



Graduate School of Development Studies

**THE POLITICS OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN
GHANA'S NORTHERN REGION:
The Role of NGOs**

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my LOVELY wife: Aisha; my children, and of course, my Mum and Dad.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGDRS – Assemblies of God Development and Relief Services
CECOTAPS – Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies
CoS – Council of State
CPP – Convention Peoples' Party
CRS – Catholic Relief Services
CT – Conflict Transformation
DAs – District Assemblies
DISCAP – District Capacity-Building Project
DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States
GPRS – Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
IRS – Indirect Rule System
MA - Master of Arts
MCA – Millennium Challenge Account
MCE – Metropolitan Chief Executive
MOF – Ministry of Finance
MOLGRD – Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MPs – Members of Parliament
NAL – National Alliance of Liberals
NDC – National Democratic Congress
NHCs – National House of Chiefs
NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations
NPI – Nairobi Peace Initiative
NPP – Northern Peoples' Party
NRHCs – Northern Regional house of Chiefs
NR – Northern Region
NT – Northern Territories
PNDC – Provisional National Defense Council
PP – Progress Party
PPNT – Permanent Peace Negotiation Team
RHCs – Regional House of Chiefs
32. RTL – Radio Télévision Libre des Milles Collines
SAPs – Structural Adjustment Programmes
TEP – Tamale Ecclesiastical Province
UN-United Nations
WANEP – West Africa Network for Peace Building

ABSTRACT

Ghana is an ostensibly a peaceful state; yet its northern region in particular and the whole of the 'north' in general is beset with violent conflicts which are characterized by both intra/inter-ethnic warfare. These conflicts cannot simply be ignored. It seems the state has failed to impartially mediate to find a sustainable panacea to the conflicts. This created a space for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), generally tagged as politically neutral interlocutors, to directly engage in transforming the conflicts into a form that engenders peaceful and constructive co-habitation among the different ethnic groups in the region.

The central tasks of this research is therefore to investigate whether the involvement of NGOs in conflict transformation in the Northern Region has a potential to end the violence or it was a cynical and self-interested manoeuvre by the state to cede off some of its core functions and responsibilities onto NGOs. Conflict transformation is unavoidably a political issue and requires political decisions to address them. But in these days of neo liberal triumphalism, the state's role is reduced to only the core functions. Even more disturbing these days is that, some of the core responsibilities of the state — provision of security, it seems, though implicit, are getting privatized especially with NGOs engaging in conflict transformation beyond their traditional role of relief services provision.

Particularly central to this study also is to explore and understand how NGOs engage in conflict transformation and whether they facilitate or inhibit conflict transformation. It is also in the interest of this paper to investigate why the conflicts are difficult to resolve despite both the state and the NGOs interventions. I argue that conflict transformation is inherently political and NGOs will be largely influenced by their donors' interests or become state bandwagons in their practice rather than transforming the conflicts into a form likely to engender development.

Chapter 1:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Authorities may try to challenge the credibility of an NGO by arguing that it promotes conflict (especially religious or ethnic conflict) or endangers stability by importing foreign values and foreign donor influences (Jordan and Van Tuijl, 2006: 7)

In the last two and a half decades, Ghana's northern region has experienced, and still experiences, violent conflicts. The state and its local government institutions in charge of security find themselves in a dilemma as the conflicts get protracted and polarized along politics as they strive to resolve them. The conflicts, as local as they are supposed to be, have political undertones which make the state unwilling or incapable of resolving them. The result is that the state has opted to invite Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), given their supposedly 'political neutrality', (Willets, 2002)¹, to engage in transforming them.

As Richmond (2003: 1) argued 'NGO participation in conflict zones is *ad hoc* and privately initiated'. However, in the case of northern Ghana, the NGOs intervention was the state's initiative, at least according to Brukum (2000: 143) and Tsikata and Seini (2004: 32). Conversely, there are other accounts, such as those of Jonsson (2007: 37) and van der Linde and Naylor (1999: 9) who observed that the NGOs themselves appealed to the government to allow them to complement its efforts at resolving the 1994/95 Komkomba-Nanumba war. The 1994/95 war is significant since it marks the genesis of NGOs official involvement in conflict transformation in northern Ghana.

Ghana is a West African country with an estimated population of over 21 million according to the 2005 estimates using the 2000 population census as the baseline (GhanaHome Page)². Ghana is a multi-ethnic state with about 65 different ethnic groups and 10 administrative regions. Of the 65 ethnic groups, about 17 of them are in the NR. The southern part is predominantly Akan who constitute the largest ethnic group (49.1%) and occupy five regions, Ewes; 12% and, Ga-Dangbe;

¹ Advance reading for workshop participants

² <http://www.ghanaweb.com>

8%, both in the South, while Mole-Dagomba; 16.5% based in the North and about 3.9% of the population is non-Ghanaians, mostly found also in the north according to the 2000 population census (ibid.).

Of the 10 administrative regions, three are generally referred to as northern Ghana— Northern; Upper East and Upper West regions. The Northern Ghana suffered tremendously from the British Indirect Rule System (IRS)³ in the 1900s and continue to suffer from inequalities, marginalization and exclusion resulting from successive governments' policies since Ghana's political independence from the British colonialists in 1957.

The northern region (NR) was part of the area designated as a 'Protectorate'³ of the Gold Coast from where the Colonial Masters drew labour for the plantations in the Southern sector. No attempts or little if at all, were made by the colonial governments to develop the north. This was because they wanted to maintain a constant supply of labour for the plantations of the south. The North was thus designated a 'labour reserve' (Adjapawn, 2002: 32; Brukum1998: 118; Langer, 2007: 8), inhabited by 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. This ensured the people in the North were kept impoverished. As we shall now see, there were some changes prior to and after independence in March 6, 1957.

To reverse centuries of discrimination and consequently bridge the inequality gap between the north and the south, 'free education was instituted in Northern Ghana' (Tsikata and Seini, 2004: 19). However, this incentive was gradually removed by successive governments. These developments and other government policies like the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s with its emphasis on the market and with the general severe drought in 1983 (Adjapawn, 2002: 38) greatly but negatively, affected the north most. These consequently contributed in keeping the north perpetually underdeveloped in respect of the south. These unhealthy developments conditioned largely by government policies account for the structural inequalities and continue to worsen the poverty levels in the north. These inevitably permeated and weakened social cohesion in the region. As we have learnt from the common adage that 'a hungry man is an angry man', then, the north, by implication is a home of violent conflicts. This is also confirmed

³ A less developed polity that signs undertaking with another ordinarily a superior power to protect it.

by Goodhand (2006: 16) argument that 'conflict is viewed as a constraint on development, and if any form of linkage is recognized it is the lack of development which contributes to conflict'. This is because the north was consciously underdeveloped by the colonial Masters and the post-colonial state willingly accepted the status quo at least. It is therefore not startling that the NR alone since the last two and a half decades houses about 17 conflicts' (CECOTAPS, 2003: 2; Pul, 2003, cited in Jonsson, 2007: 5) and many of which have turned violent since Ghana returned to multi-party democracy in 1992.

In light of the above, I argue that perhaps, constitutional democracy provides people with platforms to seek redress for their grievances which otherwise they dare not voice out in a non-democratic regime. Fascinated by the provision in article 12, 'Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms' in the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, there were claims and counter-claims by various acephalous ethnic groups to have their own paramountcy and the right to choose their own traditional rulers. For example, the unwillingness by the Dagbon Traditional Council to grant the Konkombas a separate Paramountcy upon their request as well as the snail-pace response from government to their (Konkombas) petition (Brukum, 2000: 141; Jonsson, 2007: 8) in my opinion made the Konkombas to use violence as a necessary tool to free themselves from the Dagombas and Nanumbas' traditional hegemony. In my opinion, it was probably due to democracy deficit as a result of multiplicity of decision points that delayed government's response to the petition.

However, I should not be misconstrued to mean that democracy is a source of conflict. But, what I do argue is that, the inadequacies of democracy: imbalances in access to power, resource allocation as well as domineering majority makes others feel unsatisfied and will resort to violence if the decision-points themselves are a hindrance to dialogue.

The northern region is Ghana's largest region in terms of land area covering some 70,383 sq. km. It is also the most sparsely populated region with about a total population of 1,820,806. It is composed of 18 District Assemblies (DAs) as local government units. Yet, it is among the least developed regions in terms of infrastructure and there is relatively poor road network. Indeed, the region is the

third least developed in Ghana in terms of human development and per capita, with 69.2% and 57.4% of the population estimated to be below the upper poverty and lower poverty levels of \$2 and \$1 in 1999/ 2000 respectively (GPRS 2002: 138)⁴. Again, about 70% of the total population in the region lives on less than US\$1 per day (Adjapawn, 2006: 31).

Divide and rule as well as neglect and marginalization are the antecedent factors of the present state of predicaments in the NR as Pul observes that the postcolonial state:

is not a neutral player in this game of interethnic exclusion because of the retention of institutionalized structures and systems in the post independent state, which by their very design and intent, have either oppressed, marginalized and/or perpetuated the inter-ethnic inequalities imposed by various accidents of history (Pul, 2005: 73).

In fact, this was also echoed by Duffield (2002: 1066) when he argued that, 'predatory state institutions are seen as fomenting non-conventional, internal, regionalized and criminal forms of conflict'. The case of Ghana is no exception. Deeply accused of partisanship in the protracted conflicts, the state had no option but to actively co-opt NGOs to intervene to resolve or at least transform them (Seini and Tsikata, 2004:32). At the very least, the state accepted an informal NGO-Consortium's appeal (van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 9) to complement its own efforts at resolving the 1994/95 ethnic conflict. And interestingly, the NGOs are believed to be facilitating conflict transformation.

1.2 The Research Problem

However, Jordan and van Tuijl argument (cited above) is parallel to the Ghana's example. Even if we assume that both scenarios about the Ghanaian example are true, the questions that irritate the minds of many are: Does the involvement of NGOs in conflict transformation facilitate or inhibit the resolution of the conflicts in the NR? If they inhibit, how then will the conflicts be transformed so as to bring about the generally desired peace and development in the region which remains the national goal of Ghana?

⁴ Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy

As we learnt in the preceding, the conflicts in the region become complex to resolve by the state because they get polarized along political lines. This perhaps conditioned the extension of a good-will gesture by the state to NGOs to intervene. Interestingly however, conflict resolution is not value-free, but predominantly political. And if the state still wields control over the space within which NGOs operate, how then do the NGOs play the game so that, their role becomes acceptable, first, to the conflicting parties and then to the state in this controlled space? Thus, the challenge is for NGOs to play this hydra-headed role conscientiously. The game is to be played according to the rules: not to step on the toes of the state; to become acceptable to the people in conflict and yet still to stay in tune with donors and their values. It is this complex balancing act being performed by NGOs that this study intends to investigate.

1.3 Relevance / Justification

Development NGOs' involvement in conflict transformation in the NR is perhaps appropriate since there can hardly be development without peace. It was therefore widely welcomed when Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Ghana Chapter of the West African Network for Peace-building (WANEP), opened up offices in 2000 and 1998 respectively in the NR to stem the tide of the rising conflicts which were and still are the bane of development in the region.

However, there is relatively little academic reflection on the role of NGOs in conflict transformation and peace building. Therefore, the central concern of this study is to investigate whether, the ingression of NGOs into conflict transformation after the 1994/95 war in the region was a politically reasonable thing to do or it was one of the cynical maneuvers by both the state and the Western donors to promote the neo-liberal agenda of marketizing security provision; a core function of the state. The research will also seek to find out what kind of power relations exists between the state and the NGOs in the political context of the conflict transformation space in northern Ghana. I argue that conflict transformation is inherently political and NGOs, as aid dependent as they are, are largely influenced by their donors' interests or become potentially state bandwagons rather than transforming the conflicts into a form desired for development.

1.4 Objectives:

1. To explore the role of NGO in the processes of conflict transformation and peace-building in the political space in Ghana's northern region.
2. To investigate the different dynamics involved in conflict transformation and what factors facilitate or militate against conflict transformation.

1.5 General Research Questions

Does the involvement of NGOs in conflict transformation make any specific contributions to the resolution of conflicts in the nr?

1.6 Specific Research Questions

1. How do NGOs seek to transform the conflicts in the Northern Region?
2. Why is it difficult to resolve the Northern Region's conflicts despite the state and NGOs interventions?

1.7 Methods

The study is basically exploratory and used mainly secondary data. The sources of data were as follows:

i. Primary Documentary Sources:

Even though adequate contacts were made from the proposal to the design stages of this research to access information from the two NGOs that are under study, I could not readily come by the information. Thus, I resorted to accessing information from the WANEP website on GHANEP while one Bishop from CECOTAPS sent by E-mail two documents on the project. Thus; the only primary documented information I got from the NGO through attachments in e-mail. I also accessed some information from the CECOTAPS website

ii. Secondary Documentary Sources:

The study relied on secondary documented data. I reviewed existing literature on NGOs and conflicts extensively from journal articles; books, and from the internet.

1.8 The Research Methodology

The research took two NGOs as case studies. These two NGOs are: Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS) of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) of the Damongo Diocese and GHANEP: Ghana chapter of WANEP which both work at transforming the conflicts and building peace among the inhabitants in the NR. I chose these two NGOs because GHANEP specializes in conflict prevention and capacity enhancement of other NGOs in conflict transformation and Peacebuilding as the main project intervention area while CECOTAPS runs an institute in conflict transformation and peace building.

1.9. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is limited to 2000 to the first half of 2007 but not exclusive from the period preceding 2000. Thus; I referred to appropriate episodes in the past and even beyond the first half of 2007 to support my claims when appropriate. Primarily, the study focused on the NGOs' roles that basically aim at transforming conflict and building peace, even though, activities that do not explicitly but also impact on conflict transformation and Peacebuilding are equally analyzed.

Although physical distance no longer poses a challenge in this era of globalization with regards to information flow, in my case, it did. Primarily because; my contact persons in the two NGOs, were not willing to send me information despite that, time without number they assured me of their readiness to open up to discuss anything or make available any relevant documents when I contacted them during the design of this paper. While I acknowledge the unreliable nature of information from the internet, I was very diligent and critical of the type of information I used.

Unfortunately however, even though I proposed in my design that, I was going to interview some NGOs here in The Netherlands to use the results as supplements, I did not carry it out. Of course, not because I was unable, but, because; I did not fancy conflating Northern NGOs' roles in conflict transformation with that of their counterparts in the South.

Although it could be a very good basis for comparison, I did not see it feasible because first, I could not compare primary data with secondary data. And second, I greatly was mindful of the different contexts within which conflicts occur at the

different parts of the globe. Hence; my reason for not carrying out the interview here in The Netherlands as I earlier on proposed.

1.9. The Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized in five chapters. The next chapter deals with both conceptual and analytical issues while chapters three and four focus on the socio-political setting of the NR and the case studies respectively. The final chapter draws some conclusions reached from the analysis.

Chapter 2:

NGOs IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the plethora of theoretical understandings of the concepts of conflict; conflict transformation; state; and NGOs. Conflict has been perceived as all bad and the mere mention of it rings bells of negativity in the minds of many people. To unpack it, I will first elucidate on how it is overly conceptualized; and then turn my attention to conflict transformation. This will also include a review of the concept of the state; and NGO and how they relate in framing this research. This will provide me with a nuance analysis of the data to arrive at conclusions for this paper.

2.2 Conflict

In a pluralist society as that of Northern Ghana, there are, of course, bound to be disharmonies resulting from different interests and priorities. It is in the process of these disharmonies or different interests competing for attention that conflict of interest is generated. The concept is fluid and is being used loosely to refer to different situations by many a writer. For instance, conflict is about life, pointing straight to contradictions as life-creative and life-destructive forces interact. Perceived in this manner, it becomes pervasive in every social unit as argued by Deutsch (1991: 26), Galtung, (1998:71), Zartman, (1998: 145, cited in Varynen, 1991: 1).

In its everyday usage, it is often used in a different sense, to convey the state of violence or dispute. International Alert (2003: 3) observes that conflict can be used to mean a 'debate or a contest; a disagreement... a dispute or quarrel; a struggle, battle or confrontation; a state of unrest or chaos'.

Interestingly, a welter of scholars such as Fisher (2001: 12), Deutsch (1991: 26), Miall (2006: 19), observe that conflicts are inherently a mixture of objective interests (e.g., competition over scarce resources such as territory) and subjective elements (such as perceptions, attitudes and valuing of goals). Conflict, thus

viewed can result in violence when passion overwhelms reason, as argued by Spinoza (1951, cited in Sandole, 1993: 8).

However, Spinoza's observation about the genesis of conflict is an understatement or even a mis-statement since conflict can arise as a result of rational calculations and permutations on gains and losses as postulated in rational choice theories of conflict. Again, the 'Idealists' observe that:

...violent conflict can be the result of many of contributory factors, including learned responses to frustrated goal-seeking behaviour. The range of responses to violence is fairly broad, including 'counter-violence' (in self-defense), but also non-violent means for bringing about change in political, social, economic, and other systems to eliminate causes and conditions of violent conflict (ibid: 4-5).

This is in tune with the violence in the NR because the Minorities expect to emancipate themselves from under the tutelage of the Majority ethnic groups. Therefore, for the purposes of this study and in situating Ghana's NR in the context above, I conceptualize conflict based on Sandole's 'aggressive manifest conflict' which views conflict:

as a situation in which at least two actors, or their representatives, try to pursue perceptions of mutually incompatible goals by physically damaging or destroying the property and high-value symbols of one another; and/or psychologically or physically injuring, destroying, or otherwise forcibly eliminating one another (Sandole, 1993: 7).

Although this conception seems apt, nonetheless it fails to acknowledge the positive effects of conflict. Conflict can open up platforms for dialogue; it is argued and also benefits the elite(s). It is also being used as a 'bargaining ingredient and a way to make the power-holders perceive an unbearable situation as a problem' (Zartman, 1988: 145, cited in Vayrynen, 1991: 1). Besides, conflict is not only destructive as Sandole portrays it. Conflict might be used to maintain internal cohesion as well as support external expansion of the dominant group.

At this present juncture, disputes in the NR, especially those over land ownership and Chieftaincy succession among others, more often than not, degenerate into large scale violence and, almost invariably result in human suffering and material destruction instead of serving as conduits for expression of grievances and opening up of political spaces for dialogue which otherwise would remain closed (Vayrynen, 1991). What is important to note here is that since conflict has both positive and negative trajectories, it is essential to transform violent conflicts into more positive and constructive forms that will generate social change.

2.2 Conflict Transformation (CT)

Conflict has been given a bad reputation by its association with psycho-pathology, social disorder and war. However, it is the root of personal and social change; it is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at. There are many positive functions of conflict (Coser, 1967, quoted in Deutsch, 1991: 27)

Essentially, conflict can produce social change only when it becomes as Deutsch argued cooperative, non-adversarial; non-confrontational; non-violent and win-win instead of competitive, confrontational, zero-sum, and adversarial.

Often times the term CT is used rather loosely and interchangeably with conflict resolution. It is used to refer to various forms of 'conflict resolution or to the process of 'conflict management' (Reimann, 2004: 10). Even though, the dichotomy between CT and conflict resolution is fuzzy; nonetheless, the two are distinct though not mutually exclusive of each other. Conflict resolution refers to the process of addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring that violence is de-escalated. This results in a sustainable peace between conflicting parties. CT on the other hand, is a more generic term and refers to the gamut of activities employed sequentially to engender cordiality in the hitherto tensed relations between two or more parties. CT fosters step by step transition from antagonism to peace and 'is a never-ending process. Old or new contradictions open up' (Galtung, 1996:90). It is also a process of conflict unfolding non-violently and creatively (ibid: 9). The meaning of the term is aptly conveyed in Yeoman's (2002: 39) M.A. Dissertation in which he defined it as 'a development of conflict resolution in which asymmetric conflicts are transformed to address unjust social relations'. All said, CT is used in this paper more broadly to encompass any activity undertaken either in the build up to violence or in a post-violence situation with the overarching purpose of preventing violence from ensuing or alleviating and de-escalating violence.

In the NR as elsewhere conflicts become violent or aggressively manifested. Violence inevitably produces human suffering and material destruction. And in consequence, it poses security threats to the state. What is required in situations of insecurity is '...political space in which the actors and their interests and mutual relations can be reorganized in a manner that permits the control or elimination of violence' (Vayrynen, 1991: 12). But, how can the conflicts be transformed constructively and by whom? Could it be the state or NGOs or both? This question I will return to later!

The various explanations notwithstanding, the concept of 'conflict transformation' still does not automatically suggest positive transformation. Every conflict has stages (Galtung, op.cit; Miall, 2007: 77). Consequently, every conflict does pass through several such stages before it becomes manifested as aggressive or violent conflict. Thus, the mention of CT could even mean the transformation of a conflict from its latent state to aggressive state. Hence, the need to follow up with a complementary explanation to clarify whether it is about the morphing of conflict from its latent state to manifest aggressive conflict or from violent and confrontational to non-violent and win-win type associated with peaceful co-existence. In this study therefore the main focus is on the positive transformation of violent conflict (but also latent conflicts) into constructive forms.

2.3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS)

The term NGO was created by the United Nations, (Willetts, 2000) and was basically used to refer to various pressure groups and international organizations with official status. Literally, it connotes anything outside government. In principle, it could include private business, partnership or even an association.

However, the proliferation of NGOs and their activities beginning from the 1990s or earlier perhaps, was justified as part of the alternative development paradigm. Basically, the state and its institutions through its policy-making were unable or could not address a host of underdevelopment issues (Richmond, 2003: 1; Zaidi, 1999: 259). Economic hardships created by Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), especially in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world with its corresponding increase in the number of NGOs purported to be doing all that the state is not, made the term 'NGO' a fashionable concept. These provoked and continue to provoke scholarly attempts to clearly distinguish voluntary and non-profit organizations from private and/ or business sector institutions. The result of that is the 'sectorization' of the economies into 'Public', 'Private' and what has recently been referred to as the 'Third sector'⁵ or citizens sector'.

NGOs are part of the citizens' sector but not the business sector. This is because NGOs are not for profits organizations while the business sector strives at

⁵ The 'Third Sector' refers to Civil Society including NGOs.

making profits. The ongoing discourse on the NGOs trajectory, among other things, focuses on drawing the dichotomy between NGOs and business entities. The fluidity of the dichotomy is perhaps what influenced Biekart (1999:60) to refer to NGOs as 'a container concept'. The World Bank defines NGOs principally as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (see OED, 2002)⁶. Despite the lack of agreement, all NGOs at least portray certain basic characteristics as observed by Willets, (2002). The characteristics include being independent from the direct control of any government; not acting as a political party; not-profit-making and not as a criminal group or mafia organizations.

NGOs, Alan Fowler (1991: 880) argues, "have a number of comparative advantages over governments in addressing the needs of the poor" (cited in Zaidi, 1999: 262). Given these advantages, NGOs are considered to be especially suited to: promote popular participation needed to eliminate exclusion and inequalities; reach out to the poor and the vulnerable and develop community-based institutions capable of handling conflict issues in a pluralist society like that in the NR.

Situating NGOs in the context of this study, it suffices to conceptualize them as all (usually all formal) institutions including networks that are outside the direct control of the state and undertake community development, provide social services, advocate against human rights abuses and hold capacity enhancement training workshops in participatory problem-solving in rural (but also in urban) communities in order to build a coherent, equitable and responsible civil society.

2.4. The State

A state in the Weberian sense is a body of institutions that has monopoly over coercion in a defined territory (Azam, 2001: 430). This conception is synonymous to that earlier on postulated by John Locke as an "'instrument' for the defence of 'life, liberty and estate' of its citizens" (Held et al, 1983: 10). A state, therefore, is a group of people on a defined territory with government as the symbol of the state imbued with the use and control of coercive power. The army, the police, Prison

⁶ Operations and Evaluation Department, Lessons and Practices No.18 (available

service, etc, are used to as it were, counter any threat of anarchy in, or from outside the defined territory. Of particular significance though implicit in Weber's conception of the state is its duty to its citizens: provision of security through the use of its coercive power.

Ideally, Ghana like any African state after political independence from colonial rule was supposed to knit all the ethnic groups together to provide egalitarian protection to all in order to maintain civil peace as one of its fundamental functions. This conception of the state focuses greatly on its functions rather than its structure or institutional set up which unarguably falls within the scope of this study. The Functionalists thus define a state 'as that set of institutions that uphold order and deliver social stability' (Heywood, 2002: 86).

Essentially embedded in the two conceptions of state above is the uniqueness of the state as the only legitimate body with the monopoly over the use of force and the indivisibility of that preserve. Invariably, the state cannot share its monopoly over the use of coercive power with any other body: real or imagined and is deemed to ensure social stability. From the preceding, it means an ideal state should be devoid of repression, violence and the threat of insecurity.

Paradoxically, the functionalists' conception of state has been criticized by both the Marxists and modern Marxists as the mechanism through which capitalism is perpetuated by its ability to end class conflict. Even rightly so, the state still has the responsibility to ensure social stability because, as peace prevails among various classes it will trickle down to the rest of the society and engender peaceful co-existence between labour and owners of capital. Instead, the Marxists conceive of a state to mean "an institution which exercises power (including repression and violence as well as economic and administrative power) in the long-term interests of dominant classes" (Mackintosh, 1992: 69 quoted in Heywood, *ibid*). This was categorically trumpeted by Marx himself in the Communist Manifesto as "but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (*ibid*).

In both the Marxists and the Functionalists' conceptions, the state is perceived to be the 'Maintainer' of peace and security for its citizens. However, contrary to

that, the state is accused of fomenting conflicts (Duffield, 2002: 1066; Mbembe, 1999: 13) by marginalizing some ethnic groups and persistently neglecting or excluding their elites from participating in the political space, while opening up the space to others to participate.

The state's monopoly over coercive power is eroded and it no longer wields absolute leverage over its citizens because of the marketisation of some of its core functions. Thus, globalization and the neo-liberal reform agenda have rendered the 'nation-state the most extensive political unit in which collective violence is, in most cases, effectively contained' (Vayrynen, 1991: 7). Akin to the erosion of the state's power is the growth in influence and legitimacy of non-state actors which assume complementary roles in development.

Interestingly however, violence poses insecurity to the citizens of a state as well as threatens the survival of the state. Violence is embedded in 'structures and not in specific geographical locations' (ibid: 23). It means that to transform the violence then, the structures have to be transformed. And since the state is manifestly political, it is not 'better equipped to avoid the pitfalls of political engineering and the neglect of the structural context' (Vayrynen, 1991: 2) in which the violence take place. Transforming the structures will suit a neutral third party (Nicholson, 1991: 59; Richmond, 2003: 8). Perhaps, the government of Ghana like Marx (op. cit) opined, needed to protect the interest(s) of its elites in the region. Thus, greatly influenced by the neo-liberal economic order, the state ceded off some space for Non-State actors like NGOs to take up some of the roles: hence; the basis for the state-NGOs nexus in security provision. Therefore, I discuss the framework within which to analyze the roles of NGOs in transforming conflicts in a space controlled by the state.

2.5 Analytical Framework:

From the background through to the problem statement to the justification of this study, it is unambiguous that, the violence in the NR is manifestation of a long history of inequalities. As common wisdom reveals, the problem of the conflicts in the region is like 'the hen and the egg' puzzle. It becomes unclear whether the region is experiencing violence because it is underdeveloped or it is the violence that contributes to its underdevelopment. Ordinarily, I argue that it is both. That is, the underdevelopment and the conflicts reinforce each other even though the

existing literature point to the fact that the underdevelopment conditioned the violence.

Therefore, transforming the conflicts to build sustainable peace and security requires bridging the inequality gaps through poverty reduction. It also requires increasing livelihood options and strengthening civil society by building their capacities and improving statehood through advocacy, civic education and 'watchdogging'⁷

Fundamentally, NGOs' are part of civil society. NGOs wield some leverage among the state and the populace. Therefore, their intervention in a politically polarized conflict makes them more trustworthy as they are largely apolitical. This perception perhaps influenced Fowler (1994, cited in Fowler, 2000b: 659) to describe them as being "ordained to be ladles in the global soup kitchen". This amply demonstrates that NGOs can be accepted by all parties in conflict.

Again, the fact that NGOs work in deprived communities, they are in a position to be relatively more conversant with the local structures and issues that form the core of the disharmonies than the state. Therefore, having identified the roots of the conflicts in the region as manifestations of structural inequalities, transforming the structures and the issues embedded in the structures means transforming the conflicts. Thus; Galtung's (1996: 93) 'Structural Conflict Transformation Theory' amply forms the basis for analysis.

Galtung argued that, 'conscientization and mobilization are precisely the processes needed to transform the interests in a structural conflict into consciously held values'. This means that a conflict can best be transformed and be 'solved if all parties are convinced that they cannot force the other(s) to submit' (ibid). Essentially, to conscientize and mobilize, there is need to decouple and recouple the structures according to Galtung, (ibid: 94).

By *decoupling*, it means cutting structural ties between the exploiter and the exploited by empowering the exploited in order to build autonomy and the capacity for self-reliance. In the NR, not only is it marginalized by the state, but also some elites and majority ethnic groups marginalize and exploit other minority groups. In this context, 'confronting the sources of [conflict] affecting people and

⁷ 'Watchdogging' is a jargon referring to monitoring.

communities on the one hand and promoting nation building on the other' (Monshipouri, 2003: 139) is more appropriate if the conflicts are to be resolved. Decoupling and recoupling encompass a 'multi-track approach, combining efforts that aim at achieving relief, development and governance' (ibid). Decoupling therefore, has to do with all the NGOs' activities which seek to empower the exploited to self reliance.

Recoupling on the other, encapsulates all advocacy work aimed at removing all unjust structures that promote inequalities. This will ensure that relative horizontal structure are put in place to bring about respect for 'human rights instead of repression, equity instead of exploitation, autonomy instead of penetration, integration instead of segmentation, solidarity instead of fragmentation, participation instead of marginalization' (ibid). Given that the state is politically laden and in principle, part of the complexities in the conflict dynamics, only a neutral party – NGOs; could perform the tasks of decoupling and recoupling.

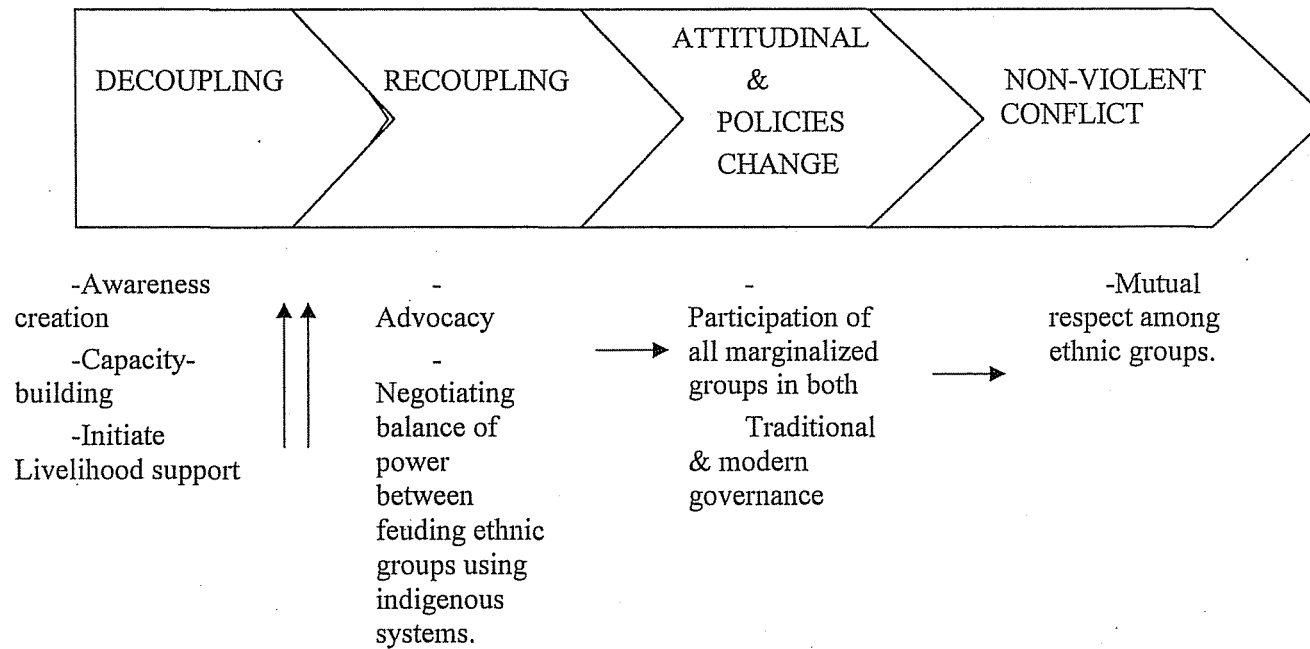
As the NGOs are engaged in service delivery, provision of capacity and skills training and as well advocate for all the virtues preferred by Galtung above, inadvertently or purposefully, they are already doing decoupling and recoupling. Therefore, I analyzed the NGOs roles in advocacy and service delivery and how those contribute to bring about CT in particular and structural changes in general.

Thus, in this study, I borrowed extensively from Galtung's concepts of 'Conscientization (decoupling) and Mobilization (recoupling) in order to shape my analysis on NGOs' role in CT. The intervention areas invariably are advocacy work and civil society building as well as NGOs strategy of participatory problem-solving incorporating development assistance. As we can decipher from the diagram below, CT is an on-going process and encompasses several stages. In the diagram, it is clear that CT begins with creating awareness on the benefits of co-existence leading to transformation of attitudes of the people. This is complemented with capacity-building on non-violent conflict handling dynamics as well as empowering the people economically by increasing livelihood options in order to engender self-reliance.

Again, of particular importance is advocating for changes in unjust policies (but also structural) as well as negotiating with power holders in both the traditional and modern spectrums to ensure equity in the distribution of both economic and power resources. In fact, the decoupling and recoupling must go on concurrently. While these twin activities are being effectively carried out, of

course, the immediate outcome will be positive attitudinal changes in the people as well as changes in policies and decisions that promote inclusion and participation in all matters that affect all. This process – if fully implemented – has a potential to result in the handling of conflicts non-violently. The diagram below is self-explanatory.

Figure 1:
PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMING STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS



Source: Author based on Galtung (1996: 94) idea of Transforming Structural Conflicts.

However, in order to shape my analysis so that we can arrive at some meaningful and relevant conclusions on the role of NGOs in conflict transformation, it is absolutely necessary to explore the socio-political contexts of the conflicts in the region. Therefore, the ensuing chapter will largely be examining the roots of the conflicts.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter clarified the key concepts and illuminated on how they will contribute to frame the research. Galtung's concepts of decoupling and recoupling are form the basis for my framework of analysis. The ensuing chapter contextualizes the NR conflicts paying attention to their roots and the socio-political setting of the region.

Chapter 3:

CONTEXTUALIZING CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN GHANA

3.1 Introduction

In the last two and half decades Ghana's NR has experienced (still experiences) a cycle of protracted inter and intra-ethnic conflicts. In fact, the most deadly inter-ethnic conflict was the 1994/95 Konkomba-Nanumba war also known as the 'Guinea Fowl war'⁸ while the most deadly intra-ethnic conflict was the Dagbon chieftaincy succession dispute of March 2002 which resulted in the gruesome murder and beheading of the Overlord of the Dagomba Traditional Area and the death of over 30 more others.

This chapter gives an overview of the conflicts in context, delving much on the socio-political causes of the conflicts in the region. While the Konkomba-Nanumba war seems to be resolving, the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute is still intractable and perhaps un-resolvable if both royal gates involved in the dispute do not compromise their stances and resolve to re-start on a fresh footing. Even though it is very difficult to attribute successes to the NGOs, I am highly touched by the efforts, time and resources they committed and continue to commit to addressing the 1994/95 war and others in the region.

In giving insights into the causes of the conflicts, I resolve to abstain from referring to the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute because it is still volatile. It resulted in the Minister of the Interior and the Tamale Metropolitan Chief Executive (MCE) resigning their positions to allow for non-partisan investigations into the gruesome murder of the king in which they were implicated. My decision to stay away from it is not because of its volatility but, because; there is still no available literature on the conflict as it was only in mid 2006 the King was buried. I will however, use the

⁸ There was a misunderstanding between Konkomba and Nanumba men at Nakpayili market over the price of a guinea fowl but it was resolved. However, the Konkomba man ambushed the Nanumba man and shot him dead on his way to farm the next day. This provoked tensions especially among the Nanumbas and they organized to retaliate which resulted in aggravating violence and it spread through out the Nanumba district and even beyond.

Guinea Fowl war as a reference point in which the causes are not exclusive but more general to almost all conflicts in the region as a former 'Protectorate' of the British colonial rule. Thus, I will give a brief overview of the legacies bequeathed to the people of the North through colonialism.

3.2 The Historical Context

Although Ghana's (then Gold Coast) first contact with the Europeans was in the fifteenth century, i.e. 1471 (Adjapawn, 2006: 32; Howard, 1978: 27), it was only in the nineteenth century (1874) that the country was subjected to formal colonialism with the assumption of a resident Governor (Howard, *ibid*: 30). Hitherto, her contact with the Europeans had been in informal trade. With the end of the informal empire in the Gold Coast, the British divided the Gold Coast into three provinces: the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti and the Protectorate also referred to as Northern Territories (NT) in 1900 for purely political as well as economic reasons (Brukum, 2000: 137; DISCAP⁹, 2004: 4; Howard, 1978: 34). All three were administered from Accra through a Resident Commissioner through the traditional rulers. This was referred to as the Indirect Rule System (IRS) (MacGaffey, 2006: 81) introduced in the north in 1932.

Land in the past like today had always been a political issue over which different ethnic groups and even families contested. In the Gold Coast, the colonial masters made several attempts to take over the tenureship of land from the indigenous people but met stern opposition. Thus, essentially, to avoid the African elite strategic defense of playing the traditional rulers against them (colonizers), they adopted a lands policy of 'retaining traditional forms of ownership even when the internal dynamics of the indigenous society demanded change' (Howard, 1978: 43) in the Colony and Ashanti but not in the NT.

The ensuing explores how the British IRS affected Northern Ghana negatively and accounted largely for the structural inequalities within the north, and between the north and the south. The Colonial government passed the 'Land and Native Rights Ordinance' in 1927 in the NT under which all land was vested under the control and made subject to the disposition of the Governor for the common benefit

⁹ DISCAP means District Capacity Building Project.

of the natives (Howard, 1978: 43; Jonsson, 2007: 14). In part, it was because the NT 'affairs were not debated in the Legislative Council' (Howard, *ibid*) even as late as 1938.

Indeed, while the colonial government left the control of land in the hands of the traditional rulers in the NT, it as well tried to work through the chiefs, not so much out of respect for native institutions as for the sake of administrative convenience (DISCAP, 2002: 4; Kimble, 1963: 487). Similarly, because their functions were never clearly defined, they could be used as stooges to pursue the colonial government's interests. Further, maintaining the already organized existing traditional structures was considered legitimate to the people and made administrative sense because creating new power brokers could meet stern resistance from the local people as did in Ashanti.

The IRS of administration strengthened the position of chiefs and their chiefdoms (DISCAP, 2002: 4; Jonsson, 2007: 7), but excluded the non-chiefly (acephalous) groups particularly in the NT until independence in 1957. In fact, Pul (2005: 84) has aptly described the traditional authority structure and the IRS as having 'created and sustained ethnic hegemonies that became the object of contest, especially between the chiefly and non-chiefly tribes'. As the story unfolds, traditional rulership (chieftaincy) and the question of land ownership have taken centre-stage in most, if not all the conflicts in Ghana in general and in the north in particular.

However, after independence Kwame Nkrumah; the first president of the newly independent Ghana, abrogated the formal alliance between the chiefs and the Colonial Administration and encircled the powers of the chiefs. The chiefs had hitherto provided anchorage to the then Northern Peoples' Party (NPP) and later the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) which posed a stern opposition to Nkrumah's Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) (MacGaffey, 2006: 83-85; Tsikata and Seini, 2004: 15-6). Nkrumah, after inheriting a state in which the north was deliberately excluded and perpetually referred to as a labour reserve to produce labour to feed the south (*op. cit.*), was not any better. He sought to maintain the status quo or play peasants in the region who politically were aligned to the CPP against the middle class. Nkrumah subsequently identified the chiefs as opponents. This could be a basis for discontent in the region as Nkrumah reduced the authority of the chiefs.

Inversely, I rather believe that, Nkrumah's decision not to identify with the chiefs in my opinion was politically correct. Because this could create and nurture an egalitarian society in order to create coherent society since he identified with the peasants. However, this was short lived as the powers of the chiefs were restored by Dr. Busia¹⁰ and the subsequent provision in the Fourth Republican Constitution of Regional Houses of Chiefs (RHCs) as well as National House of Chiefs (NHCs). This has empowered and further strengthened the position of the chief in national issues while it correspondingly relegated the acephalous groups to the background. As the chieftaincy institution was re-invigorated in the 1992 Constitution, it continued the 'hegemonization' of the chiefly groups in the north while it subordinated and excluded the non-chiefly groups from both traditional rulership and modern governance. This accounts for the belligerence in the north at large; because the acephalous groups especially the Konkombas, observe that, although Ghana gained her independence in March 1957, true independence still eludes them in the region, (Jonsson, 2007: 10). At this present juncture, it suffices if we explored the roots of the conflicts in the region.

3.4 Root Causes of Conflicts in the Northern Region

It is not easy to fathom the causes of the conflicts in the NR because every conflict has both remote and immediate causes. The conflicts in the region are no exception. They have multiplicity of causes although some scholars and media reports indecently name the conflicts after their triggers. For example, some wars have been named 'the Cow war', 'Mango war', 'Pito war', and lately the Guinea Fowl war.

However, Jonsson, (2007: 10) observed that the violence in the region are being caused by 'the interplay of history, ethnic identity creation, and rapidly evolving indigenous institutions and political systems'. DISCAP (2002: 5), on the other hand, asserted that they result from a 'historical legacy of the clash between the two governance and tenureship systems: as well as ethnic competition not only in government and the state, but also in the parallel politics of chieftaincy and at local governance levels'. Similarly, Brukum (2000: 141) identified the desire for

¹⁰ Professor Kofi Abrefa Busia was Royal from Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo region and

recognition and self-assertion as being accountable for the belligerence in the region'. While all the above are potential sources of conflict, in my own opinion, I do believe that such conflicts were only latent and did not show any evidence of escalation. Indeed, I believe that the most considerable factors that contribute to their escalation were the 1983-85 intense nationwide droughts that affected the North the most and thereby worsened the poverty levels.

Besides the drought, came the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government's trade liberalization and the Structural Adjustment Programme in the same 1980s turbulent period which saw many public sector employees laid off in the name of slimming down the public sector. In consequence, the victims increased craving for agricultural lands to embark on cash crops cultivation which was seen as the only alternative to earn a living. Therefore, since chieftaincy is both necessary and as well a sufficient condition for the right to land tenureship, it inevitably constitute the nub of claims and counter-claims. Aggravating the situation was the 1992 Constitution¹¹ controversial provision, which in my opinion, added flavour to the contestations. It is therefore, not surprising that over 17 inter and intra-ethnic conflicts (Pul, 2003, cited in Jonsson, 2007: 5) occurred in the NR alone from 1980 to 2006.

In light of this, I allude to what Brukum (2000: 139) describes as 'wars of emancipation' in which one group (majority) fighting to maintain the status quo of hegemony while the other group (minority) fighting to break the dominance and instill ethnic egalitarianism in the region. The minority groups feel that the true meaning of Ghana's motto, i.e. 'Freedom and Justice'¹² is supposed to be the linchpin of every society. These wars of emancipation in my opinion began soon after Ghana's return to constitutional democracy in 1992 as a result of democracy deficit. As the problem of the conflict in the region is structural and evolves around the right to land ownership and 'self-rule', it calls for a brief overview of the socio-political context of the region.

Prime Minister in the Second Republic from 1969 to 1972.

¹¹ See the 1992 Constitution, Article 257 clauses 3 & 4.

¹² See Ghana Coat of Arms.

3.4 The Northern Region: The Socio-Political Setting

The present day NR with its capital in Tamale was part of the NT which was controlled as a Protectorate during the colonial era. It is Ghana's largest but sparsely populated region with land mass of 70,383 sq. km. It has a total population of about 1, 820,806 according to 2000 population census (Adjapawn, 2006: 34; Jonsson, 2007: 5). It is a home of about 17 ethnic groups according to Pul (op. cit.) From pre-colonial era through colonialism to indirect rule to Ghana's return to constitutional democracy in 1992, there were only four paramountcies: Mamprusi, Dagomba, Gonja and Nanumba (Pul, 2005:84) in the region. Historically, the four paramountcies conquered the areas now referred to as their Traditional Areas in the 14th and 15th centuries and imposed chiefs on the conquered (DISCAP, 2002: 4). One irksome question that needs to be answered immediately is the question of whether the lack of many paramount chiefs in a region provokes violence.

The response to the query above per se cannot be in the affirmative. It is only when chieftaincy becomes a tool for accessing political power and for mobilizing other benefits in an atmosphere in which there is a yawning inequality among the ethnic groups. This brings us again to the question of why that crisp inequalities and high degree of consciousness in a cosmopolitan region like the NR.

Ordinarily, Northern Ghana is relatively less endowed with natural resources. Thus, apart from the north's lack of natural resources relative to the south, the effects of colonialism and the IRS account for the inequalities (Jonsson, 2007: 6; Pul, 2005: 84). Colonialism negatively affected, and indeed created the inequality gap between the north and the south on the one hand. On the other, it also contributed to the 'hegemonization' of certain ethnic groups over others in the region. In fact, the subsequent acceptance of the status quo by the post-colonial state (Adjapawn, 2006: 33) is responsible for the sustenance of the inequalities. From the above, it is undoubtedly clear that colonialism bequeathed to the post-colonial state a region consciously underdeveloped with many already un-resolved inter and intra-ethnic conflicts.

However, Songsore (1979); cited in Adjapawn, (2006: 32) argues that the north was already booming with economic activities through long distance trade in cola nuts and salt before the British colonized and preserved it as a protectorate in the early 1900s. Interestingly however, soon after out-dooring colonial rule and legitimizing the IRS through the local chiefs, the British upon realizing that the

north has no potential for pay-offs due to its savannah nature, quickly took deliberate steps to maintain it as a labour reserve to draw labour from, to feed the mining and plantation sectors in the south (Adjapawn, 2006:33). Invariably, while admitting that the north is a savannah and lacks natural resources, I believe that it was deliberately preserved as a labour reserve because the people did not resist colonialism as did in Ashanti. For instance, since education is the only way through which peoples consciousness can be awakened, the British, despite that education got to the north only in 1908 (Adjapawn, 2006: 34), i.e.; decades after it had started in the south through the coastal belt, still deliberately declared that the colonial administration was not ready to spend upon the north because of the excuse that:

considerable expenditure will be incurred in the near future in the building of Achimota College [in the south], His Excellency has decided that no additional day primary school will be opened in the NT during the next three or four years (See Adjapawn, 2006: 34).

This deliberate neglect or “benign neglect” (Botchway 2004, quoted in Adjapawn, 2006: 33) was never resisted in the north. Thus the gullible nature of the people of the north largely accounted for the success of the IRS on the one hand and the development gap between the north and south on the. Similarly, the creation of the Northern Territorial Council in 1935 with tribunals vested with the power to try all cases except criminal cases (Brukum, 2000: 138; Jonsson, 2007: 7) accounts for the development deficit and the structural inequalities among majority and minority ethnic groups in the north. These in my opinion account for the present state of animosity and bellicosity among the minority and majority ethnic groups in the region.

Given this background, one would expect that the postcolonial state will take concrete and pragmatic steps to bridge the yawning inequality gaps between the north and south as well as halt the ethnic ‘hegemonization’ in the region that left some of the minority ethnic groups perpetually excluded from both the traditional and modern systems of governance.

However, on the contrary, from Nkrumah through Busia to date, the north is being paid lip service and nothing much has actually changed since power changed hands at independence. The development disparity between the north and the south continue to worsen thereby conditioning north-south migration. For instance, out of the 2,129 new factories registered and established in Ghana between 2000 and 2006, only 26 of them are located in the NR while only six districts are benefiting

from the Millennium Challenge Account – MCA (Adjapawn, 2006: 44-5). The MCA is purported to transform the Agricultural sector for growth. Also, while as late as the 1970s, only one secondary school was opened in the Konkomba land, there was already a Teacher Training College in Yendi; the Traditional Seat of the Dagbon Kingdom. (Jonsson, 2007: 11). In fact all these machinations by successive governments of the post-colonial Ghana is aimed at keeping the north perpetually impoverished so as to maintain the status quo of northern labour migrating to the south.

Paradoxically, Cadwell (1968) and Nabila¹³ (1986); underscored the importance of social amenities and job opportunities and argued that the north-south population drift is as a result of over population in certain parts of the north (cited in Adjapawn, 2006: 33). In fact, their interpretation of the north-south migration sounds ridiculous and quite repugnant. In reality and from national statistics (2000 census)¹⁴, the northern region is the most sparsely populated region in Ghana (van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 15) with a population density of 25.9 as compared to Greater Accra and Ashanti regions both in the south with 895.5 and 148.1 densities respectively (Adjapawn, 2006: 34), and in deed, the major destinations of the northern migrants.

As already stated; the continuous domination of the four chiefly ethnic groups in both traditional governance and in modern state institutions account for the rising state of belligerence in the region. For in instance, Pul, (ibid) notes that:

...[i]n the north, for instance, the so-called minority ethnic groups found themselves systematically excluded from acceding to political offices, especially at the regional levels...the exclusion of the non-chiefly ethnic groups, sometimes erroneously referred to as the minority, is orchestrated and sustained by what has come to be known as the northern equation in which only members of the four chiefly ethnic groups can accede to positions such as the political headship of the Northern Region...

In fact, the situation in the region today is still as it was in the yesteryear and aptly suits Major-General W. H. Grey's description of the north in 1929 to Sir Slater, then new Governor for the Gold Coast that "more than anything else with the exception of the [poor] motor roads, rest houses and Government quarters, was

¹³ Professor John S. Nabila is currently a Divisional Chief of Wulugu; one of the Five Divisions of Mamprugu; Majority ethnic group in the Northern Region and Member of CoS for the Northern Region. He is also Lecturer at the University of Ghana, Legon.

the impression that the state of the country and the conditions of the people were very much the same as 1904” (see Brukum, 1998: 122).

As if to add insult to injury, the erstwhile PNDC and the Consultative Assembly that sponsored the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution disregarded all agitations for a reformed land policy that had been at the centre stage of every conflict in the region and elsewhere in the country and vested all lands under the control of the chiefs (see 1992 constitution)¹⁵. Again, despite the Nchumurus and the Nawuris numerous petitions to the United Nations (UN) for separate paramountcies, (Brukum, 2000:141; Jonsson, 2007: 8), article 274 of the 1992 Constitution is enshrined a provision of RHCs which is supposed to hear all cases related to chieftaincy.

Given the already precarious situation in the NR in particular and the incessant contestations of the minority groups about the representativeness of the NRHCs; the membership increased from four to five (Pul, 2005: 85) only in 1997 out of about 18 ethnic groups in the region. The NRHCs is to receive complaints of the subordinate or minority ethnic groups and sit on them to decide whether some chiefs should be elevated or not. See for example, 1992 constitution¹⁶. Common sense will reveal that since granting the minority groups separate paramountcies is a zero-sum game, the majority groups will want to maintain the status quo. Thus; the minority groups will employ all means possible including violence to press home their much cherished demand for their own paramountcies.

As already mentioned, insights into the Konkomba-Nanumba war of 1994/95 will enhance our understanding of how an already volatile situation can spark out intense violence with little provocation when all pointers show that little or no efforts are made to addressing grievances of the aggrieved minority groups.

¹⁴ See <http://www.ghanaweb.com/>

¹⁵ Article 267

¹⁶ 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Article 247 (3) (c; d & e)

3.5 The 1994/95 Konkomba-Nanumba War.

Among the acephalous or what I refer to as stateless ethnic groups in the NR which Brukum (2000: 131), Jonsson (2007: 6) and Pul (2005: 85) described as “Minority”¹⁷ are the Konkombas. The Konkombas, despite that they are stateless and somewhat seemingly non-Ghanaians; constitute the second largest ethnic group with an estimated population of over 300,000 after the Dagombas (Jonsson, 2007: 9; Pul, 2005: 85; Toonen, 1999: 2). They inhabit the eastern part of the NR, which was annexed and incorporated into the NR by the British following a decisive ‘yes’ votes in the ‘1956 public referendum’ (Jonsson, 2007: 10). It is therefore no wonder that these antecedents are exploited by anti-Konkomba propagandists to tag them as aliens and for that matter not qualified to be rulers.

It is interesting to note that the violence in the region have been between the minority and the majority ethnic groups. Never in the post-colonial period had the different majority ethnic groups fought each other. The traffic had always been minority versus majority groups. The reason being that, and as already mentioned somewhere in this chapter; the minority is fighting to over-turn majority dominance to establish ethnic egalitarianism, while the majority is fighting to maintain the status quo.

In the last two and a half decades there had about been 20 such emancipatory conflicts in the region and the Konkombas alone were involved in five of them (Brukum, 2000: 131; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 24). The 1994/95 war against the Nanumba; a majority ethnic group was the most deadly. I intend to use this to explore the circumstances that led to NGOs involvement in and what role they play in CT. The war engulfed seven out of the then 13 districts in the region. Over 15,000 lives were lost (Toonen, 1999: 3; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 26-27) while property worth millions of cedis was also lost. Again, in the history of the region’s conflicts, deadly weapons such as AK47 assault rifles (Jonsson, 2006: 11; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 24) were used and intense violence pursued for over 10 days while intermittent fighting went on for months, (Toonen, 1999: 3). This portrayed that advance preparations were made by both sides of the ethnic

¹⁷ Brukum (2000: 131) described the term “Minority” not in terms of demography but in the sense of ethnic groups that did not build empires in the past.

divides but the guinea fowl incident was only a trigger. Thus, I argue that, the tagging wars to their triggers by the media could inhibit proper investigations into the roots of the conflict.

But, just to illuminate on our understanding of, I give a brief background to the main trigger of that war. It started as a misunderstanding between two Konkomba and Nanumba males over the price of a guinea fowl at Nakpayili market, and from which the war got its name; 'Guinea Fowl' War (Brukum, 2000: 139; Jonsson, 2007: 6; Pul, 2005: 76; Toonen, 1999: 3; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 27). We are told that, the alleged dispute was resolved in the market, but the following day the Konkomba man and his son ambushed and shot the Nanumba man on his way to farm. When the other Nanumbas in the community got wind of the incident, they counter attacked the Konkomba man and before evening that day, the whole community was engulfed in gun fire and it spread to other Nanumba and Konkomba communities in the district and beyond like wild fire in the hamattan (a dry wind).

The trigger notwithstanding, scholars such as Jonsson, and van der Linde and Naylor observe that the underpinning causes of the war were a spill over of the 1981 and 1991 wars as well as 'frustrations with political developments, such as the failure of Rawlings to deliver on the hopes of minorities raised by his election rhetoric, and the effects of the 1992 constitution' (Jonsson, 2007: 12-13). The Nanumbas were later joined by other majority groups, i.e. Dagombas and Gonjas (Tsikata and Seini, 2004: 31) to fight the Konkombas; a common enemy in the region. But, why did the war prolong for over two months in a state governed by democratically elected government? To answer this question, let us turn our attention to how the state responded.

As we could discern from above, the root causes of the conflicts in the region range from lack of social integration as a nation, polarization of ethnic differences to contested historical claims. However, while these become tools for mobilization, I argue that, if there was a well functioning rule of law and judicial system and the people had reposed trust in them in the country, all points of contestations and litigations could have been addressed at the law courts. Unfortunately however, the

judicial system in my opinion is largely mediated by power politics. This therefore makes many people resort to 'resolving their differences in the Builsa way'¹⁸

3.6 The State's Attempts to Resolve the Conflicts

In February 1994 a theatre ensued between Konkombas and Nanumbas. And like the other previous conflicts before it, the then NDC government under Jerry Rawlings deplored the Ghana Army and personnel from the Ghana Police Service to keep peace. Although the security personnel deployment delayed for about 10 days after the war had broken out due to lack of effective communication system linking the north to Accra; the Seat of government, the peace-keeping was effective (van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 30). However, MacGaffey (2006: 79) argues that the failure of the government to respond timely was due to its remoteness from the north, the conflict area.

Paradoxically, the remoteness of the national capital to its peripheral regions should not be a barrier especially that Ghana had already decentralized its local governance as early as 1989. In deed, what it does portray is the 'benign neglect' alluded to earlier. It also portrays a lack of the state's commitment to 'integrate its citizens politically and economically' to provide a just playing field for peace and development. Again, in a situation in which the state had already been accused of fomenting the war (Jonsson, 2007: 13; Pul, 2005: 90; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 34), it was not likely that it could get the cooperation of all the parties to the conflict in its attempts to resolve it I guess.

Besides being accused of showing partisanship in the conflicts was the fact that the government unfortunately could not secure financial support from donors in Europe after its two unsuccessful trips (Toonen, 1999: 4; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 30), to enable it respond timely. Thus, the Rawlings government, like its predecessor governments which often established commissions (Tsikata and Seini, 2004: 31) having been caught up in that dilemma, had no alternative but to establish a supposedly neutral body: Permanent Peace Negotiation Team — PPNT (Brukum, 2000:143; Toonen, 1999: 4; van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 34)

¹⁸ The Builsas are an ethnic group in Ghana who are alleged to resolving their differences physically.

consisting of Chiefs and chaired by a member of the Council of State to negotiate a resolution (van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 34).

However, as already adduced, the parties to the conflict soon 'felt that the government was not now to be trusted to facilitate a fair peace' (van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 34). This and other setbacks suffered by the government such as limited 'financial support and facilitation skills' (ibid) could not do much to end the violence. Hence, war broke out again in March 1995.

Having unfortunately suffered legitimacy problems as well as limited financial support, the state found it only prudent to extend a word of invitation to NGOs which had formed an informal Consortium and already were playing their traditional role of providing relief and other humanitarian services to the war victims to assist in facilitating the peace processes. At first hand, the NGOs turned down the gesture, because:

- 1) They did not want to compromise their neutral image; and
- 2) They also doubted the efficiency of the PPNT because of its remoteness: about 400 miles away from the conflict area (van der Linde and Naylor, 1999: 34-36). However, they later reconsidered their decision and accepted the invitation.

3.7 Conclusion

Essentially, the above developments set the stage for NGOs participation in CT in Ghana. Therefore the following chapter will elaborate on how the NGOs engage in CT in the NR with particular reference to Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS); a humanitarian NGO and Ghana Network for Peace Building (GHANEP); an advocacy NGO as case studies vis-à-vis the state and how NGOs-state.

Chapter 4:

NGOs' ROLES IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

4.1 Introduction

...NGOs are therefore not value-neutral but they do tend to present ethical judgments as impartial and universal standards. Many NGOs take a strong interest in preventive actions and in strengthening global society. At the same time, NGOs are connected to and depend on their home governments in ambivalent, cooperative and at times contentious relations (Aggestam 2003: 16)

The preceding chapter discussed the socio-political setting of the conflicts in the NR and how NGOs were drawn into CT. In this chapter, I will elucidate on the role of NGOs in CT as their preoccupation is to leapfrog the region's development through fighting poverty, advocating for equity and social justice and respect for human rights and good governance. Unfortunately however, there can hardly be development amid insecurity, and endemic violence engulfing the region. As Gersbauer (2005:23) observed 'the kinds of security threats and conflicts faced today are ones that NGOs are particularly well suited to address', some NGOs, both local and international alike, are deeply engaged in CT.

4.2 Transforming the Conflicts: The Role of NGOs.

Fundamentally, the NR or Northern Ghana in general is geo-politically less strategic as compared to the south. This therefore makes the conflicts in the region less attractive to the international community. Perhaps; it is partly because they are not large scale civil wars although in the 1994/95 war, over 1500 lives were lost, obviously qualifying it as a civil war (see Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: 595). Again, in part, it could be because the conflicts are far removed from the state apparatus and consequently do not pose any insecurity to the state and its governmental structures.

Notwithstanding, the conflicts in the region could have untold consequences on the state's security and development if they are left unresolved. To forestall these potential negative consequences of the conflicts, NGOs are being involved in transforming and resolving the conflicts. But they are inextricably linked to struggle for political and traditional power. The 1994/95 war which was much intractable and deadly marked the official ingression of NGOs into CT.

Interestingly, from the 1980s, not only has the NGOs population increased, but also, they have taken up new roles which were hitherto the preserve of the state. Orjuela, (2003: 195) and Rigby, (2001: 957) assigned the increased in funding following the end of the cold-war, the desire by NGOs to fill the gaps created by the neo-liberal reform agenda, and rapid globalization as antecedent for the NGOs participation in CT the globe over

In the 1994 Konkomba-Nanumba war, both international and local NGOs were involved in transforming the conflict. These included World Vision International, Ghana; Oxfam GB; Catholic Relief services; 'Amasaachina'; CARE; Action Aid International, Ghana; Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI); Assemblies of God Development and Relief Services (AGDRS); Lifeline

Denmark; Red Cross, etc (van der Linde & Naylor, 1999: 31). Some of these NGOs were already implementing development projects in the NR before the conflict broke out and so were more acceptable to the people than the state.

Again, also particularly telling why some NGOs have taken peace building as another trajectory of development, especially with my experience from NGO work for four years lies in the fact that human security and development reinforce each other. Thus, since NGO population has increased to fill the development vacuum created by the neo-liberal reform agendas, any development stride will be in jeopardy if the NGOs did not take steps to remove away conflicts as threat to human security.

This chapter therefore, elaborates on the role of NGOs in CT beyond their traditional role of humanitarian services. In recent times, NGOs have become important actors in what have become 'track two'¹⁹ activities. Essentially they informally negotiate and facilitate meetings of warring parties leading to transformation of the conflicts. CECOTAPS of the Damongo Diocese — a humanitarian and/ or faith-based NGO, and GHANEP — the Ghana Chapter of WANEP, a regional advocacy Network of NGOs as case studies. CECOTAPS and GHANEP²⁰ offer us typical case studies of Humanitarian and advocacy NGOs roles in CT respectively.

4.3 The Case Studies

The case studies try to investigate and understand how CECOTAPS and GHANEP are engaged in transforming the conflicts in Ghana's NR. Each case study gives the background of the NGO and explores the activities it carries out in light of its objectives and vision. Thus, the ensuing explores and analyzes the two NGOs involvement in awareness creation, capacity enhancement; advocacy and networking.

4.3.1 Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS)

CECOTAPS, hereafter referred to as the Centre, was established by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) of the Damongo Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church in 1994. The establishment of the Diocese coincided with the 1994/95 Konkomba-Nanumba war which served as precursor to what evangelization work will be going through. Aware of this predicament, the Bishop quickly commissioned a socio-economic and pastoral survey in the diocese carried out by University of Ghana and Action Aid, International, Ghana. The findings provided the basis for planning the diocese (Diocese of Damongo, Ghana: 1)²¹. The fact that there cannot be any meaningful evangelization amidst incessant violence, the idea of a peace centre was borne as a response to that pastoral need. Thus, the Unity Centre was later institutionalized and assumed the name CECOTAPS. Basically, CRS is its main financier.

¹⁹ Non-official conflict transformation approaches.

²⁰ See <http://www.wanep.org/>

²¹ http://diodamongo.catholic.org/unity_centre.php (Accessed on 04-09-07)

The role of the Centre in CT can be discerned by examining its objectives. As a humanitarian organization, it works at achieving the following objectives:

- To serve as a place where the main agents of evangelization can meet to share views and ideas for themselves and for the enrichment of others;
- A place for training and formation in the faith, basic human values, justice and human development as a whole;
- To serve primarily as a Centre for the Promotion of Peace Building and Conflict Transformation activities
- To conscientize all sectors of the population about the common brother/sisterhood they share and the value for peaceful coexistence; and
- To provide a serene atmosphere and hospitality services, promote personal reflection, recollection and recreation for all categories of people, as well as the arrangement of retreats for interested groups and individuals.

Source: http://diodamongo.catholic.org/unity_centre.php (Accessed on 22nd Sept. 2007).

For the purpose of this study, objectives 2, 3 and 4 are of utmost importance and the role of the Centre in conflict transformation space is investigated using them and its vision as benchmarks. As a humanitarian and /or development organization, it is envisioned to 'help the people of Northern Ghana create a new era devoid of violent conflicts so that the citizens can explore their full human and material potential for authentic human development' (CECOTAPS, 2003: 1). Viewing conflict as a multi-layered phenomenon and in pursuance of its vision, CECOTAPS' activities are focused on four major thematic areas. These conform to Neubert (2004: 49) three-pronged typology of peace building — 'conflict prevention and de-escalation; crisis management and the end of combat (negative peace) and; finally, consolidation of peace (positive peace)'. Perhaps, this was the basis upon which the Centre developed its intervention areas. Its activities include:

- i. Mass education and awareness creation through radio programmes;
- ii. Training programmes and support services in the five dioceses of the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province (TEP);
- iii. Establish Satellite Peace building Centres in all TEP; and
- iv. Set up Peace Education Programmes in 180 selected schools in the TEP

Given the array of activities employed in furtherance of its vision of an era devoid of violence, I regrouped them into two: creation of peace constituencies and training programmes and support services to allow for discrete examination of each.

i. 'The Creation of Peace Constituencies'

The findings of the survey as stated above included that: “unjust colonial systems that were put in place to satisfy the colonial mission but which have not been addressed in the modern nation state of Ghana since independence” are the roots of the conflicts in Northern Ghana (See CECOTAPS 2003: 10). These ‘mass education’ on effects of violence as well as raising awareness on other non-violent ways of addressing conflicts are envisaged as critical in the Centre’s interventions. This is necessary in order to keep track of fostering common brotherliness essential in building the ‘new era devoid of violent conflicts’. CECOTAPS realized that another antecedent of violence in the region is the people’s general ignorance of the root causes and dynamics of conflicts. This ignorance manifests itself in the way the people react to disharmonies; challenges of life instead of accepting and striving to turn them into opportunities.

Besides the ignorance is the lack of skills and knowledge to analyze conflicts which consequently prevent them from exploring other non-violent means to resolve their differences. Thus, in seeking to build the ‘new era devoid of violence’ it envisioned raising awareness on the dangers of violence and its impact thereof on the region’s socio-economic development is fundamental. As Neubert (2004: 63) refers to it as ‘education for peace’, it is important in creating ‘local structures for de-escalation and reconciliation’ (ibid) through the radio.

Undoubtedly, radio has a high potential to reach out to a large audience at a relatively low cost. It is perhaps, also, the most readily available means of reaching out to illiterate societies (Betz, 2004: 38; Orjuela, 2003: 205). The radio does in fact ‘contribute[s] greatly to the creation of climate change’ (Marceau, 1972: 241). It is therefore in tune with this that the Centre uses it to inform, facilitate decision-making and educate the highly polarized ethnic groups in the north on the need to co-exist peacefully and resolve conflicts using non-violent means when conflicts do inevitably occur (Mwakawago, 1986, quoted in Betz, 2004: 39). Radio Okapi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was very instrumental in the post-war period in mobilizing the people (ibid.).

Awareness can be through the radio especially with the common practice in Ghana in which telephone lines are activated for the listening public to phone-in and make contributions to a topic under discussion. However, this can be ‘exploited to manipulate listeners and promote fear, mistrust and violence’

(Wohlgemuth, 2005: 191) as did by radio RTLM of Rwanda in the run up to the 1994 war (Betz, 2004: 43). It is true that radio does educate for peace, but it can also educate to achieve opposite and negative results. Again, it equally lacks the tool to assess feed back. It is also not possible to target the right audience. Therefore, in my opinion, it could be as ineffective as it is considered effective.

In every protracted conflict, there are 'violence actors'²² (Neubert, 2004: 63). And since NGOs do employ social work and other pedagogical methodologies in the social mobilization, they are acceptable in communities in conflict. Therefore, identifying opinion leaders and profiteers in violent conflict to give them a resounding training in non-violent conflict transformation, though a daunting task, is much promising. In fact, Hoffman (1995, quoted in Neubert, 2004: 63) observes that inter-community understanding on non-violent conflict transformation mechanisms can only be achieved through a wide range of courses and workshops. It is therefore in consonance with the Centre's in-depth training programmes on conflict resolution and management skills within the TEP.

Interestingly however, how these workshops and training programmes are carried out remains a nagging issue. The training needs to be traditionalized so that it could contribute to addressing the roots of the conflicts. At this present juncture, let us examine the nature and the efficacy of the capacity-building programmes and how it contributes to CT as observed by Hoffman (op. cit.).

ii. *Training Programmes and Support Services*

CT is a process that encompasses several stages. It deals with steps that result in the 'consolidation of peace leading to positive peace (i.e. stable peaceful order)' (Neubert, op. cit.: 54). It does require a holistic approach to change attitudes and perceptions of the people. Thus, the Centre organizes workshops and training programmes in: Introduction to Peacebuilding and CT; Conflict Analysis/ Resolution/ Transformation; Peacebuilding in Multicultural Settings; Development Practice and CT; Religion and Conflict; Good Governance and CT; African Social Systems and CT and Practical Skills for Peacebuilding and CT. Therefore, the Centre seeks to carry out from between 2003 and 2008 in their phase two with funding/ and or technical support from CRS as primary financier, the Ministries of

²² Violence Actors are those who profit from violence (See Jonsson, 2007: 13)

Education (MOF) and Local Government and Rural Development (MOLGRD), WANEP as secondary partners.

To be able to address the roots of the conflicts, the themes for the training programmes must be encompassing. They must aim at providing an array of community based platforms to significantly discuss the issues of land and traditional governance. It must also draw participants from mostly policy makers, 'violence actors', traditional rulers and opinion leaders from all ethnic groups.

However, these courses have cost implications for participants on the one hand, and on the other are being skewed against peasants and the grassroots who become ready recruits in armed conflicts. From experience, most NGOs routinely select their workshop participants from cronies, and politically active groups. Again, as the conflicts in the region mutate around land and chieftaincy, participation of chiefs and members of the Lands Commission in the training programmes must be in focus group instead of mixed. This is because tradition does not allow the chief to say certain things in public. Holding separate meetings with them will allow them space and confidence to actively and truly offer suggestions as to the way forward.

Despite that addressing ignorance about the roots of conflicts and lack of knowledge and skills in conflict dynamics are fundamental, I do believe that the conflicts in the region are structural. That is; inequalities and struggle for political and traditional power. Therefore, improving the living conditions of the minority groups will facilitate the feeling of inclusion in them.

Although the state is still dominant in the domains of politics and security, CECOTAPS significantly facilitates people-to-people networking by establishing satellite peace building centres through out the TEP. Since the conflicts are spread throughout the 'north', the Centre is responsible for 'facilitating experience/resource sharing at the community levels' (CECOTAPS, 2003:14). This is aimed at not only complementing but also supplementing formal diplomatic initiatives resulting in de-escalation and changes in attitudes. It also involves policy makers at the grassroots such as Assemblypersons and teachers who are icons of respect and discipline at the grassroots.

Notwithstanding the claim that NGOs are independent, see for example, the Rio Earth Summit document of 1992, (cited in Bleiker, 2003: 104), CECOTAPS request for funding from some agencies such as the district assemblies, Ministries

of Local Government and education (CECOTAPS, 2003: 21). This seriously impinges upon questions of sovereignty and independence and has the potential to make CECOTAPS political, at least. Getting financial support from Local Government structures will make them affiliates. This inherently contradicts Mawlawi's observation that, the lack of NGOs affiliation to government agencies allows them to "engage in informal diplomacy that is nonthreatening to the disputing parties" (quoted in Gerstbauer, 2005: 29). As I argued earlier, politics and the involvement of politicians in the NR's conflicts have increased the complexities in getting them resolved. The Centre's request for funds from them is likely to legitimize the involvement of politicians in the conflicts.

4.3.2 Ghana Network for Peacebuilding (GHANEP)

GHANEP, hereafter referred to as the network is Ghana chapter of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. It was established in 1998 in response 'to nearly a decade of violent conflicts throughout West Africa' (WANEP, 2004: 4) in the 1980s. Awakened by the dangers of violence and its attendant implications on the economic growth and development, West African scholars and academics 'based in the United States especially at the George Mason, America, Duquesne and Eastern Mennonite Universities' came together and established it (ibid.). Working toward economic growth and development in the Sub-region, it became apparent that the regional economic block – ECOWAS; Economic Community of West African States, could support the initiative by providing technical and financial support.

With its Secretariat in Accra, the capital of Ghana, it was only expedient to open its national office close to the zone of conflicts (Northern Ghana–Tamale). The 'proximity to the populations and flexibility of action' WANEP, 2004: 1) could be used as an advantage to detect the imminence of conflicts and where possible take "early preventive actions" (ibid.). The national secretariat in Tamale coordinates a network of about 48 civil society organizations in Ghana. As part of the regional network, GHANEP shares the same goal(s) with its mother network. Thus, its goal is to 'build sustainable peace; thereby creating an enabling environment for development in [Ghana]' (WANEP, 2005: 2) and works to:

- Strengthen the capacity of Peacebuilding organizations and practitioners in Ghana to engage actively in the peaceful transformation of violent conflicts;
- Increase awareness on the use of nonviolent strategies in responding to conflicts in Ghana;

- Develop a conflict prevention network in Ghana to monitor, report and offer indigenous perspectives and understanding of conflicts in Ghana;
- Harmonize Peacebuilding activities in Ghana through networking and co-ordination of GHANEP members;
- Build the capacities of Ghana Women to participate in Peacebuilding processes at all levels; and
- Build a cooperative platform for human rights and Peacebuilding organizations to dialogue and promote a culture of peace, justice and reconciliation in Ghana.

Source: WANEP 2001: 3; 2002: 3; 2003: 3; 2005:2 annual reports, available at <http://www.wanep.org/> (Accessed on the 21st Sept. 2007). Since GHANEP is part of WANEP, I have replaced GHANEP with WANEP as well as Ghana with West Africa.

Building sustainable peace will require building the willingness to accept differences inherent in people and that one cannot force the other to submit. It also requires strengthening the institutions of governance to respect human rights. But how do these attitudinal changes come about, and become sustainable? For insights into how GHANEP does this, let us examine the processes and efficacies of its pedagogical methodologies of transforming conflicts by first looking at how it creates peace constituencies through 'education for peace'²³.

i. *'The Creation of Peace Constituencies'*

WANEP has observed that in addition to known historical causes to the conflicts in the Sub-region are 'weak institutions that are unable to ensure equal access to power and resources, and to guarantee citizen's right and broader societal security' (WANEP, 2004: 1) and Ghana is no exception. Therefore, strengthening the weak institutions will require capacity enhancement in governance, dynamics of conflict and non-violent modes of handling conflicts as pointed out by Hoffman (op. cit). Based on this, I investigated the role of the network in capacity-building/training workshops, advocacy work, and how it coordinates the work of other member NGOs of the network.

a. Capacity-building/ training workshops

In GHANEP's view the civil society awareness of and their ability to employ non-violent means of resolving conflicts are key to addressing the conflicts in the region non-violently. In practice, GHANEP is a capacity-building and /or advocacy NGO working to develop the capacities of individuals and other partner

organizations to realize and sustain their project objectives. For instance, in 2005 alone, it 'organized five Peacebuilding training workshops for security officers, political parties and leaders, youth and trade groups, assemblypersons and women groups' (WANEP, 2005: 23). The purpose was to raise their awareness on human rights and individual responsibility in peace processes. It also equipped them with skills to analyze and manage conflicts non-violently.

b. Advocacy work

Traditionally, as an advocacy NGO, it seeks to influence 'policy-makers and decision-makers to engender changes at [both micro and] the macro level[s]' (Goodhand, 2006: 15) which impacts on peaceful co-existence among all ethnically divided societies. In this bid, GHANEP played an active role in 'five non-violence and peace education campaigns in Tamale' as part of the peace processes in the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute (WANEP, 2005: 23).

c. Coordination/Networking

NGOs network being coordinated by GHANEP plays an invaluable role in building a strong civil society. Strong civil society is key in modifying the hitherto mutually distrust relationships among the different ethnic groups in the region. For the network to be able to engineer a massive popular mobilization, it must be able to reach out to all districts and villages in the region and even beyond. This will enhance the knitting together of the civil 'societies' that are formed and located according to ethnic groups. For instance, in the NR almost all the different ethnic groups have their Youth Associations sometimes playing the role of spokespersons for their ethnic groups. When civil society is divided along ethnic lines, they become "uncivil society" (Bastian, 1999, quoted in Orjuela, 2003: 199) which inevitably becomes a source of conflict.

Essentially, while networks have the advantage of sharing best practices and cross-fertilizing ideas to suit specific contexts, we should not also underestimate their potential to be dominated by the most 'big and powerful'²⁴ NGOs. Interestingly, it came up in the WANEP 2004 final evaluation report that, 'national network members appeared to have little input in the programs designed at the regional level' (WANEP, 2004: 17). If these domineering tendencies rear their ugly heads at the Sub-regional level how much less at the national level? In the event

that programming becomes top-down instead of bottom-up, it leads to some members of the network developing passive “receiving-mentality” (Mayer, 2000, quoted in Orjuela, 2003:199) leading to a weak network with a weak voice which cannot assert itself to demand for reforms.

4.4 Summary of the Role of NGOs (CECOTAPS & GHANEP) in Conflict Transformation

NGO Activity	Target Group	Intended Impact/Objective
1. Awareness creation/Peace education (CECOTAPS)	Local communities including 40 paramountcies & 180 selected schools.	Increased inter-communal tolerance, peaceful coexistence & interdependence
2. Training/capacity-building workshops (CECOTAPS/ GHANEP)	Assemblypersons, Security Officers, Personnel of the NCCE ²⁵ , Members of the Regional House of Chiefs, Youth, Opinion Leaders, Members of Parliament (MPs), Political Party Leaders, Women Groups, Trade Union Leaders, Teachers	Inculcate in them the skills of handling conflicts non-violently.
3. Organizing and Facilitating Peace talks using Mediation & Arbitration as Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism (CECOTAPS/GHANEP)	All key actors in a conflict	— DO—
4. Advocate for policy changes, respect for human rights and the right to participation of all in decision-making. (CECOTAPS/GHANEP)	Policy/decision-makers, Politicians, Paramount Chiefs	To pressure policy-makers/Politicians to stay clear from using ethnic markers, foster all-inclusiveness in decision-making.

²⁴ The big and powerful are the NGOs that financially & technically sound

²⁵ National Commission for Civic Education

4.5 Analysis of the Cases

A close study of the available NGOs literature shows that NGOs are capable of facilitating the transformation of the conflicts from violence to non-violence and constructive forms if they remained committed to achieving their objectives. For instance, developing a conflict prevention network to monitor; report and offer indigenous perspectives of understanding conflicts is a well thought out and good intentioned objective.

However, a review of the NGOs interventions reveal that the NGOs role in capacity-building/ training workshops; awareness creation through the mass media; and advocacy work are too intellectual and merely seek to, as it were, confirm Musito (1985, quoted in Bratton 1989: 572) observation that the interventions aim at "serving as a conduit for predetermined plans". The NGOs rely on all-fit-all models at the expense of their claim to offer 'indigenous perspectives' to understanding conflicts and their 'autonomous and participatory action' (Bratton, *ibid*: 573) of empowering the powerless. The workshops and conferences are **less adaptive to the local context(s)**. The workshops and conferences are planned and presented in PowerPoint at places far removed from the conflicts settings. As stated earlier, since the roots of the conflicts include craving for access to land and the rights to be self-governed traditionally among others, the NGOs activities have failed to incorporate the processes of the beauty of indigenous knowledge systems of resolving conflicts. That is, in a typical northern traditional setting, conflicts are resolved by bringing together the parties involved in one place for a respected elder or the chief to facilitate open dialogue. The dialogue if impartially mediated results in one party admitting guilt after which the symbols of peace in the form of cola nuts and locally brewed beer (pito) are shared to signify the end of the conflict.

Furthermore, it is evident that their strategies in creating awareness and/ or building capacities of the people in conflict handling skills are skewed against the youth who are ready recruits who become both victims as well as perpetrators if there arise any misunderstanding between distinct ethnic groups. While I do not undermine the appropriateness of the western approaches of transforming violent conflicts, I do believe that as flexible as the NGOs are perceived to be, they can design and use traditional approaches such as drama, music and dance 'in appropriate situations' (Malan, 2005: 450) to foster interaction of feuding ethnic groups. This can increase interdependence, breed mutual trust and reduce the

likelihood of the conflicts escalating into violence while the roots of the conflicts are also addressed.

But, the bringing of the chiefs, elders, youths, women and other elites together in a classroom situation is a mockery of chieftaincy. And since the chief does mistrust the educated elite, he does not open up in the workshop. Or if at all, he pretends and does not say certain things which can be helpful to the work of the NGOs. Therefore, when a chief finds himself in that scenario, he only becomes a passive participant. In actual fact, focus group meetings especially the chief and elders alone and in the palace is more rightful.

While the state lacks the political will to ensure equity in accessing political power, the NGOs busy themselves implementing their planned projects. There is congruence of both initiatives only when the state's interest(s) is/ are served. Even at the state level, there is inherent contradiction in some constitutional provisions. For instance, while Article 276(1) of the Forth Republican Constitution says '[a] chief shall not take part in active party politics; and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to parliament shall abdicate his stool or skin', articles 270 (3) (a) and 271 (1) created a RHCs and NHCs respectively and article 89 (2) obligates the president to appoint the Chair of the NHCs to the Council of State (CoS). Even though explicitly the CoS is apolitical, implicitly the members are largely politicians and the President of the NHCs in the CoS is no exception.

In practice, chiefs are very active in mobilizing grassroots development for their communities. Chiefs are also the first point of call when a state functionary visits any community. Thus, I argue that all these paradoxes add up to the complexities faced by NGOs in their CT roles on the one hand. On the other, the inclusion of the chieftaincy institution in national issues makes the acephalous groups to push further for their own paramountcies because chiefs now play a role in the socio-economic development of their communities.

In chapter three, we saw that the conflicts in the region are manifestations of long history of exclusion of certain ethnic groups, referred to as minorities from both modern and traditional forms of governance. Therefore, to resolve the conflicts will require empowering the hitherto excluded so that they become independent. To do this, it also requires fulfilling the political, economic and social development responsibilities which the state is unwilling or fail to fulfill. However, there is a limit to which NGOs can act in the space. The NGOs have basically concentrated their resources and energies on the capacity building trajectory while

little work and resources are committed to advocacy and negotiations with the power holders. Of course, from the framework for analysis, we observed that, the conflicts will be transformed when all the decoupling and recoupling activities are carried out concurrently. Unfortunately however, the NGOs concentrate on decoupling to the neglect of recoupling. Even in the decoupling, no attention is paid to the poverty situation in the region. The people will only put their skills to use only when living conditions are improved and the unjust policies and structures are removed to allow for equity among the ethnic groups. But, the literature reveals that the NGOs do not pressure government and parliament to amend certain laws which are a source of conflict or initiate the passage of certain laws and policies to forestall certain unhealthy competitions among the people. This only increases the complexities of the conflicts as well as the dilemmas of the NGOs.

Clearly the analysis of the literature reveals that the existing traditional structures which the colonial masters created and were subsequently adopted by the post-colonial state do, in fact, account for the inequalities and exclusion leading to the endemic conflicts in the north. Again, same factors still render the conflicts difficult to resolve because the structures have become institutionalized and internalized by the people who profit from them. For instance, chieftaincy is one colonial legacy which neither the state nor the NGOs can push for their democratization. But the chieftaincy institution is one big obstacle that inhibits the transformation of the violence into the form desired by all.

In addition, NGOs claim neutrality and yet, depend on donor funding to execute their Peacebuilding projects. They as well operate within the 'boundaries of a nation-state and at the pleasure of a sovereign government' (Bratton, 1989: 570). This impinges on their neutrality and leaves them in a challenging juxtaposition. NGOs are said to be integrated into a wider political and administrative environment over which they have limited influence and even less control (Smith, 1980, quoted in Bratton, *ibid.* 581). They are therefore frayed between working in consonance with their donors' interests or, as it were, kowtowing to the subtle control of the state. Which ever side the NGOs adhere is capable of making their role(s) superficial which consequently increase the complexities of getting the conflicts transformed.

In light of the fact that NGOs are 'believed to be more participatory, flexible, innovative and effective' (Aggestam, 2003: 17), they are highly capable of transforming potentially violent conflicts into nonviolent and constructive forms if

they are able to integrate the 'new homegrown methods in which the best current practices' (Malan, 2005: 450) are compatible with the traditions of the people. This means that, the role NGOs play must be flexible, and avoid the one-fit-all syndrome in which they seek to transplant the gamut of western ideas and values into the developing world without due consideration of the cultural variations.

4.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore, analyze and understand the role (actual and potential) of NGOs in CT and how they do play the role. It also tried to understand what kinds of obstacles NGOs face in working to transform the NR's conflicts, given the background of both the state and NGOs interventions. From Table 1 above, we realized that the NGOs role in transforming conflicts include, but not limited to awareness creation; capacity enhancement and facilitation of discussions between opposing factions. The next chapter therefore draws conclusions based on the analysis.

Chapter 5:

CONCLUSIONS

This research investigated and analyzed the roles of NGOs in CT. Its primary concern was to answer the questions whether the involvement of NGOs in CT hinders or facilitates the transformation of conflicts in the NR. It also focused on investigating and understanding the role NGOs have played and how they play these roles alongside, or apart from the state in particular. The research was also aimed at uncovering why it has proven so difficult, and remains difficult in spite of interventions of both NGOs and the state, to resolve the conflicts in Ghana's northern region. In the last chapter we explored what it is about these conflicts that make them particularly intractable.

Having reviewed the available and relevant literature, the background to the problem, and having grappled with relevant concepts and methods, the paper came to the conclusions that:

1. First, conflict transformation and/ or resolution are inherently political. And for NGOs to facilitate their transformation from violence to non-violence and constructive forms, they have to be highly political; especially that they have to pressure state agencies, politicians and the state through advocacy and 'shaming' to reform the unjust policies and institutions that promote exclusion in their advocacy role. The NGOs must advocate for ethnic balance in accessing political power.

2. Second, I came to the realization that the conflicts are difficult to resolve because; both the state and the NGOs efforts are focused on treating instead of curing them. That is; the NGOs have failed to address the socio-economic and political inadequacies of the conflicts which we identified as historical legacies, poverty and the struggle for power. From the analysis, I observed that, addressing the conflicts is inextricably linked to addressing the poverty issue that plagued the region. This is because most people in the region impoverished are and will be highly 'preoccupied with their day-to-day survival, which they normally do not see as dependent on [any conflict] situation' (Orjuela, 2003: 200). They hardly will listen to awareness creation outreach programmes or attend meetings. And since the NGOs' focus is on stopping violence rather than eliminating it, the roots of the conflicts remain untransformed which could rekindle fresh skirmishes as soon as something triggers misunderstanding between any Minority and Majority ethnic groups. I suggest that, as the structural inequalities are age-old, the NGOs

approaches should encompass all the activities in both decoupling and recoupling to address the underlying causes of the inequalities, which as it were covertly or overtly account for the naked confrontations in the region instead of seeking to address particular conflicts.

3. Furthermore, the paper came to the conclusion that NGOs involvement in CT could transform the conflicts. That is, they could transform potential violence into opportunities for development if they remained committed to, and vigorously plan and execute activities that will enable them achieve their set objectives. However, the study noted that, NGOs initiatives are typically western which do not encompass all activities of decoupling and recoupling. The NGOs roles, i.e., awareness creation, capacity-building and advocacy are planned and executed in the form of a project rather than strategically and contextually addressing peculiar cases of conflicts in a traditional setting. Simply put, the NGOs have not 'traditionalized' their activities. And since most of the roots are traditional, only traditional forms of resolving conflicts are ideal, necessary and sufficient. For instance; it is untraditional, in fact, an affront to the tradition to mix the chief with the 'ordinary' in a meeting setting to discuss issues relating to his authority.

4. In addition, from the background through to the literature to analysis, it was uncovered that conflicts – even violent conflicts – can present opportunity for social change. However, this research discovered that, in the case of the NR the desired change is not engendered because the NGOs interventions have failed to create the platforms conducive for constructive dialogue and grassroots participation. Participation in capacity-building activities in conflict dynamics is selective and has cost implications. Thus, capacity-building opportunities are only accessible to the elites and not the grassroots. The conflicts have failed to generate any positive social change but are inherently destructive. Perhaps it is also largely due to the particular ways in which the state mediates conflicts. Whilst in the liberal conception of the state, it might generally be expected that the state would take the lead in CT through its public policy by bridging the inequality gaps and promoting inclusion in the region, this analysis suggests that on the contrary, the state's role is almost inevitably embedded in power politics, which often serves to institutionalize exclusion. I argue that the state promotes exclusion and marginalization in its public policy making deliberately to as it were manipulate the minds of the 'Northerners' to continually provide cheap labour for the industries in the south. In furtherance of this objective and as stated earlier in this study, the

state still concentrates the industries that could provide employment opportunities to the people of the north in the already affluent and relatively peaceful south as was revealed in Chapter three. Empowering the people through employment opportunities could increase the people's income and consequently reduce poverty induced conflicts. The state also institutionalized the 'hegemonization' of the cephalous ethnic groups at the peril of the acephalous groups by its constitutional provisioning as enshrined in articles 270 and 271. In light of this, this paper can conclude that, the conflicts become difficult to resolve because the state contributes to the complexities of the conflicts instead of providing a serene and peaceful atmosphere for all its citizens.

5. Besides, both the state and the NGOs play parallel politics in their engagement in the transformation of the conflicts in the region. Even though the NGOs operate within the state boundaries and in the confines of political spaces, there is hardly any collaboration and harmonization between the state agencies and the NGOs. As we realized from the literature that, conflicts are multilayered, it is therefore absolutely necessary that they require more than one actor to address the different trajectories and manifestations of it. However, a critical review of the literature reveals that, there is rarely any synergy between the NGOs and the state agencies even at the local government level. The NGOs have only forged relations with the state in instances where they (NGOs) seek government financial and other logistical support to build the capacities of local government staff. This relationship, I argue, impinges on the NGOs claim of neutrality. Because, the state is inherently political and will politicize its relationship with the NGOs which will derail the NGOs image as non-political organizations. Therefore, to facilitate the transformation of the conflicts, I suggest that a more non-political relationship should be forged between the NGOs and the state. The interventions should also be multi-faceted and focus more on transforming the unjust structures and the systems in which the roots of the conflicts embed rather than on individuals whose capacities are enhanced but cannot transcend the structures to transform the conflicts.

5.1 Conclusion

I know is not within the scope of this research to investigate the kind of relationship that should exist between the state and NGOs. Therefore, further

research could be carried out to investigate this. Investigating how the traditional structures could be transformed to serve as an empowering tool to the indigenous people is also a potential area for further research.

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