Understanding Conflict Dynamics: Identifying 'attractors' in the Alavanyo - Nkonya Conflict

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Abstract

One of the key attributes of ethnic conflicts is that they could be complex and intractable. Peace-building efforts aimed at resolving ethnic conflicts therefore need to be informed by the interwoven factors that bring dynamism and complexities (intractability) to the conflict. In an exploratory qualitative study of the almost century-old, seemingly intractable Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict in Ghana, a thematic analysis of primary and secondary data revealed some significant elements (attractors) that contribute to the positive and negative dynamics of the conflict.

The study identifies four elements that serve as positive attractors (peace factors) and negative attractors (tension factors) in this conflict. These include, conflict management efforts, anonymous killings, communal content over time, and the media. Out of these four, one (anonymous killing) is an outright negative attractor and the other three could serve as positive or negative attractors depending on the time, nature and circumstance under which they manifest. These three are fluid attractors and have shown to be more or less determining of the conflict depending on how they impact the conflict and perceived by conflict parties. Overall, this study finds that the effect of positive attractors have had a greater influence than negative attractors and this could explain why relative calm exists in the area over the course of the conflict.

The study concludes that the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict is protracted because of these dynamics and recommends that state agencies and mediators adopt a modified peace-building approach that transforms the conflict, pays attention to original conflict actors and pursue the possibility of amicably setting aside the hurdle of previous court rulings.

Keywords: Conflict Dynamics, Ethnic Conflicts, Peace-building, Alavanyo, Nkonya, Ghana

1. Introduction

Complex conflicts, as intractable conflicts tend to have many different sources of tension located at multiple levels (individual, group, communal, and so on) over time and which often interact with each other to feed or sustain hostilities temporally (Coleman, Vallacher, Nowak, & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2007). Mitchell (2005), explains how dynamism lends to the complexity of conflicts by stating that the sources of hostilities in such intractable conflicts often change continually and at any given time may be more or less determining of the peace-building efforts around the conflict. It is therefore expected that the dynamics of a conflict would have implications for the success of peace-building efforts, especially because peace-building is a response to conflict or the threat of it. Moreover, peace-building is a dynamic process aimed at avoiding a relapse into conflict (United Nations, 2014). As the African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) explains, peace-building is a complex and continuously changing term with several key characteristics, including; the long-term nature of the process, the interdependence of the actors and the multidimensional nature of the process (ACCORD, 2013). This suggests therefore that the success of peace-building efforts during conflicts, rely heavily on the ability of peace-building agents and conflict managers to understand the dynamics of the conflict.

Ghana is a significantly peaceful country but not without its own intra-state conflicts. The 2015 Global Peace Index (GPI) ranks Ghana 6th out of 44 countries in sub-Saharan Africa[1] and this makes it a relatively stable and safe country in the region. Nevertheless, it is important to seriously pay attention to observations made by Kendie, Osei-Kufuor and Boakye (2014) that, while Ghana has been praised as generally peaceful, it is obvious that violence occurs from time to time in conflicts that may be ethnic, religious, economic or political in nature.

1.1 Background of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict study

In a comprehensive conflict mapping exercise by Kendie et al., (2014), ethnic and resource-related conflicts have been identified as problematic conflict types in Ghana. One of these conflicts is the one between the people of Alavanyo-Kpeme and the people of Nkonya-Tayi. These are two local communities sharing a border in the

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[1] Ghana's rank in the 2014 GPI was 7th out of 44 Sub-Saharan African countries

Volta Region of Ghana located in the south-eastern part of the country. This conflict can be linked to ethnicity and competition over land (Kendie et al., 2014). Tsikata and Seini (2004) explain that the Alavanyo/Nkonya conflict has arisen from an 80-year (now 91-year) old boundary dispute between the Nkonya, a Guan group and the Alavanyo; an Ewe group.

The current state of affairs is that presently, the Alavanyo-Kpeme people farm on the disputed land but the Nkonya-Tayi people are now demanding their land which they claim was given to the people of Alanvayo-Kpeme who came there as settlers. However, the Alavanyo-Kpeme people are not prepared to give up the land to Nkonya-Tayi because they fear losing their source of livelihood (Kendie et al., 2014). Following this, there have been numerous violent clashes at different times and places in the course of this conflict and many attempts to bring lasting peace to the area has not been successful. Kendie et al., (2014) report that, since the conflict begun, there have been 6 violent incidences in: 1923, 1983, 2003, 2004, 2012 and 2013.

Kendie et al., (2014) further report that the violence associated with the conflict seems to have moved beyond Nkonya-Tayi and Alavanyo-Kpeme to involve incidents across the wider traditional areas of Alavanyo and Nkonya. In recent times, killings occur in neighbouring towns and the violence is being perpetrated by unknown persons. In 2014, there was a reported shooting, in vigilante-style, of a soldier on a peacekeeping mission in the area ("Military man shot", 2014) and in 2015, two separate killings of a man and a woman (by unknown assailants) was also reported (Sixty-eight year old killed, 2015). The man was on his way to his farm and the woman was shot in front of her house where she was fetching water from a barrel.

These events make it difficult to clearly identify what the motivations for violence are in contemporary times and such observations raise questions about the trajectory of this conflict. It also makes resolution difficult, especially in identifying actors and victims of the conflict. Besides, there have been different modes of intervention such as court settlements and mediation but the violence still goes on; creating a complex phenomenon in the analysis of the conflict. In such a case, it is not enough to end at simply identifying the causes of the conflict as seen in the literature (Kendie et al., 2014; Tsikata & Seini, 2004), but to move beyond that and focus on the elements in the course of this conflict that contribute to its dynamics over time.

Our objective in this study is therefore to examine the temporal dynamics of this conflict with specific focus on identifying positive attractors (peace enhancers) and negative attractors (tension producers) in the conflict. Understanding such dynamics in the conflict will help in making recommendations for sustainable peace-building. Such understanding is drawn from an analysis of field data collected through interviews of key informants who are parties to the conflict and those who have played a third party role in mediation efforts of the conflict. Supported with some secondary data from news sources, these data were thematically analyzed to identify the key issues that contribute to the dynamics of the conflict.

2.1 Dynamics of Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict; a theoretical perspective

The sources of hostilities in intractable conflict settings often change continually and at any given time may be more or less determining of the conflict (Mitchell, 2005) and these variables of conflict intractability can be somewhat linked to the phenomenon of conflict traps (Mack and Nielsen, 2005).

The Dynamical systems theory (DST) explains how interests, motivations and identities in conflict change over the cause of time. It was used by Coleman et al., (2007) to explain the complex dynamics of conflicts and why conflicts resist resolution. We observe that the DST can provide an understanding for protracted conflicts that are based on key issues of interest such as identity, the security dilemma, fear of extinction (Horowitz, 1985), and the fear of the future (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). Looking at intractable conflicts from the DST perspective, all these are interrelated, influence each other and could change over time to create complexity.

DST also provide a framework for constructive engagement of conflict parties and their interests. According to the dynamical systems model of constructive engagement (Coleman, et al., 2007) conflicts become intractable as their various elements (thoughts, feelings, actions, issues, norms, symbols, etc.) link together and organize into strong patterns or attractors for destructive interactions, where the elements become mutually reinforcing and self-perpetuating and therefore resistant to change.

We identify that DST is supported by previous findings of scholars on the motivations of conflict based on psychological or rational calculations. For instance, Gunther (2004) reasons that what people are negotiating or fighting about is a fundamental question in analysis of conflict. Even though conflicts may occur as a result of structural differences between and among individuals or groups, such differences are further complicated by the attitudes and actions taken by the conflicting parties (Galtung, 1996). Ross (2001) explains that when people fight, they war about interests, but the way this is done, the intensity of feelings, and the lengths to which

disputants go to defend or acquire what they believe is their right has an important rational component which is not well understood. Moreover, Langridge (2012) argues that the security dilemma surrounding ethnic conflicts make them rational. Such rational calculations could inform violence in a very murky and non-linear way especially because, conflicts are multidimensional and could occur because of primordial and institutional factors as well as the actions of political entrepreneurs, and the competition over resources (Blagojevic, 2009).

The context of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict is indeed multidimensional. First, there are the primordial issues of migration, sharing of boundaries, ancestral inheritances of land, ethnic affiliations and erroneous maps (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). There are also institutional lapses in the form of non-adherence to previous court rulings (Kendie et al., 2014). Finally there are intermittent violence episodes recorded over the years. Whilst these things are known, the big question is how these factors actually bring dynamics to the conflict, and this is yet to be explained in literature. We believe this is imperative because as Smith, (1991) explains, for such conflicts there is the need to explain the social, cultural, and political dynamics that determine how enduring specific identities are, and how they change.

In the next session, we would explain, empirically, which particular factors and events over the years have contributed to escalating or de-escalating the conflict. Explaining these will help peace-building interventionists in understanding the changes in the profile of the conflict so they can adjust their peace-building strategies to meet these dynamics. After all, while root causes may matter as motivation for intervening in a conflict, Woodward (2007) explains that it is the outcomes of violence and not the causes of conflict that are important to inform intervention.

3.1 Positive and Negative 'Attractors' of the Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict: empirical perspective

Coleman and Vallacher (2010) use the term 'attractors' to refer to agents of destructive interaction within a conflicting society. Borrowing that terminology and with the understanding that conflicts could escalate or de-escalate based on certain circumstances, we differentiate between 'positive attractors' and 'negative attractors'. We use 'positive attractors' to refer to those elements within the conflict society that promote peace or tone down tensions, and negative attractors to refer to those that stir up tension.

The study found four elements that serve as positive or negative attractors. These include, conflict management efforts, anonymous killings, communal content in the conflict over time and the media. Out of this four, one (anonymous killings) is an outright negative attractor and the other three are fluid and serve as positive or negative attractors depending on the time, nature and circumstance that they become relevant. Overall, it can be assumed that the effect of the positive attractors are greater than the effect of negative attractors and this has contributed to the relative calm over the course of the conflict.

3.1.1 Communal content: attractor and divider

Azar (1985) uses the term 'communal content' to refer to the socio-cultural elements of a community that make up the way of life of a given people and explains that these elements could be fuels of violence. The onset of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has a strong foundation on the communal content of the two societies and the formation of the structural issues of dispute. The strong economic value of land and strong attachment to agriculture as the main economic activity made it plausible for land to become the basis of discord between the two ethnic communities. As Galtung (1996) notes, these issues serve as precursors of conflict (Galtung, 1996). Both communities (Nkonya-Tayi and Alavanyo-Kpeme) had similar communal content. There was an overlap in their sources of livelihood leading to a zero sum struggle. This notion was supported by the narratives from an Nkonya respondent who is party to the conflict:

"The land is still very relevant for the Nkonyas because before 1983, Tayi people were able to produce 80 tonnes of cocoa. They are not stool lands, they belong to individuals, and families farm there. Part of the land is a forest reserve and so our farms are really there. The land is still very relevant to us. Since we are no longer working there we are very poor."

Blagojevic (2009) and Olzak (1992) have highlighted the importance of economic considerations to fuel conflicts in multi-ethnic societies. We also observe in this case that the economic value of the land is also now a key fuel to the sustenance and expansion of the conflict. However, the economic interest has moved beyond just farming to the sawing of wood from individuals perceived to be from both sides. As an Alavanyo respondent submitted:

"There are some people from both sides who are sawing wood in the area. So those sawing wood are trying to prevent others from sawing wood. What you are doing is illegal and you are policing another person who is also going to saw wood. One of the Alavanyo youth had his chainsaw confiscated at gun point by Nkonya youth.

Today if that youth sees the others using their chain saw, what do you expect him to do?"

The communal content also makes it viable for the violence to spread from the initial two primary communities (Alavanyo-Kpeme and Nkonya- Tayi) to the entire Alavanyo and Nkonya traditional areas (Kendie et al., 2014). Aside the economic consequences of violence, population growth comes with relative scarcity of the primary economic resource for multi-ethnic societies and this leads to more people feeling the frustration of the (apparent) deprivation of resource. This is especially so when population growth is not matched by diversification of economic activity employment hence creating a situation of economic deprivation which is a key fuel of conflict (Olzak, 1992; Azar, 1985). The interview responses above, reveal that the strong economic value of the land makes it very attractive as well as a motivating factor for criminals to take advantage of the conflict.

Nevertheless, the role of communal content is not all bad news. Aside the role communal content plays as a fuel for the onset and progression of the conflict, it is also a barrier to full scale violence. One respondent highlights an interesting scenario that could be seen as a positive effect of communal content. The respondent notes:

"Let me tell you something….I was nearly killed by my own relative…from members of the other side. My relative only got there to realise that the one he had been tasked to kill was his own blood".

It is fair to say that, the protraction of this conflict has not seen an increase in violent manifestations and this phenomenon could also be explained with the concept of communal content. Ross (1997), for instance, argues that rural communities and their members are, in fact, connected by multiple social networks and over the range of issues that make up their social life. The findings of this study suggest that the social linkages in the communities involved contributes as a positive attractor that tones down hostility. All the respondents agree that there is a lot that the two communities share in common (in terms of historical family relations), that an attempt to wage any violence on the other side will be self-inflicting. In effect, it is not easy to frame 'us' versus 'them' due to the blurred line and identity shift in the settler-native dichotomy (Ruanne and Todd, 1996).

Such communal dynamics make it very difficult for overt clashes between the people. This observation is a significant deviation from the perceived dividing role that primordial issues play in conflict. Blagojevic (2009) identifies primordial issues as key to the manipulative power of political entrepreneurs during the competition over resources. However in this case we find that the strong historical family connection between people from the two communities makes it difficult to mobilise along those lines for open violent confrontation. Some of the responses from mediators of the conflict highlight the nature of connection between the two communities:

"[t]hey cook their food and invite their counterparts from the other side".

"We should be mindful of the fact that when you kill your brother or relative, there are serious curse implications to that. They are all brothers and sisters"

There is another positive effect that change in communal content has in the conflict. Since the conflict started over 91 years ago, the demographic constitution of the two societies in conflict have undergone some significant changes which have had a bearing on the conflict. The original protagonists of the conflict are no longer existing, the volatile peace in the area has sparked emigration of the youth also play a role in diffusing the ossification of historical and primordial bitterness (Coser, 1957).

Hence for this conflict, the role of communal content is both a positive and negative attractor. As illustrated from the field data collected, these can be summarised from three angles. First, a negative effect in relation to the onset of the conflict; second, both positive and negative effect in relation to the progression of the conflict; and finally a positive effect on the containment of the violence.

3.1.2 The media: positive and negative attractor

During the field interviews, respondents did raise some concerns about the role of the media. Though the respondents were not very critical of the media, they believed that there were still some outlets and reportage that can be flagged as bias. As one of the Nkonya respondents said:

"The media, sometimes don't consult us before they break the news. Like in those days when a soldier was shot at the Alavanyo side, they said it was us [the Nkonya] without proof. There is also this local radio station (Sekpele community radio at Nikpe) that has been inciting Ewes against us."

An Alavanyo respondent had this to say:

"The media reportage, you can always find some problem with them. But as far as I know there have not been any adverse reportage or complaint of the media that adversely affected the process".

The narratives above show that the role of the media is mixed. Whilst the media could be lauded for bringing to light the acts of violence, the progress made in the conflict management process and championing the campaign for peace, it has also been implicated as a negative propaganda tool for division and heightening tension (Tsikata & Seini, 2004).

Aside the field data, secondary sources of data also indicate how critical the media has been in the course of this conflict. The onset of the conflict has seen many words traded in the media, ranging from press conferences, to editorials written by experts and representative of the parties in conflict. But the impact of this media frenzy is mixed. Even though media reports play a key role in calling the state's attention to respond to acts of violence, they also become precursors of retributive action by the parties in conflict. Even more worrying, is the fact that some of these reports were said to be unconfirmed by the security apparatus. For instance, Tsikata and Seini (2004) cite a media report of 21st April 2003 that armed men from Nkonya had camped at Akrofu near Ho to attack the people there even though the police did not confirm it. Such reports have a tendency to inflame passions.

There is also an apparent attempt by some persons to manipulate the media to their advantage. This is again hinted by Tsikata and Seini (2004) who write about an incident reported to have taken place on 17 April 2003 but appeared in the 12 June edition of the Ghanaian Times. Such a delay is likely to have been a strategic replay of events by a party for instrumentalist purposes.

3.1.3 Intervention efforts: positive and negative attractors

The responses gathered from the field interviews led to the mixed conclusion that whilst peace interventions may be beneficial in conflict, the manner and timing could also create challenges for lasting peace. The interventions seen in this conflict include, military detachments to the area, curfews, judicial court rulings and mediation processes that broke down in 2009.

One Nkonya respondent said:

"..When we proposed our ideas for resolution saying the courts have ruled on the matter, the chairman of the mediation committee said we were taking them back (that we had taken an entrenched position) and I was surprised to hear them say that we should not be slaves to court ruling. This brought some unease in the room. So we suspected that the mediation committee was influenced by the Alavanyos to bring that proposal and that's why we boycotted the mediation and we are not willing to go back since they are not willing to listen to our side."

An Alavanyo respondent speaking about the court decision said:

The court verdict they [Nkonyas] are relying on, someone needs to draw their attention and tell them that it was for some individuals and that should not affect the other areas under the traditional paramountcy."

Cleary, the court decision[1] and its interpretation has become a key point of disagreement to the point of hurting an attempted mediation. In fact, it is one of the main reasons why mediation has stalled, as seen in the narratives above. First, the mediation committee proposed to divide the disputed area between parties which implicitly would be side-stepping the courts' rulings in favour of one party. This is not welcome from the Nkonya side. Also, some police crackdown and arrests that have followed instances of violence have been seen as biased depending on which party had people arrested. As gathered from the responses on the field, these institutional actions have affected at least one faction's perception that their interests are being undermined by state institutions or in connivance with the other party. The perceptions of the negotiators change as the contexts that influence them change. Such perceived unfairness create or resurrect active contention settings that are conducive to inter-group competition (Belanger & Pinard, 1991).

Despite this effect, state intervention efforts have served as a positive attractor in some ways. It is important to note that generally, the conflict would have been more devastating without these interventions. A trend analysis conducted by Penu (2015) of the conflict shows that the conflict management interventions have always been more than the violence and it is fair to say that their overall effect tilt towards the direction of relative peace. This is a positive observation and in this regard serves as a general positive attractor. These state interventions have provided a platform and avenue where conflicting parties seek redress. They have served as the channels that filter the causes of conflict (Morris, 2001) and also have helped in playing down the primordial or structural

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[1] Tsikata and Seini (2004) cite reports that here have been about 4 court decisions given between 1975 and 1980 concerning the disputed land all in favor of the Nkonya. The Alavanyos claim the Grunner Map of 1913 on which the decision was based was inaccurate and does not take into consideration historic indigenous landmarks.

contentions between the parties (Blagojevic, 2009).

Another positive attractor is that the police and military detachments have helped to deter full-scale violent confrontations. The mediation committee was also successful in getting the parties to dialogue for sometime and the court rulings, at the early stages of the conflict, also brought some resolution to the dispute leading to some tenancy atonements to be made. All these highlight the benefit of democratic dispensations to provide space for political bargaining and compromise between ethnic subgroups (Prazauskas, 1991). It also highlights the fact that such state institutions of conflict management help in diffusing conflict situations at an early stage before they have opportunity to escalate to full scale war (Dixon, 1994).

3.1.4 The intermittent violence and killings: a negative attractor

The killings that have occurred along the course of this conflict have always created a setback for the gains made through intervention efforts. All the respondents agree that some of the killings are a reaction of vengeance for earlier killings. Unfortunately, the history of this conflict has seen anonymous, non-battle related deaths occurring intermittently. It makes it very difficult therefore to sustain the peace in the area. Aside this, it is also the reason why the conflict is expanding across neighbouring communities under the two traditional areas. This is because, those who are killed are usually not directly linked to the conflict and they in-turn become actors out of grievance and frustration. The narrative below is a classical illustration of how a false alarm of killing was used to shatter progress made on the mediation committee:

> *"..During the process, when we were just about to sign the agreement, there was some story brought in that Alavanyo people had entered Nkonya and were killing people. I called back home and the bishops from the various sides also called back home. The feedback they got was that there was no attack going on. Even one of our elders said there was an Nkonya woman selling fish where he was standing. But this is how everything was scattered".*

We argue therefore that the killings (and news of killings) have developed into a strong pattern of attractors for destructive interactions, reinforcing tension and therefore resistant to positive change. These killings are not just a matter of insecurity, they are also a matter of intractability for the conflict.

4.1 Restoring peace in the Alavanyo / Nkonya conflict area

4.1.1 Setting aside the court decision

On the face of the positions presented by the conflicting parties, there seems to be no zone of possible agreement. The field interviews still re-echoed the entrenched positions of the parties. The Nkonya side stuck with their call for adherence to the court decision:

> *"What can be done differently is the government intervention. And then making a pronouncement [on the court decisions in our favour]. Military attachment and [land] sharing won't solve the problem"*

The Alavanyos discount the court claims:

> *"The court verdict they are relying on, someone needs to draw their attention and tell them that it was for some individuals and that should not affect the other areas under the traditional paramountcy. 7 people from Kpeme and a few from Tayi. That would be a problem for about just 10 individuals."*

A member of the mediation committee shared some very helpful insight on how things can be done differently going forward. He focusses on promoting communal relations:

> *"We must be concerned about one another. But this should tell us from now on that if there is a court case, and it is not working, the parties should be made to sign an undertaking to set aside the court case. For instance along the line in the past things were going well and a lawyer came in to use the court ruling to set back everything. And the people to sign won't be paramount chiefs, the people themselves should be made to speak for themselves. Surrogate parties should be minimal; direct parties should talk for themselves. We have been working with "strategic allies" and you leave out the people themselves out. Let us not make a mistake to think that the chiefs can deal with the matter if it does not concern them."*

Hence, whilst the conflict parties' positions may seem incompatible, this narrative highlights the potential in using the fluidity of communal content (Azar, 1985) to move the peace process forward. However, as Vukovic (2014) recommends, there is the need to 'subtract some players' from the mediation process. The use of surrogate negotiators on behalf of the originally affected individuals in the land dispute seems to have blurred the clear identification of affected individuals and to surgically deal with their disagreements.

The hurdle of previous court rulings is also key to a lasting resolution to the conflict. We find it

understandable (though unfortunate) why the court decision has been a bane of the mediation process. The court decision has now become a very key point of departure for both parties. This problem is as a result of the rights-based approach inherent in the deterministic process of the courts in dealing with the conflict at the early stages (in the 1950s). We observe that the interpretation of this court ruling has created some setback for the peace process. As Parlevliet (2015) argues, it is better to focus on the common economic and social rights of conflicting parties rather than the political and civil rights. The former has the potential to widen the zone of possible agreement for the parties in conflict. This is why the earlier agenda of promoting infrastructural development for economic growth in the region should be resurrected and given higher priority; for example, the 'Jubilee Road' from Gbi-Wegbe through Alavanyo to Nkonya- Tayi in the newly created Biakoye district that was intended to celebrate the strides in resolving the decades old land dispute but was stalled ("Lodonu bemoans", 2009). A focus on economic and social rights could have a strong effect as hinted in this response by a mediation team member:

"You see, some of the people have farms in the area and they think that if they don't fight for what is theirs it will be difficult for them to have food for their families…They may not want war but they don't also want to lose their property"

4.1.2: Refraining from militarising the disputed area

Already there is a significant presence of security forces around the disputed land at the border between Alvanyo-Kpeme and Nkonya-Tayi and there are plans to ramp that up ("Military moves shooting range", 2015). However, all the respondents agreed that militarisation of the area is not enough to solve the problem and may raise more problems than solutions. This is because a take-over may be interpreted by the Nkonyas as government's decision to deprive them of what is rightfully theirs (as decided by the courts). Also, government would not be able to provide security for all areas taken over. The curfews being imposed on the areas do not seem to be sustainable, at least in the eyes of those dealing with the conflict. As a mediation team member explains:

"..That we can 'transform' this conflict which would make people able to go around their business peacefully. Curfew is not a solution to the problem, it's a security measure. We should be able to have the institutions to isolate the individuals who perpetrate violence and so that people don't use them as reasons to perpetuate it."

As I have already discussed, the court decision is a key point of departure. It challenges the introduction of any new institutional arrangements to pursue a reconciliatory resolution of this conflict. In this way the court decisions have served as a negative attractor. One of the problems of setting aside the court ruling, is the fear dilemma of ambush. Hence before thinking about setting aside the court action, there is the need to introduce fear-reducing institutions for those whose interests would be affected. Fear-reducing institutions were critical for arriving at the Arusha Accords (Vandeginste, 2009). One respondent gave a clue to which area to look at:

"You see the churches were doing well in getting the people to get to negotiation. But since this has not worked fully, maybe we need to engage other stakeholders who can speak to the conscience of the actors to see reason to stop fighting. You see, if someone you respect came to speak to you to stop an action, you will do it"

With some youth migrating out of the communities, there is a diaspora community that can be called in as norm-diffusing external actors to pressurise negotiators towards peaceful resolution (Vandeginste, 2015). There is the need to maximise the potential of external norm-diffusing forces; the youth, state institutions and economic activity that can transform the conflict. The road project that was stalled in 2005 was a lost opportunity to transform the conflict through an economic boom.

5.0 Conclusion

The empirical data gathered suggest that there is a seeming apathy that has seeped into many years of 'negative peace' (Galtung, 1969) in Alavanyo-Kpeme and Nkonyaa-tayi. Therefore conflict transformation through increased economic activity, can become the viable way forward to lasting peace in conflicting areas between the two communities in Alavanyo and Nkonya. In order to transform the conflict however, there is the need to pay attention to the positive attractors that promote peace as opposed to the negative attractors that stir up tension and to focus on policies that promote the former. In the long term, conflict managers should aim at introducing an 'instigating belief' (Bar-Tal et al., 2010) which will contradict the previously strongly held beliefs that there is a need to continue the conflict. This could be done by either taking a look at the possibility of legal manoeuvring to set aside the court decision already arrived at or by focussing on economic development in the area since many are aggrieved because of the economic utility of the land. Getting an instigating belief promoted through positive attractors like economic development might stimulate people to move away from their basic

position and look for alternative ideas.

Finally, we are of the view that as long as there is a positive net effect between the positive attractors and the negative attractors, relative peace would prevail in Alavanyo and Nkonya. However since these dynamics are fluid and could be influenced by so many things, including political electioneering such as the impending 2016 elections in Ghana, there is the need for state conflict management institutions to act fast to dampen the prospects of a resurgence in open violence in the conflict area. Coleman et al., (2010) advices that in searching for any new positive attractor, it is of utmost importance to identify one that is embedded in the society's culture, so that it will be naturally sustained.

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