to most armed conflicts similar to the nature of the Guinea Fowl War. Disarmament is primarily aimed at stopping the continuation of violence and providing adequate security.<sup>266</sup> In most disarmament programs which have been supervised by the United Nations, arms have been publicly burnt on special ceremonies for the public to see.<sup>267</sup> Destroying these weapons have both realistic and symbolic importance, as this has the potential of carrying the image of government in a non-bias manner especially so when some government appointees have been accused in smuggling arms to the conflict zones..<sup>268</sup> One would have hoped that the government would have taken lessons from its inactions and learned from the attack by the mob at Bimbilla on the Bimbilla police station in January 1994, where about 500 rifles confiscated in 1981 in the Pito War between the Konkombas and the Nanumbas were ransacked. Ultimately, with the such number of arms looted and in civilian domain, allowing ethnic leaders to lead the charge for generally disarming their members offer little hopes for peace and security.

It is important to make the point that there were some signs and records of warring ethnic groups voluntarily handing in their weapons to the military task force even in the absence of any incentive from the government.<sup>269</sup> This could speak to the nature of the influence of the leadership of the various ethnic groups as they embarked on a ceasefire outreach in the various districts and villages engaged in the conflict.<sup>270</sup>

### 5.3.3 Statements during tours of the conflict zone

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<sup>264</sup> Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (Ddr) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts."2005

<sup>265</sup> The DDR programme of ending hostilities consists of three stages, namely the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

<sup>266</sup> Nina Wilén, "A Hybrid Peace through Locally Owned and Externally Financed Ssr–Ddr in Rwanda?," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 7 (2012).

<sup>267</sup> Look for this reference

<sup>268</sup> Daily Graphic 17<sup>th</sup> February, 19 'Chambas denies allegation'.

<sup>269</sup> Ghanaian Times, Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 1994 "Warring factions start surrendering weapons" Gariba Ibrahim

<sup>270</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana.*

Thirdly, Political statements made by politicians namely the president and some of his appointees especially when the war was at its peak from the month of February to April 1994 did not help in having a successful ceasefire. Some of the statements sought to suggest that some members of the government had ‘soft spots’ for some of the warring factions. For instance, the presidential staffer on Chieftaincy Affairs, Nana Akuako Sarpong had said at a public function that “at one time or the other, communities migrated from one place to the other.”<sup>271</sup> Statements such as the one from Nana Akuako Sarpong could easily be misconstrued by the warring factions as a support to one group. His allusion to the point that everyone at one point was a migrant could be interpreted to be a response to the Dagomba and the Nanumba claims that the Konkombas hailed from Togo and therefore did not have any land rights in Ghana. Perhaps such statements might have caused the information officer of the military task force to note that despite the ceasefire there had been some cases of attacks and counter attacks especially emanating from around Yendi-the spiritual home which happens to be the spiritual home of the Dagombas.<sup>272</sup>

Again, there were journeys by government officials to the war areas -popularly called *conflict zone tours* to inspect the level of damage and also assure the warring factions of governments preparedness to work for an amicable solution. As it turned out, some of the statements made by government officials had different interpretations. On other occasion, these tours to the conflict zone gave opportunities for the chiefs to make statements generally showed a hardline stand. One would have expected the government to use its influence during these visitations to assert their influence not only as the sole monopoly of the power to exercise force but also an entity with the power of curing all the constitutional and legal imbalances which had made it possible for ethnic groups to resort to arms in chieftaincy and land disputes

For instance, in one of the President’s visits to Banda, the President is reported to have advised warring factions not to wait on the government to find solutions to the conflict but rather find a lasting solution to the conflict by themselves.<sup>273</sup> This statement by the president tends to contradict one of his earlier statement at the independence square at the end of Ramadan. The Ghanaian Times reporting on the president’s speech indicated that the president said “*it was the*

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<sup>271</sup> Ghanaian Times Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February 1994 “Akuako: Govt will resolve all land problems” by peter Abban

<sup>272</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 1994 “Warring factions start surrendering weapons” Gariba Ibrahim

<sup>273</sup> *Daily Graphic* “Chiefs urged to ensure peace in conflict areas’ Okyere

*responsibility of the Government to take measures to restore peace and security in the strife-torn areas... and to set in motion a search for long-term solution to the causes of the strife.*"<sup>274</sup> The two statements above by the president showed a big contradiction in what he had said with regards to finding a lasting peace to the Guinea Fowl War. Moreover, while the president was reported to have addressed the people of Bimbilla not to allow emotions to override their good sense of judgment, the Bimbilla Naa, on the other hand, said that "his people are law-abiding and that those who do not want to obey the law should find their own abode..."<sup>275</sup> Such hard-liner statements made in front of key government functionaries could easily have been cautioned. The government seems to talk tough when they speak during functions outside the conflict area while toning down when they come face to face with ethnic leaders in the war area. The inability of the government to be consistent in their actions and reprimand warring factions did not help for a successful call to ceasefire and disarmament.

In what follows, I discuss the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) and how that contributed to promoting peacebuilding and role of non-governmental organizations during the Guinea Fowl War.

## **5.4 The Committee of Enquiry and Conflict Resolution Efforts**

The increasing nature of violence as a result of the failed disarmament exercises as discussed above generated a lot of concern by a cross section of the populace. There were generally two initiatives regarding peace committee in the hopes of finding a lasting solution to the Guinea Fowl War. Aside the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT) which was commissioned by the government, there was also the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) which evolved out of the collaboration of various civil society and community NGOs operating within the conflict area. In this session, I will discuss the methods each of these bodies utilized in finding a solution to the war and the extent to which they were able to fulfill their mandates.

### **5.4.1 The Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT)**

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<sup>274</sup> *Ghanaian Times* Monday March 14, 1994 "Resolving NR-conflict Task for all-President" by Alfred Tamakloed

<sup>275</sup> *Daily Graphic* "Chiefs urged to ensure peace in conflict areas" Okyere

On 12<sup>th</sup> April 1994, the minister of interior announced the formation of the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT).<sup>276</sup> The PPNT had a seven-member committee comprising of two members of parliament, three Council of State<sup>277</sup> members and two members from the security. Its responsibility, according to the minister of Interior, was to “intensify the search for a permanent solution to the unfortunate ethnic conflict in the (Northern) region.”<sup>278</sup> The PPNT embarked on a different set of actions and initiatives towards finding lasting solutions to the Guinea Foul War. On 9<sup>th</sup> June, the PPNT recorded its first success by getting the warring factions to agree to a number of principles for a *permanent ceasefire agreement*.<sup>279</sup> Amongst other things, the new permanent ceasefire agreement denounced the use of violence as a means for achieving objectives of the warring factions. Interestingly, the ceasefire accord was misrepresented by a large section of the population to be a peace accord between the warring factions as it was purported by section of the media.<sup>280</sup> This can be explained in part to be as the result of the desire of the media to put the government in a good light. On the whole, it could be argued that the second move at cease fire after the ministerial task force was successful. By August 1994, the level of armed violence had reduced significantly leading to the House of Parliament to pass a motion to end the six months long State of Emergency.<sup>281</sup>

The second action of the PPNT was to invite members of the warring factions to submit position papers on their claims for which they perceive to be the causes of the war and a possible solution to the armed conflict. The details of their back and forth petitions and counter presentation are beyond this paper as I am unable to discuss the various petitions and counterclaims in details. However, most parts of the petition and position papers are a repetition of old stereotypes and rhetoric which had been mentioned by each side. They bothered around the discussions of who was aboriginal and who was a migrant. Some of these rhetoric’s have been discussed in chapter four where I discussed the causes of the conflict according to the various ethnic groups. Here, I will mention two significant events which are important to this discussion.

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<sup>276</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana*.

<sup>277</sup> The Council of State is a constitutional body mandated to counsel the President of the Republic in performance of his function. Article 89 of the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution stipulates the composition of the Council of State

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<sup>279</sup> Daily Graphic (file ceasefire) Samuel Sarpong “Two factions sign ceasefire agreement”

<sup>280</sup> Daily Graphic Friday July 8<sup>th</sup> 1994 “Permanent Negotiating Team starts negotiating”

<sup>281</sup> Daily Graphic Saturday August 6, 1994 “State of Emergency Lifted”



In one of the Nanumba position paper signed by the Bimbilla Na, the Nanumba overlord suggested that a solution to the Konkomba aggression was for the Konkombas to leave Nanum land and for them “to be subjected to intense education so that they can abandon their violent propensities.”<sup>282</sup> On the other hand, The Konkombas solution to the impasse was for all ethnic groups in the Northern Region to be made to have their chieftaincies.<sup>283</sup> The Dagombas declared that a peaceful resolution could only be reached if the Konkomba compensated their victims for the loss of life and properties.<sup>284</sup>

In December 1994, the daily graphic reported a story of an apology rendered to the Ya-Naa by the Konkomba for sidestepping him in their petition for a paramountcy. The report noted that the PPNT “*achieved a major breakthrough in their efforts to resolve the ethnic conflict in the Northern Region when the two main factions-the Dagomba and the Konkomba smoked the peace pipe.*”<sup>285</sup> The news went ahead to state that the apology was conveyed to the Ya-Naa through the chairman of the PPNT. Indeed, the chairman of the PPNT was reported to have said that “*the Konkombas have accepted the fact that they have slighted the Ya-Naa in his request and did not only regret but apologized accordingly.*”<sup>286</sup> However, succeeding events came to prove that the news report was at best an exaggeration of the events regarding the Konkomba apology as the leadership of KOYA insisted that there was no such apology. KOYA leadership conceded that they were present at a traditional ceremony to perform a ritual in order to appease the oath the Ya-Naa had sworn when he declared during the heat of the war that “never will he set his eyes on the Konkombas again.”<sup>287</sup> To the Konkombas, their presence was a gesture at reconciliation and not an apology.<sup>288</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Evaluating the PPNT**

The call for the submission of position papers as one of the methods of the PPNT had one significant effect on the peace process. Firstly, it eliminated members of the society at the grassroots

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<sup>282</sup> ‘Joint memorandum of the Nanumba Traditional Council and the Nanumba Youth Association to the Negotiation Team on the Ethnic Conflict in the Northern Region’ (June 1994) cited in Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana*, 81.81

<sup>283</sup> *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana*.

<sup>284</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>285</sup> Daily Graphic Thursday December 22, 1994 ‘Dagombas, Konkombas Resolve Dispute’

<sup>286</sup> *ibid*

<sup>287</sup> *ibid*

<sup>288</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

who were directly engaged in the conflict from taking an active part in the arbitration process. For example, the PPNT dealt mostly with leadership of the various Youth Associations as spokespersons and the chiefs who were at the forefront of the controversies. Thus, this limited the discussions to the causes and solutions of the war to those who had the power and influence to act as representatives of the warring factions. Wienia, for example points out that “the position papers exacerbated the legalistic positioning...which produced societal silence because laymen stood behind the authoritative statements of especially of their youth associations”<sup>289</sup>

Secondly the system of petitions and counter-petitions that was adopted proved itself redundant. Yet the PPNT had consigned itself to such an unproductive peace process instead of designing a new strategy after their petition-style arbitration did not seem to lead to nowhere. In January 1995, the Bimbilla Na raised three issues as his final condition for giving Konkombas peace. The first condition was for the expulsion of over 300 Konkomba warlords in Nanum. Secondly, the Bimbilla Na demanded a public apology rendered to him and his subject by the Konkombas for starting the war. Finally, the Bimbilla Na declared his decision not to allow any political representation of Konkomba in Nanum Land<sup>290</sup>. These demands seemed to have broken the camel’s back and triggered a series of violent events. As a result of the latest Nanumba Proposal, the Konkombas refused to attend a meeting with the PPNT after it came to light that the PPNT had accepted two conditions from the Nanumba petition to the KOYA “including a safety assurance and a public apology to the Bimbilla Naa”<sup>291</sup>

Soon there was rumour of the peace process having been broken down as tensions started mounting. Between the period of February to March 1995 was marked by rising tensions and violence which saw a new state of emergency passed in the Nanumba area.<sup>292</sup> The hopes of the

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<sup>289</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana*.p.80

<sup>290</sup> Bimbilla Na Abarika Atta II to The Permanent Team of the Northern Region (09-01-1995) ‘Final Proposal for Finding a Lasting and Permanent Solution to the Nanumba-Konkomba Wars in the Nanumba Traditional Area of Northern Ghana’ cited in *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana. P. 83*

<sup>291</sup> *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana*.p.83

<sup>292</sup> Daily Graphic. 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1995 “Government imposes curfew in Nanumba District”

PPNT finding a solution to the current impasse suffered a blow as members of the committee were visibly taken aback by the turn of events.<sup>293</sup>

A major weakness of the PPNT was its failure to submit a peace report on the root causes of the Guinea Fowl War. A report would have captured the facts on the events leading to the start of the war and a determination or a proposed solution on how the government could resolve the grievances of the various ethnic groups involved in the war. This is no different to successive government commission of inquiry who commissioned in glamorous ceremonies and with flamboyant government speeches with media attention but without the intention of acting on those findings. The Ampiah committee report between the Gonjas and the Nawuri is a typical case.

Ken Wujanji having written the petition on behalf of KOYA could not hide his sentiments on the lack of a report from the government-appointed PPNT. He disclosed to me that:

I have not seen a single report on that. (the GFW) which is unfortunate though. They should have told us who did what because people it was the KOYA who started it. that was what was said alleged. But the let the findings come out and let's know if we have done anything wrong, let them charge us for it. But for the fact that nobody has dared asked me anything, I have not seen a single page on that so I think politicians want to play it safe so that it doesn't appear that they like this group and don't like the other<sup>294</sup>

The machinations and lack of action by the government regarding ethnic conflicts in Ghana have also been attributed to fear of losing future elections. The words of government during intense periods of conflicts did not seem to match their actions when the opportunity to act presented itself. For instance, before the breakdown of the PPNT arbitration, the President of the Republic in November 1994 assured the nation that the government will do everything possible to stop any violent conflict in the in the Northern Region.<sup>295</sup> However, the government's commitment to playing the role of 'a mother for all' has seriously been doubted. The NDC and succeeding governments after it have meddled in both intra and ethnic conflicts in Ghana. One of my Nanumba

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<sup>293</sup> Ghanaian Times 16<sup>th</sup> March 1995 "Negotiation team shocked"

<sup>294</sup>Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."2017

<sup>295</sup> Daily Graphic Friday November 18, 1994 "Govt will stop violent conflicts...says President Rawlings

informants and a member of the Nanumba delegation to the PPNT, Mr. Adam Mashar disclosed during our focus group interview that:

when it comes to politics and tradition, we can't deny that government does have an interest in our traditions. Whosoever is in power will want your vote and they don't care dividing you for the purpose of their votes. What is worrying you at a time is a source of division for them, Chieftaincy problem...its leadership on the political front. One will say if I win I will give you this position, and the other will say that...It's an issue all over the country, the politician can deny it and we can't deny it...<sup>296</sup>

The inertia of the government's PPNT to lead a smooth and a credible mediatory role in the GFW saw to the increasing participation of non-governmental agencies in the effort resolve the conflicts. In my last section below, I will briefly discuss the efforts of the local NGOs in the efforts to mediate the GFW by discussing their methods and results which came out because of their efforts.

## **5.5 The Inter NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative**

The NGOs operating in villages affected by the ethnic violence could not sit on the fence while the deadly killings continued unabated. Initially, their operations were consigned to distributing relief materials to persons affected by the violence and helping to provide social support for the displaced<sup>297</sup>. The deadlock that visited the work of the PPNT had become a source of concern for all. These NGOs, most of them with international affiliations working in the villages and districts afflicted with the violent carnage had to act because of several reasons. Key amongst them was the fact that their original locus of providing local assistance through various development project had stifled. As an international NGO, their continuous survival depended on their utility of their project and therefore the bloodshed was not giving them a conducive atmosphere to operate. These NGOs which include Oxfam, ActionAid, Catholic Relief Services, Red cross and World Vision International gradually moved away from providing reliefs to taking part in organizing a parallel peace process from that of the government PPNT.<sup>298</sup> The NGOs formed a consortium and invited

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<sup>296</sup> “, interview by Ibrahim M Larry, 20th August, , 2017.

<sup>298</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region."2007

a Kenyan based peace facilitator called the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) to help mediate over the conflicts.

One key factor which helped the Inter NGO consortium to navigate the stormy and complex web of issues underling the conflict was the fact that the NGOs had a lot of good will and trust from the warring factions due to their involvement in local development. Indeed, their mode of operation is seen my both sides of the parties to the conflict as instrumental to the realization of peace. For instance, one of my informants recollecting the effect of the inter NGOs to the peace process juxtaposed it to taking a pain killer in a period of migraine. He disclosed to me that the NGOs and NPI involvement in the process *“was what ‘eaaaased’ the tension. It was as if you have some deep pain and get something and it goes down, that was what happened. The Kenyan team! It was just wonderful.”*<sup>299</sup>

Even almost 2 decades after the war, the role of NGOs in the development of this villages has continued unabated. When I asked my Nanumba informants during the focus group interview on why the NGOs command their respect to the point of following their direction one remarked that:

they help in bringing law and order in wherever they stayed. And they think development prevent conflict. So, they are deeply involved in trying to give development initiative. So, they go around where boreholes are needed, they help in ... educational problems, the girl child education thing” and provide financial support.<sup>300</sup>

Below I will highlight on the modus operandi of the NGO and the Nairobi Peace Initiative and how that impacted on the level of cooperation and success they achieved in the efforts to resolve the causes of the GFW.

### **5.5.1 Bottom up approach and face-to-face meetings**

One distinguishing strategy of the Inter Ngo consortium’s peace initiative was its attempt to involve people from the grass roots and secondly to get leaders of the various warring ethnic groups to meet face to face in a peace workshop. Reports and decisions of the meeting sessions were expected to be discussed at the community level by the leaders of the various groups at the peace meetings. Before the start of their mediation, the NGOs toured the strong hold communities of the various ethnic groups in the conflict, namely the Konkombas on the one hand and the Nanumba,

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<sup>299</sup> Waja, "Personal Interview."

<sup>300</sup> Elders’, "Focus Group Interview."

Dagomba and the Gonja on the other hand (\*allied invading forces). (Assefa 2000) categories of people in the communities of the warring factions and invited them to come for a dialogue regarding how the NGOs could continue their developmental work in their communities in the period of the upheaval.<sup>301</sup> The people drawn from the villages were not the popular national leaders of the various warring parties represented on the PPNT delegation. They were community-based elders and influential people in the communities. By passing or ignoring ethnic national leaders in the first meeting, all the rhetoric's which had contributed to the long back and forth proceeding of the PPNT was greatly avoided. A scenario which had helped the warring factions move their rhetoric's from 'positions to interest'.<sup>302</sup> A departure from a top down approach to mediation to the bottom up approach saw to the organization of series of follow up workshops in the districts of Bimbilla, Salaga, Yendi, Tamale, Soboba and Gushegu where participants in the peace process in Kumasi spoke about the need for peaceful coexistence and tolerance.<sup>303</sup> Unknowing to the delegates invited, the agenda for the meeting which was communicated was only a way to get the adversaries to be together in one place.

The first of a series of 6 consultative meetings in Kumasi was held in May 1995 with final meeting leading to the signing of the peace accord in March 1996. At each of the other accords, membership of the delegation kept increasing which eventually came to include chiefs, women groups and national leadership of the various warring ethnic groups. The first workshop lasted for a period of four days. According to Assefa, the leader of Nairobi peace consortium, noted that the first meeting which lasted for several days when the delegates first arrived:

there was no mingling among the participants across conflict lines, even at the meal tables. The Konkomba apparently felt outnumbered by the twelve people from the coalition of their adversary groups, later we were told that the four Konkombas slept in one room to protect each other<sup>304</sup>

However, by the end of the first Kumasi Accord, relations between the delegates showed signs of improvement as they were both made to understand each other's perception and point of view on the nature of damage and destruction of the war. Indeed, the first positive signs of the meetings

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<sup>301</sup> Hizkias Assefa, "Coexistence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana," in *Reconciliation, Justive and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*, ed. Hizkias Assefa (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000).

<sup>302</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region."2007

<sup>303</sup> Assefa, "Coexistence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana."2000

<sup>304</sup> "Coexistence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana."p.170

had gone to demonstrate the effectiveness of the modus of the NGOs. It has been argued that, the platform neutrality provided by the NGOs is a testimony to the fact that strong intercommunal Civil Society Organisation promote peace whiles their absence may allow for the degeneration of communal violence when they eventually happen.<sup>305</sup> More than just by their presence, the consortium had a clear purpose and plan on how to resolve the conflict with another strategy of a clear process anchored on the theme of justice and reconciliation

### **5.5.2 The theme of justice and reconciliation**

Whiles converging delegates from warring faction face to face is not enough to ease or resolve the conflict, the facilitator of the inter NGO consortium was determined to follow a programme which had a record of accomplishment of success. The facilitator of the programme for instance set out to use similar methods which had been used in different jurisdiction for solving armed conflicts such as these. At the root causes of the conflict is the issue of justice. Yet any solution to the conflict which has be a just one must be preceded with reconciliation. Thus, the inter NGO consortium established this parameter and facilitated their workshops towards encouraging open discussions on how each warring faction's claim affected one another. It has been observed that attaining a peaceful solution which is seen as just must be able to critically interrogate claims from different sides in a non-acrimonious manner. Bringing people from the warring factions together in one place and space provided "for all points of view to be expressed, challenged and reassessed."<sup>306</sup> The facilitators recognized that as justice is a sine qua non for reconciliation, it is not in itself an overarching condition. Two hardline positions which had to be reconciled is the claim by the Konkomba of land rights discrimination and unequal social status with the allied invading force's counter claim of allowing their lands to be used by the Konkomba out of generosity. By the end of the accords, through open debates underpinned by the ideology for reconciliation, parties in the war had started to show signs of conciliation. Assefa noted that, one participant of the sessions said *"I got to understand the view points and demands of my*

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<sup>305</sup> Varney

<sup>306</sup> Ada Van der Linde and Rachel Naylor, *Building Sustainable Peace: Conflict, Conciliation, and Civil Society in Northern Ghana*, Oxfam Working Paper (Great Britain: Oxfam, 1999).p.

*contenders...Having understood the root causes and the demands of the other ethnic group, I can explain to my people how to begin to make compromises.”*<sup>307</sup>

On the issue of justice where groups who felt that they have been wronged, the discussions about attaining equity was center on the table., Through the modules of the series of workshops built on reconciliation and justice, a framework was fashioned out to address the claims of each side while at the same instance provide the atmosphere for peaceful coexistence. Thus, the final peace accord which was ultimately signed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1996 where amongst other things the Dagombas agreed to create a paramount chief for the Konkomba as they requested in their petition.<sup>308</sup> However, this paramountcy created came with its own issues. In my next session I will briefly look at the peace accord signed by the Konkomba and the allied invading forces and examine their significance towards the peaceful coexistence of the people.

## **5.6 The Peace accord and its aftermath**

The final Inter NGO consortium held in Kumasi towards the signing of the peace accord eventually attempted to resolve the conflicts between the Konkomba and the other allied invading forces. There was separate agreement between the Konkombas and the Dagombas, Nanumbas and the Gonjas. beyond this bilateral agreement of the Konkombas, the inter Ngo consortium had by the third Kumasi workshop expanded to include other indigenous ethnic groups who were also having problems with their overlords.<sup>309</sup> (I have attached as Appendix 1, the various agreements that have been reached between the various ethnic groups in the ethnic conflict) Here, my focus is on the agreement arrived at between primarily the Konkomba-Dagomba and the Konkomba- Nanumba as main factions to the GFW who had individual grievances with each other.

### **5.6.1 The Konkomba-Dagomba peace agreement**

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<sup>307</sup> Assefa, "Coexistence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana."2000 p. 173

<sup>308</sup> "Coexistence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana."p.182

<sup>309</sup> For instance, there was an agreement reached between the Nawuri and the Gonjas, Gonjas and Nchumuru and Baasare and Gonjas



As it would be recalled, one of the main reason underlying the causes of the Guinea fowl war was the petition sent by the Konkombas to the NHC requesting for paramount chieftaincy for their chief in Soboba in July 1993.<sup>310</sup> Obtaining a paramountcy status will guarantee the Konkombas access to political representation in the RHC, a constitutional body that is mandated to advice government and any agency on matters relating to the traditional institution, customs and land. Amongst other things, the Kumasi peace accord between the Konkombas and the Dagombas have two important provisions which is worthy of a discourse.

Firstly, the agreement recognizes that “Yana holds the allodial title to all Dagbon Lands and he holds same as a trustee in trust for all the citizens<sup>311</sup> of Dagbon”<sup>312</sup>. The effect of this provision is that legitimate claim to *lands by conquest* has been upheld just as it was done in 1978 when the Alhassan Committee declared that “the land the Konkombas now claim should be vested in them is under the Ya-Naa by conquest. We therefore accept the claim of the Dagombas that the area claimed by the Konkomba’s is Dagomba Land.”<sup>313</sup>

The position of the Konkombas has remained on change for a long time. They concede that they do not have any land rights in Nanum.<sup>314</sup> Their demand to exercise authority over areas and lands they call their own has always been made in relation to lands within the authority of the Ya-Naa who the overlord of the Dagomba people is. What remains from the after math of this agreement is whether any other claim to land rights apart from invasion such as long occupancy of other indigenous tribes is recognized. As one of my Konkomba informants disclosed to me almost two decades after the war that “we have no land problems with the Gonjas, we have no land problems with Nanumba, we have a land problem with Dagombas. Until that thing is sorted out, the conflict will never end”<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Jonsson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region."see also Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>311</sup> The word citizens used in the agreement refers to “all person claiming and reputed to be indigenous persons and recognized as such. Currently Dagombas, Konkombas, Bassares, Anufus etc. are generally known as citizens.

<sup>312</sup> Peace Agreement clause 1

<sup>313</sup> Report of the Committee on Ownership of Lands and the Position of Tenants 1978 cited in Maasole, "The Land Factor in the Konkomba-Nanumba Crisis of 1981."p.43

<sup>314</sup> Waja, "Personal Interview."

<sup>315</sup> "Personal Interview."

From the proceedings of the peace negotiations in 1996, it becomes clear that the provisions were arrived at from a dialogue which resulted in compromised agreement. Where one party losses over certain claims and win concessions over some others. The danger to peace in this situation is when there seems to be hard line beliefs and narratives over individual group positions which do not easily go away after peace intervention. A situation which has been argued to be a main challenge for peace especially in areas of intractable conflicts.<sup>316</sup>

Secondly, the agreement between the Konkombas and Dagombas saw a momentous breakthrough when the Ya-Naa agreed to confer paramountcy status on Konkomba. It will be recalled also that, when the fight broke out, and during peace talks, the Ya-Naa has consistently maintained that the Konkombas were foreigners from Togo.<sup>317</sup> Indeed the agreement went as far as to mention that “the conditions attached to the elevation to paramountcy are as applicable to Dagomba chiefs as they are to Konkomba and Baasare chiefs in the same situation”<sup>318</sup> This gesture therefore suggests on the surface that the main reason for sending the petition has been achieved. However, the proclamation by the Ya-Naa to accede to the demands of the Konkomba to give paramountcy to the Konkomba has rather come with some complications and uncertainties. Even when the then Northern Regional Minister B.A Fuseini said at a peace ceremony that nominations had already been sent to the NHC to consider the paramountcy status of the Konkombas.<sup>319</sup> It does not appear that the Konkombas enjoy the same paramountcy rights as does the Dagombas and other allied invading groups as was contained in the peace agreement.

I will explain in my next heading why the paramountcy status conferred on Konkomba is only symbolic and with less significance.

## **5.7 THE EFFECT OF THE KONKOMBA PARAMOUNTCY**

The president was right when he noted during a gathering of the warring factions that a traditional peace ceremony which saw various traditional rites and sacrifices offered will not magically

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<sup>316</sup> Gavriel Salomon, "Does Peace Education Really Make a Difference?," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2006).

<sup>317</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*.

<sup>318</sup> The Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation Between the Various Ethnic Groups in the Northern Region of Ghana-May 1996

<sup>319</sup> Daily Graphic Monday May 20<sup>th</sup> 1996 “...And President warns future troublemakers”

remove all the differences which caused the war to start in the first place.<sup>320</sup> Rightly so, more pragmatic actions are required from key stakeholders to the peace agreement and also the government which has the powers to cause to come to effect all the lofty ideals and compromises which was reached during the peace. On the issue of paramountcy, Konkomba do not enjoy the same paramountcy status as do the Dagombas, Nanumbas and the Gonjas.

It has been claimed by Awedoba that, the Ya-Naa after the peace agreement had given the Konkombas the opportunity to elect three of their chiefs as paramountcy's.<sup>321</sup> However, the assertion that the Konkombas were given the opportunity to elect by themselves those paramountcy has been fiercely challenged. They deny the claim that they were given the opportunity to elect those three Paramountcies. Firstly, they argued that even when their petition requested for one Paramountcy, the Ya-Naa gratuitously offered them three.<sup>322</sup> This move has been interpreted by the KOYA leadership as a divide and rule mechanism. When I asked one of my key Konkomba informant whether their demands were met he remarked as follows:

We had a strategy to ask for one chief. The time table we drew for ourselves was that single chief in Soboba, then after two years, the major clans should also have their own paramountcy's and we build that way until we had our own traditional council... what Ya-Naa did was a smart way of putting spokes in our development. We asked for one and he gave us three, what a benevolent guy!<sup>323</sup>

Secondly, the Konkombas reject the claim that they were involved in the processes for selection and choosing the chiefs who were drawn to occupy those paramountcy's. Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, "2017,<sup>324</sup> This generally points to the difficulties of ethnic groups without a certain tradition or cultural traits to adopt or fashion out a replica of an identity of another ethnic group which gives them the advantage to exercise or enjoy certain privileges. This has been the key debate regarding Ethnicity as either primordial or constructed. In this regard, we observe the Konkomba as ethnic group without a chieftaincy history or tradition aspiring to emulate the invading ethnic groups with the concept of chieftaincy and paramountcy to have a representation into the house of chiefs. However, the current internal wrangling between the Konkombas

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<sup>320</sup> *ibid*

<sup>321</sup> Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace*.

<sup>322</sup> The Konkombas asked of a paramountcy for their Chief in Saboba, however, the Ya-Naa granted two extra making three. Soboba, Nambiri and Sanguli.

<sup>323</sup> Wujanji, "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

<sup>324</sup> "Interview with Kenneth Wujanji, ."

themselves as to which of the three paramountcy's they have is superior to who has been a source of division instead of unity.

Again, a significant fall with the conferment of paramountcy status to the Konkomba after the peace accord making their paramountcy of ornamental value is the issue of land right. There seems to be a contradiction between the two most important provisions in the peace accord. On the one hand the peace accord recognizes that all Dagbon lands belongs to the Ya-Naa held as trustees, however an intrinsic feature of a paramountcy is the ability to exercise control over its land. As the Bimbilla Na and his elder told me "paramountcy goes with land"<sup>325</sup> and that their kingmakers "won't give title to anybody who cannot be given land"<sup>326</sup> This has also been confirmed by one of my Konkomba informants who believes that until there is a clear goal by government as the final power that can give legal backing and implementation to the agreements, the conditions which existed before the war where Konkombas had no land to legally claim as theirs will continue to exist in perpetuity.<sup>327</sup> He recall during our interview the parties to the warring faction met in Tamale 15 years after the war under the auspices of the West African Network for Peace (WANEP) the Konkomba position was unchanged. He informed me of the questions he normally gets confronted with. Questions like peter "*why don't you cover this thing? Whatever you are doing in the Konkomba region (with lands) no body worries you... So, I ask them if gold is found here today, who owns it.*"<sup>328</sup>

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the actions and the inactions of government before, during and after the Guinea Fowl War of 1994. I argued that, the Guinea Fowl War did not happen in a vacuum. There were various events before the war which had cast a shadow of a looming conflict. I discuss the idea that the conflict could have been avoided if there was pragmatic and urgent action from government. I established the point that the system of political administration in Ghana made it

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<sup>325</sup> Elders', "Focus Group Interview."

<sup>326</sup> "Focus Group Interview."

<sup>327</sup> Waja, "Personal Interview."

<sup>328</sup> "Personal Interview."

possible for governments through their agencies and appointees to pick signals of impending danger and to deal with them.

In discussing the actions of government during the war, I highlighted the role of the government in providing security. I evaluated the actions of government in the declaration of state of emergency across the seven districts engaged in the carnage and the effectiveness of the Task force which was dispatched in the northern region under operation 'Gongong'. This chapter also analyzed and provided possible explanation to why the first ceasefire accord failed. I attributed the failure of the ceasefire to the timing of the release of the Justice Ampiah committee Report, the *laisse faire* attitude of government towards disarmament and some of the political utterances of those occupying political power.

I also discussed the efforts of government towards investigating the causes of the war in order to find a lasting solution to the impasse. I outlined the *modus operandi* of the PPNT in dealing with the conflict and the perceptions of the warring faction on the ability and capacity of government to deal with violent clash in an unbiased manner. Furthermore, this chapter also brought to light some of the activities of non-state actors such as the NGOs and civil society in working to promote peace. I showed that, the inter NGO consortium which was formed by local NGOs with the professional support of the Nairobi peace initiative had a more pragmatic approach in their attempts to mediate the armed violence. Their strategy of a bottom up approach in engaging with the grassroots and bringing members of the warring factions face to face was instrumental in easing tensions. Lastly, I argued that the Inter consortium had a clear goal and theme based on intellectual and proven methods of conflict resolution. Their approach and focus on reconciliation and justice was instrumental in seeing to the birth of a peace agreement in May 1996.

The final part of my discussions in this chapter discussed the effect of two critical provisions of the Kumasi peace accord between the Konkombas, the Baasare and the Dagombas. The discussions showed a possible contradiction between two important clauses in the agreements regarding the recognition of all lands belonging to the Ya-Naa and the fact that the Ya-Naa had agreed to give paramountcy's to the Konkomba and Baasare whose status is applicable to other paramountcy's. I argued that as paramountcy comes with the ownership of land, the three paramountcy's conferred on the Konkomba is only of symbolic or ornamental value.

## CHAPTER 6: REFLECTIONS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

The ethnic conflict that erupted in some parts of the Northern Region about two years ago caused anguish and has left deep pains and scars...Despite all the affections, integration and the long history of neighbourliness, when emotions took over the best part of the people, they were ready to go to war and kill to establish superiority over one another. Thankfully, the people have seen the senseless nature of the war and the fact that the end of it all, there were no victors or vanquished.<sup>329</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter seeks to provide a summary of the major discussion in the various chapters of this thesis. It also shares my reflections and contributes to the general theoretical and conceptual discussions of ethnic conflict. Lastly, this chapter also shares my analytical findings regarding the Guinea Fowl War and offer some insights for future studies on the state and ethnic relations in Northern Ghana.

### 6.2 Chapter Summaries

This thesis is written as a historical piece of research which so far, has narrated, described and analyzed two main research questions. Chapter four discussed the first research question of finding out the main causes of the war as perceived by the parties. We established in the discussions that, even though the war was widely seen as an armed conflict between the Konkomba and the Nanumba, it drew in different ethnic groups to fight on each side as allies.<sup>330</sup> In chapter five, this study discussed the second research question by assessing the actions and inactions of government before, during and after the Guinea Fowl War. The chapter also assessed how the various actions taken by the government and their inactions have either contributed to peace or saw the continuation of violence.

In my quest to situate the topic of this thesis in context, chapter two of this research reviewed written academic materials on ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana in general and the Guinea Fowl War. To recall, my analyses of the chapter categorized the written materials on the causes of the war into three perspectives. First is the *colonial project school of thought*, the *ethnicity and the social school of thought* and thirdly, the *state-centric approach* explanations to understanding

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<sup>329</sup> The Daily Graphic, Monday May 20<sup>th</sup> 1996 Editorial “Peace Efforts Sealed”

<sup>330</sup> The Konkomba had the Baasare and the Nawuris fighting by their side (this group a termed as allied indigenous forces) whiles the Nanumbas, Dagombas and the Gonjas (I referred to them the allied invading forces)

ethnic conflicts. The second part of chapter two also presented the conceptual discussions on the causes of ethnic civil wars and how they can be resolved. The *minority mobilization theory* as forwarded by Gurr<sup>331</sup> and the theories about composition and conduct of government in arriving at peace after a civil war were also discussed.<sup>332</sup>

Drawing upon diverse sources of data for this research, my chapter three presented research design and methodology in interrogating the research questions to this research. In my analyses of the main causes of the and assessing government's actions and inactions, I reviewed a wide range of primary sources both written and unwritten as well secondary publications. Archival documents, Newspaper articles, documents from the NRHC and oral interviews were used in presenting and analyzing my discussions of this thesis. It has been argued that using a wide range of sources helps to minimize the pitfalls which accompany any one source.<sup>333</sup> For instance, written materials I found at the NRHC gave me a lot of insights about the government's relationship with the chiefs who enjoyed paramountcy status. On the other hand, my meticulous use of oral accounts and newspaper articles aided me in developing a chronology of events and actions which could have been problematic had I depended solely on oral interviews.

### **6.3 Reflections and analytical contribution**

In this section, I will present the general reflections, themes and conclusions on my research questions discussed in both chapters four and five. My presentation will give a reflection on causes of the Guinea Fowl War and how it relates to the conceptual framing of the general causes of ethnic violence. Secondly, I shall analyze the actions of government and its agencies in preventing, managing and resolving ethnic conflicts and suggest ways government can increase their effectiveness in dealing with ethnic violence.

In my discussions on the causes of the Guinea Fowl War, it becomes apparent that there is no one single factor as the major cause of the war. Colonialism, ethnicity and state policies regarding chieftaincy, land rights and access to political and economic institutions have all contributed one

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<sup>331</sup> Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945."

<sup>332</sup> Gurses and Rost, "Sustaining the Peace after Ethnic Civil Wars."; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set."

<sup>333</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*.p332

way or the other in seeing to the flourishing of the conditions necessary to result in armed ethnic conflicts.

### **6.3.1 Redefining the role of colonialism**

Colonialism through British colonial policy of indirect rule had used communities who had had an established and centralized tradition of chieftaincy to rule the native people irrespective of their different ethnic affiliation. It appears that some of the centralized or invading ethnic groups might have interpreted these privileges in colonial times as their birthright even in modern times. From the archival sources reviewed, one could glean that the colonial officers sometimes did not have a grasp of the understanding of the local people. For instance, during population census, native ethnic groups were counted without distinctions of their peculiar ethnic group<sup>334</sup>. Moreover, the focus of discussion has now shifted to whether colonial influences should have a bearing on the post-colonial modern state.

The 1992 fourth Republican constitution guarantees the right of the chieftaincy institution in Ghana and tries to insulate it from political control.<sup>335</sup> Whereas colonialism for the sake of financial and administrative convenience placed some ethnic groups above others, the modern democratic state with the concept of citizens and not subjects, cannot continue to view some members of an ethnic group more relevant than others.

Does the modern state see the colonial way of resourcing some ethnic groups above others based on lack of a tradition of chieftaincy as a good practice? An attempt to answer this question brings us to two key conceptual discussions below regarding ethnicity and the role of respective governments' in ethnic civil wars.

### **6.3.2 Ethnicity as a form of classification**

The debate about the role of ethnicity in conflict is one of the major point of research in relation to causes of civil war or ethnic violence. With regards to the Guinea Fowl War, the relevance of ethnicity is invoked in two ways. First is the conceptualizing of ethnicity as a process of

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<sup>335</sup> The 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, Article 270(1-2)



communicating differences.<sup>336</sup> The second is found in the academic debate of primordial vs the instrumentalist notions of constructing ethnicity. The Konkombas in sending their petition for a chieftaincy paramountcy invoked ‘linguistic and cultural differences’ as one of their markers to evoke an ethnic boundary.<sup>337</sup> Even though the Konkombas themselves are by no means one set of homogenous people, they seem to be engaged in the rubrics of identity politics where internal differences are ‘under communicated’ in the bid to delineate boundaries.<sup>338</sup> In a similar vein, invading ethnic groups cling on their traditional heritage of chieftaincy together with historical narrations about their origin to argue for the exclusion of other indigenous ethnic groups without an established tradition of chieftaincy. As we have seen in our discussions in chapter four, the Ya-Naa not only rejected the authenticity of the historical origins of the Konkombas but he questioned their claim for a paramountcy as he noted “Chieftaincy is unknown to the Konkomba traditions and culture.”<sup>339</sup>

The Guinea Fowl War has shown that ethnic groups are not static in their development. Cohen, an ardent instrumentalist has argued that one of the aims of ethnicity and ethnic organization is found in its political functioning.<sup>340</sup> The formation of KOYA in the 1980s as an elite ethnic association has been the mastermind of Konkomba activism. We have seen how the Konkomba ethnic group hitherto described as stateless and without chiefs have evolved and developed themselves as a chiefly group with the aspiration of having their own traditional council. As Talton had observed, the Konkomba activism in demanding for a paramountcy and going to war because of that shows how African groups can “define their own ethnicity and political status.”<sup>341</sup> As a result, ethnicity has increasingly become a vehicle where an identifiable group aspire, to access power.<sup>342</sup>

However, the resolve of the Konkombas to copy similar modes of chieftaincy of other established traditions which had been long established for centuries has brought fresh problems to the

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<sup>336</sup> Thomas Hylland Erikson, *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Anthropological Perspectives* (London: London: Pluto Press, 2010), p15

<sup>337</sup> Skalnik, "Political Anthropology of History: The Case of Nanun, Northern Ghana." p.60

<sup>338</sup> Thomas Hylland Erikson, *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Anthropological Perspectives*, 3rd ed. ed., Anthropology, Culture and Society (London: Pluto Press, 2010), p176

<sup>339</sup> Responds to the KOYA petition by the Ya-Naa cited in Skalnik, "Political Anthropology of History: The Case of Nanun, Northern Ghana." 2014

<sup>340</sup> Abner Cohen, ed. *Intriduction: The Lesson of Ethnciity*, Urban Ethnciity (London: Tavistock, 1974).

<sup>341</sup> Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*. p

<sup>342</sup> Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set." 2009 p. 335

Konkombas. Unlike the Dagombas and the Nanumbas whose chieftaincy tradition has an established hierarchical order with a line of royal families since their inception in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Konkombas do not have a similar tradition. This for example has often caused misunderstandings concerning paramountcies given to Konkomba village chiefs by the Ya-Naa at Soboba, Nambiri and Sanguli. KOYA president said to me that none of the paramountcies knew which amongst them is senior in terms of authority.<sup>343</sup> This development in the relations of the Konkombas diverts our minds to the global indigenous peoples' movement and the rights of all indigenous peoples "to be different, to consider themselves different and to be respected as such."<sup>344</sup> The question which lingers on is whether the numerous historically non-centralized states in Ghana without a well-defined system of chieftaincy and paramountcy will be able to have access to important resources like land ownership rights and the NRHC should they decide to be different and hold on to their non-centralized traditions. This topic will be interesting for further research on ethnic relations in Northern Ghana with the classification and categorization of ethnic groups as 'indigenous' and 'invading'.

### **6.3.3 The State and Ethnic configuration of Power**

It has been argued that ethnicity alone is not a sufficient cause for ethnic tensions and violence.<sup>345</sup> What seems to drive ethnicity and ethnic affiliations to be used as a vehicle for armed violence is when access to state institutions of power are influenced by one's ethnic background<sup>346</sup>. The modern Ghanaian state has through various government policies and actions seen the rise of ethnic tensions in the Northern Region. The military SMC government's action of placing all lands in the Northern Region, formerly in the hands of the state, to the invading ethnic groups was instrumental in sowing seeds of rebellion amongst the indigenous groups like the Konkomba and Bassare. The current provision of the 1992 constitution with regards to the composition and powers of the Regional House of Chiefs has made the exclusion of ethnic groups in those Houses a reason to agitate for reforms. The powers and the functions of the RHC as provided in chapter 22 of the 1992, 4<sup>th</sup> Republican constitution renders any ethnic group without a representation in the house

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<sup>343</sup> Dubabi, "Personal Interview with Koya President."

<sup>344</sup> UN, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," in *07-58681*, ed. United Nations (New York: UN, 2008).p.2

<sup>345</sup> Gurses and Rost, "Sustaining the Peace after Ethnic Civil Wars."2013

<sup>346</sup> Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set."2009.p335

to be virtually insignificant. As a result, the Konkomba and other indigenous tribes are deemed not to have lands of their own and are considered as subjects of the four invading ethnic groups in the northern territory of Ghana. Gurr asserts that “grievances about differential treatment and the sense of group cultural identity provide the essential bases for mobilization.”<sup>347</sup> Perhaps this explains why KOYA an elitist ethnic association, to ask for recognition and respect as a distinct ethnic group by having their own paramountcy which qualifies them for a seat in the NRHC.

## **6.4 Findings**

Below I present my general findings regarding this thesis.

### **6.4.1 Conflict prevention, Security and Resolution: The state and civil society**

The state through its power to exercise monopoly of force and the control of intelligence is in a better position to prevent an open escalation of grievance into armed conflict. In the case of Ghana, there is a well-structured security mechanism, from the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI) at the national level to regional and district security councils at the local level. Despite various signs of a looming ethnic war in the case of the GFW of 1994, it appears from our discussions in chapters four and five that the government was not proactive enough in stemming the tide to diffuse the tension before it exploded.

When violence broke, the security services were instrumental in containing the violence. However, the extent of sophisticated arm use by the various ethnic groups posed a huge challenge to the task force. Some members of the government belonging to either side of the warring factions have also been accused of organizing and smuggling arms to the conflict areas. In some instances, information regarding security strategies by the task force to contain the violence were leaked by top members of the warring factions in government. A phenomenon which lends credence to the assertion that the modern state is not an ethnically neutral actor and that political elites may favour co-ethnics when they decide who to share their resources with.<sup>348</sup> Having Information which is

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<sup>347</sup> Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945." 1993 p.167

<sup>348</sup> Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set." 2009 p.317

deemed strategic no doubt has become a key resource in an ethnic organization and those who are in possession of it seems to be a step ahead of their counterparts.

With regards to conflict mediation and resolution, our discussions in section 5.2 of chapter five have revealed that the government's peace committee is not always trusted. More than that, the strategies employed by conflict mediating committees are as effective as their membership composition. The approach by the government's- PPNT in resolving the conflict was at best ineffective. When the inter NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace initiative entered the conflict mediation with an effective strategy anchored on the themes of reconciliation and justice, they received much trust from the warring factions and helped to reduce the likelihood of renewed violence. Their superior strategy of a post-war peace could be argued was dependent on the procedural and distributive justice approach to a lasting peace agreement.<sup>349</sup> Issues regarding how negotiations are conducted and how 'benefits and burdens' are allocated are critical in the outcome of peace agreements.<sup>350</sup> The most important detail of the Kumasi accord shows the presence of the above ingredients in the final documentation. Suffice it to add that, the bottom-up approach which contrasted with the PPNT's engagement with top ethnic group leaders was instrumental in widening the positive impact of the inter NGO consortium.

Despite the important role of civil societies in the field of development and peace in the modern state, their success really does depend on the commitment of the government to provide the enabling atmosphere for them to thrive. Even as the peace agreement signed resolved to grant the Konkombas and the Baasare paramountcy status equal in status and power to that of the other Dagombas, the Nanumbas or the Gonjas, this solution remains a mirage. To make this a reality, there must be some legal and constitutional amendment to recognize the status of historically non-centralized states in access to lands and representation on quasi-governmental institutions like the NRHC. Until this legal framework is initiated and executed by the government the paramountcy granted to the Konkomba remains ornamental with little or no significance,

The critical question is whether the government has the political will to prosecute this agenda. Two options seem apparent to the government in sustaining the peace after the Guinea Fowl War. First,

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<sup>349</sup> Cecilia Albin & Daniel Druckman, "Equality Matters: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 2 (2012).p156

<sup>350</sup> "Equality Matters: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars."p156

the government may choose to exterminate the discrimination to reduce the likelihood of another violent conflict. The second option may be to continue to allow the discrimination to prevail especially so when the situation “seems amenable to post-war reconciliation.”<sup>351</sup> In the case of the Guinea Fowl War, it seems the government preferred the latter. However, as long as a high level of discrimination persists, peace in the aftermath of an ethnic violence remains endangered.<sup>352</sup> Perhaps the relative quiet and peace between the Konkomba on the one part and the Dagombas, Nanumba and Gonja on the other since the signing of the peace accord is not the end of the story. Wiener describes the situation as ‘ominous calm’ as the title of his book in describing the relationship between the Konkomba and the Nanumba.<sup>353</sup> It seems that the strategy of confrontation from the Konkomba is shifting from combating ethnic discrimination by conventional warfare to the proverbial saying of the pen is mightier than the sword.<sup>354</sup> KOYA leadership believe that one day, these may end when they have a lot of their sons and daughters in influential positions.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has narrated, described and analyzed the causes of the GFW as perceived by parties of the war. It has also discussed actions of the government before, during and after the war. The war was primarily fought over issues regarding chieftaincy and ethnic recognition. Both issues are germane to having access to resources such as land and representation on quasi-governmental institutions.

The African continent has witnessed several ethnic and civil wars regarding ethnic discrimination. These have seen several attempts at explaining the causes of these wars with different theories and modules.<sup>355</sup> The key from our discussions is that, ethnicity in poly-ethnic societies is not an end but has become a powerful force through which the struggle to gain access to different resources.

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<sup>351</sup> Gurses and Rost, "Sustaining the Peace after Ethnic Civil Wars."474

<sup>352</sup> Ibid

<sup>353</sup> Wienia, *Ominous Calm : Autochthony and Sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba Violence and Peace, Ghana.*

<sup>354</sup> The Konkombas now believe that through education, they can fight for what is due to them. Their strategy has been to have many intellectuals across the different sectors of the nation.

<sup>355</sup> See Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War.", Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis."; Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945."

In this thesis, we have seen how the composition, powers and the functions of both the National and the Regional House of chiefs have become an arena for ethnic competition. The activities of these two constitutional bodies offer important insight for future researchers. Not least, the registry of the NRHC offers important insight on the type of relationship that between government and the various paramount chiefs in the traditional councils.

Lastly, the government's role in preventing and resolving ethnic conflict is crucial to building sustainable peace. The government must ensure that when it inaugurates commissions of enquiries to investigate ethnic conflicts, their findings must be made public and implemented. Far too often, these reports of enquiries into ethnic conflicts are not published and those that get released do not get implemented. This phenomenon breeds mistrust from the citizenry. More so, we have also underscored the importance of local NGOs in fostering communal peace and helping to provide development. Their success in making headway is dependent on whether there is cooperation between state and NGOs as partners in providing the expensive commodity of peace and development to the communities they serve.

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Peter Waja 18-08-17, Saboba, Northern Region

Philip Dubabi 18-08-17

Alhassan Dasaana 19-08-17

Alhaji Razak El-Alawa. 31-08-17

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**APPENDIX 1: TEXT OF PEACE AGREEMENT**

**APPENDIX 2: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE**

# Appendix 1: Text of Kumasi Peace Accord

## **KUMASI ACCORD ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since November 1994 the inter-NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) have been organising and facilitating a series of peace and reconciliation consultations and workshops among the warring ethnic groups in Northern Ghana.

Follow-up and Planning committees were formed from the different ethnic groups in the region to work the NPI and the Consortium. Between May 1995 and April 1996 hve meetings and consultations were organised in Kumasi as well as numerous others in Bimbilla, Gushegu/Karaga, Saboba, Salaga, Yendi, and Zabzugu/Tatale aimed at creating consensus on the need for peace and reconciliation, building confidence among the warring ethnic communities, as well as searching for solutions to the outstanding issues of conflict underlying the wars.

At the fourth Kumasi meeting, 48 delegates from seven ethnic groups constituting chiefs, PPNT delegates, opinion and youth leaders were invited to work towards the search for durable resolution to the conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana. The NPI facilitated a series of bilateral and multilateral negotiations aimed at identifying the issues clearly and finding solutions that are acceptable to all the parties involved. On February 29, 1996, the delegates severally and jointly agreed to a draft document which outlined the agreements reached on the contentious issues presented in the negotiations.

The draft agreement was then taken by the delegates to their respective communities for

extensive consultation, discussion and feed back with all segments of their community. After four weeks, the delegates returned to Kumasi to report on the outcome of their consultation processes, to incorporate into the draft agreement the feed-back and amendments generated by the consultations, as well as, when necessary, to renegotiate the draft agreement. After these processes, on March 30<sup>11</sup> 1996, the delegates signed the following document which was called the Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation Between The Various Ethnic Groups In The Northern Region of Ghana.

### **PREAMBLE**

WE, the Bassare, Dagomba, Gonja, Konkomba, Nanumba, Nawuri and Nchumuru delegations:

MEETING together at the Peace and Reconciliation Consultations held in Kumasi in February and March 1996;

HAVING heard, considered, discussed and debated the demands each group had against each other as adversaries during the Northern Region conflict;

BELIEVING that all ethnic communities have a crucial role to play in the building of peace;

DETERMINED to resolve all outstanding issues between us and to lay the foundation for a durable and stable peace for sustainable development;

CONVINCED that it is in the best interest of our respective people that we create an enabling atmosphere of peace that will foster social re-integration, mobility, economic cooperation and development as individuals and as groups;

ACCEPTING that our individual and group aspirations of development can only be achieved in an atmosphere of forgiveness, moderation, compromise, cooperation and the peaceful resolution of our differences;


NOW AGREE as follows:

## **AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE DAGOMBAS, KONKOMBAS AND BASSARES**

The present scheme of land tenure in Dagbon reflected in the customary laws, usages and practices is non-discriminatory and satisfies the aspirations of all citizens of Dagbon regardless of ethnic background. It is recognised that the Ya-Na holds the allodial title to all Dagbon lands and he holds same as a trustee in trust for all the citizens of Dagbon. The divisional chiefs whether they are Dagombas, Konkombas, Bassares etc are the caretakers of the land and all citizens through their respective divisions have a birth-right of equal and unimpeded access to the land in accordance with customary law. In this context the term "citizens" refers to all persons claiming and reputed to be indigenous persons and recognised as such. Currently Dagombas, Konkombas, Bassares, Anufos etc. are generally known as citizens.

- 2 We are appreciative of the Ya-Na's gesture to confer paramountcy on Dagomba, Konkomba, Bassare etc. chiefs and note with satisfaction that the conditions attached to the elevation to paramountcy are as applicable to Dagomba chiefs as they are to Konkomba and Bassare chiefs in the same situation.
- 3 We note with satisfaction that even before the conflict Konkomba, Bassare and Anufo chiefs had representation in the Dagbon Traditional Council. We also note that the participation of these chiefs in the Dagbon Traditional Council was interrupted when the conflict broke out. We agree that the said chiefs ought to resume their active participation in the work of the Traditional Council.
- 4 We declare and affirm our acceptance and observance of the rules, customs, practices and usages regarding the institution of chieftaincy in Dagbon and that without discrimination all chiefs in Dagbon, be they Dagombas, Konkombas, Bassares, Anufos, etc. are entitled to exercise all powers, jurisdiction and authority reserved for chiefs under customary law.

In particular we affirm that all chiefs in Dagbon, save and except as custom or the law may limit, are entitled to exercise all rights and powers in the following matters, namely:-

- a. the creation and approval of new settlements in the area of jurisdiction
- b.  enforcements of lesser chiefs or head men in the area of jurisdiction

the prerogative to adjudicate upon certain disputes in the area of jurisdiction

- c. entitlement to jurisdictional allegiance from subjects in the area of jurisdiction.

- 5 We will respect and be sensitive to the respective religious subscribed to by our people and we shall do nothing that will directly or indirectly offend, impugn or ridicule each other's religion.
- 6 We decry the spiral of arms and ammunition build-up in the Northern Region and affirm our readiness and determination to stem their flow into the region.
- 7 We declare that we shall cooperate fully in bringing about and facilitating a complete reconciliation of our people in accordance with the tenets of our customs. We note in particular the restrictions on the movement of Konkombas and Bassares in Tamale and other areas in the Region and agree that we shall implement such appropriate measures as may be found efficacious to ease the problem.
- 8 As an assurance to our continued peaceful co-existence and collaborative relations we undertake to cease all provocative acts, utterance and particularly publications in the media that may inflame passions and lead to breaches of security in our areas.
- 9 We recognise and accept the value of confidence-building in our efforts to structure and entrench peace and we therefore agree that in all our dealings with each other we shall demonstrate absolute good faith, sincerity and commitment to peace.

## **AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE KONKOMBAS AND NANUMBAS**

Nan umbas, who are indigenous and sole owners of the land in Nanun, do recognise the Konkombas as an important non-Nanumba community and brothers in development who seek the well-being of the district and whose status, rights, duties and obligations are traditionally recognised and defined under Nanun customary law and usage.

- 2 Konkombas shall be allowed to freely choose their headmen to be blessed by the Bimbilla-Naa or his delegated divisional authority, provided this will not conflict with the interest of the Bimbilla-Naa and/or the Princes of Nanun.

- 3 Representation at administrative and political decision-making processes shall be by merit and following due process.
- 4 We declare that we shall cooperate fully in bringing about and facilitating a complete reconciliation of our people in accordance with the tenets and practices of our traditions. We note in particular the restriction on the movement of our peoples in Namu and all the other areas in the Region and agree that we shall implement appropriate measures as may be found efficacious to ease the problem.
- 5 Land ownership is not in dispute with the Bimbilla-Naa as the paramount chief and allodial owner of all land in Nanumba as accepted by the Konkombas.
- 6 Paramountcy is the preserve of eligible Nanumbas.
- 7 We shall accept regulations from the Nanumba Traditional Council with Konkomba representation, which, with the help of ecological experts, regulates land use, land tenure and settlement patterns for purposes of preservation of the ecology for future generations.
- 8 Customary pacification in respect of river gods, land gods and groves should only be performed by the recognised land and fetish priests or Tindanas of Nanumba.
- 9 We agree to refrain from the practice of ethnicising individual criminal behaviour; that is, from blaming an entire ethnic group for the criminal conduct of an individual who is a member of that ethnic group.
- 10 For purposes of assuring security and the avoidance of recurrent inter-communal violence, the parties agree to create committees composed of Nanumbas and Konkombas whose tasks will consist of the following:
  - a. identifying people in Nanumba communities that foment or incite ethnic animosity and violence and ensure that appropriate legal actions are taken against such people in order to stop or deter their behaviour.
  - b. Identifying particularly conflict-sensitive areas and travelling to those areas jointly (Konkombas and Nanumbas together) to educate people about peaceful co-existence and to resolve problems in the areas peacefully so that inter-communal violence does not erupt.
- 11 On the issue of the 365 self-styled chiefs and separatists, we the Konkomba delegation will

undertake, with the assistance of the Nanumba delegation, to verify and ascertain the position of such chiefs and in consultation with our Nanumba counterparts seek a solution that will be satisfactory to both sides.

- 12 We decry the spiral of arms and ammunition build-up in the Northern Region and affirm our readiness and determination to stem their flow into the region.

## **AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE GONJAS AND NCHUMURUS**

The Nchumurus have appealed to the Golas not to frustrate Nanjuro-Wura's application for paramountcy. Gonjas have agreed to cooperate.

- 2 Gonjas have accepted in principle that the Nanjuro-Wura's status had been established as equivalent to a divisional chief. It was circumstances that made him opt out of the Gonja chieftaincy system.
- 3 Gonjas will allow the Nanjuro-Wura's application through Government, for paramountcy to go through at the National House of Chiefs.
- 4 The Golas also agree to support a subsequent creation of separate Nchumuru Traditional Council.
- 5 The Nchumurus will have representation on Northern Region House of Chiefs.
- 6 In order to facilitate these agreements, the following steps have been agreed upon by the two sides:
  - a. The Gonja delegation will immediately brief the Yagbon-Wura and the Kpembe-Wura on Nchumuru proposals and demands.
  - b. The Tuluwe-Wura will liaise with the Mion-Lana (AA Ziblim) who has agreed to act as an intermediary between Nchumuru and Gonja.
  - c. In consequence of item (b) above, the Mion-Lana and Tuluwe-Wura have scheduled to visit the Yagbon-Wura on the 15th of March to concretise the Gonja-Nchumuru peace process.
  - d. The Mion-Lana will give a feedback, subsequent to which Nchumuru will propose a tentative date to meet with the Yagbon-Wura. The date should allow sufficient notice to enable the Yagbon-Wura to assemble his divisional chiefs.

- 7 A preliminary meeting between Ganja and Nchumuru at the highest Traditional Level should open the avenues for the formulation of Peace-Awareness groups/meetings/workshops at the community levels.
- 8 Both ethnic groups will commence organising their peoples for reintegration, resettlement and reconstruction.
- 9 The follow-up Committee will be invited to facilitate the plans/expectations above.

### **AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE KONKOMBAS AND GONJAS**

- We commit ourselves to express respect to each other and refrain from activities that debase or insult each other's people, elders, customs and traditions.
- 2 Konkombas have no claim to Gmtja land or to paramountcy in the same area. However, where there is a large Konkomba community, the Gmtja paramount or divisional chief may confer a leadership title that he deems fit on any Konkomba who will serve under him.
  - 3 We agree that when conflicts erupt or rumours about conflicts circulate, the chiefs and leaders from the Gonja and Konkomba communities will take initiatives to approach each other to investigate the matter and arrest the escalation through respectful discussions.
  - 4 The Konkombas agree to undertake an independent investigation of the causes for the 1994 war between them and the Gonjas and share their findings so that both parties could learn from the mistakes that might have been committed by any side and put mechanisms in place to ensure that the same mistakes are not committed again.
  - 5 In order to encourage free movement in the conflict areas as an element of reconciliation between Gmtjas and Konkombas, we agree:
    - a. That we shall ask our respective chiefs, head men, elders, youth association leaders to ensure safe movement of members of the other ethnic group within their communities.
    - b. That if anyone from another ethnic group is attacked we agree to hold the chief or leader accountable to apprehend the culprit or be held accountable themselves.
    - c. That working groups made up of representatives of all ethnic groups in the area follow up at the community levels

and educate citizens on the need for peaceful coexistence and free movement.

- cl. A peace conference will be organised in Salaga before the commencement of the fanning season involving all ethnic groups in the Salaga area.

### **AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE BASSARES AND GONJAS**

Both sides recognise that the investigation of the Buipe Bridge incident is an essential ingredient in the reconciliation process between Bassares and Gmtjas.

- 2 The Gmtjas agree to undertake an independent investigation into the matter and share the findings so that both parties could learn from the mistakes that might have been committed by any side and to put mechanisms in place to ensure that the same mistake is not committed again.
- 3 Bassares have no claim to Gonja land or to paramountcy in the same area. However, where there is a large Bassare community, the Gonja paramount or divisional chief may confer a leadership title that he deems fit on any Bassare who will serve under him.

### **AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE NAWURIS AND GONJAS**

The Nawuris and the Gmtjas recognise that there are several outstanding issues of dispute between them that require peaceful resolution. The Kumasi meetings have helped both delegations to articulate and identify these issues.

- 2 The two delegations agree to continue the dialogue that has begun in Kumasi in order to create a conducive environment and understanding that would lead to the resolution of the outstanding issues.
- 3 To that effect, the Nawuris agree to intensify their confidence-building and peace-education activities to encourage peaceful ethnic co-existence in their respective communities with the assistance of the Peace Awareness Committee.
- 4 The Nawuris agree to assist, in whatever way possible, in resettling the Gonjas displaced from Kpandai due to the war between the two ethnic groups in 1991, back in the places from which they were displaced.



## **AGREEMENT ON REGIONAL ASSOCIATION**

To underline our commitment to this Accord, and to enshrine the sense of unity that the Accord generates among us signatories and our peoples in the Northern Region of Ghana, as well as to give an institutional embodiment to the spirit of this Accord which can enhance the implementation of the Accord's provisions, we have hereby agreed to create a region-wide association that will be composed of representatives from all the ethnic communities which currently live in the Northern Region. The specific nature and

functions of such an association shall be determined at a meeting of representatives or youth associations from all ethnic communities in Northern Ghana and this meeting shall be organised to take place immediately subsequent to the signing of this Accord.

IN FULL AGREEMENT with the above paragraphs, we the delegates from the seven ethnic communities in the Northern Region of Ghana have signed this Accord on this goth day of March, 1996 in Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

*(34 signatures follow)*

## APPENDIX 2

### GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### Interview with Naa Abarika Atta and his Elders (Focus Group)

- What's their narration of their migration history
- What's their perception of konkombas migrant status from Togo
- Are there some ethnic groups they consider more as friends and brothers as opposed to enemies or feeling of indifference?
- What do they recount of the 1994 wars?
- What made any one of them join the war and what reason reigned supreme
- How has the war impacted their lives?
- Did they get any help or form alliance with any other ethnic group?
- In their estimation who won the war?
- Narration of the accounts of events
- Will they be willing to go into war in a similar situation now? What cause of action will be most likely for them?
- What do they think of the Government or state responsibility in these conflicts?
- Has the government been proactive in solving this conflict?
- What is their perception of the main causes of the war
- Do they think the gov has the capacity of providing answers to the main cause of conflict?
- What do they think will help solve further conflicts between them and other ethnic groups?
- Do they know of the processes leading to the signing of the Kumasi accord?
- Did they receive any information from any one regarding what the peace agreement entails?
- Do they think there will be a time that their ethnic group will have no conflict with others? What will it take for that to happen

#### Interview Guide for Leadership of KOYA

- What is their response regarding their Togo Origin
- What is their view on their indogenous status and whether they are doing anything to correct notions of their migration status
- Is koya satisfied with the current status quo? what is their wish regarding a united Konkomba tribe?
- What will it take to avoid a spectacle of that similar to 1992
- Perception of government involvements in conflict
- Do they see the gov as the single most important force to quench ethnic conflicts?
- What in their estimation can act as a strong explanation for conflicts to end
- What is leaderships perception of the peace process
- Did they find the peace agreement adequate? What would they have wished for
- What in their estimation can end a possible relapse of the 1994 days?
- Any clash of constitutionalism with traditional setup?

- What is their views on government and chieftaincy?
- Can government be completely neutral and not be participating in anything of this nature?
- What in their estimation can result in peace between them and their neighbours.

#### GENERAL LEADERSHIP GUIDE FOR NANUMBA INFORMANT

- Migration history,
- Ownership through conquest
- What is their view on the concept of indigeneity? Do they think Konkomba is Indigenous?
- REPEAT questions regarding their gov n peace process to NAYA..
- Government appointments in Regional Secretary Council and District Security Council? Do they have any impact on these conflicts?
- What about the police and military? Bias or unprofessionalism?
- What do they think will help solve further conflicts between them and other ethnic groups?