

The Scramble for the Partition of the Northern Region of Ghana: Conflict and the Quest for the Coterminality of Cultural and Political Boundaries

M. H. A. Bolaji

Department of Social, Political and Historical Studies (SPHS)

University for Development Studies (UDS)

Wa Campus, UWR, Ghana

Email: mhabolaji@hotmail.com; hganiy@uds.edu.gh

and

Mohammed Adam Gariba

Registrar, Dagbon Traditional Council

Northern Region, Ghana

Email: adam_gariba@yahoo.co.uk; mmbapai@gmail.com

Abstract

The Northern Region was not only the largest administrative region in Ghana, but it was also almost one-third of the landmass of Ghana. Since 1960 there have been calls from various constituencies for it to be split into two or more manageable regions for rapid development. Eventually, the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) government put in place mechanisms to create new regions out of three – including the Northern Region – of the existing ten regions. As the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) began its consultations with the traditional authorities and other stakeholders, a scramble ensued between two kingdoms in the then Northern Region to ensure that their cultural boundaries were coterminous with the political boundaries of the regions to be created. This paper disseminates the findings of a qualitative research work that took place between October 2017 and June 2018 in the then Northern Region, Ghana. The research aimed at investigating the politics and conflicts that accompanied Dagbon's and Gonja's claim of non-cession of their territories to the new regions to be created. After establishing the interconnectedness between territory, sovereignty, and identity, the study unearths how the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict shaped the various perspectives on the regional reorganization (RR) in Dagbon and how the regional reorganization (RR) revitalized the minority question in Gonjaland. Drawing on internal self-determination, it concludes with a note that underscores the importance of kingdoms when it comes to territories and their demarcations in modern states in Africa.

Keywords: *regional reorganization (RR); partition; coterminality; non-cession; kingdoms; conflicts Northern Region*

Résumé

La région du Nord était non seulement la plus grande région administrative du Ghana, mais elle représentait également près d'un tiers de la masse continentale du Ghana. Depuis 1960, il a été demandé à diverses circonscriptions de le diviser en deux ou plusieurs régions gérables pour un développement rapide. Finalement, le gouvernement du Nouveau Parti patriotique (NPP) a mis en place des mécanismes pour créer de nouvelles régions sur trois – y compris la région du Nord – des dix régions existantes. Alors que la Commission d'enquête (CoI) entamait ses consultations avec les autorités traditionnelles et d'autres parties prenantes, une brouille s'est ensuivie entre deux royaumes de la région du Nord d'alors pour s'assurer que leurs frontières culturelles coïncidaient avec les frontières politiques des régions à créer. Cet article diffuse les résultats d'un travail de recherche qualitative qui a eu lieu entre octobre 2017 et juin 2018 dans la région du Nord de l'époque, au Ghana. La recherche visait à enquêter sur la politique et les conflits qui ont accompagné la revendication de Dagbon et Gonja de la non-cession de leurs territoires aux nouvelles régions à créer. Après avoir établi l'interdépendance entre le territoire, la souveraineté et l'identité, l'étude révèle comment le conflit de la chefferie de Dagbon a façonné les différentes perspectives de la réorganisation régionale (RR) à Dagbon et comment la réorganisation régionale (RR) a revitalisé la question minoritaire au Gonjaland. S'appuyant sur l'autodétermination interne, il conclut par une note qui souligne l'importance des royaumes en ce qui concerne les territoires et leurs démarcations dans les États modernes d'Afrique.

Mots-clés: réorganisation régionale (RR); cloison; coterminalité; non-cession; royaumes; conflits Région du Nord

Introduction

The Northern Region (NR) was not only the largest administrative region in Ghana with a landmass of 70, 384 square kilometers, but it was also almost one-third of the landmass of Ghana. It was a multi-ethnic region with ethnic groups such as the Dagomba, the Gonja, the Mamprusi, the Nanumba, the Komkonba, the Chokosi, the Basare, Bimoba, Nawuri, Nchumuru, Tampulma and the Vagala (Awedoba 2009). With 28 administrative districts,¹ it was one of the regions with the largest number of districts (see Map 1). The vastness of its landmass provoked calls for its partition from the chiefs, politicians and development practitioners. Partitioning, it was thought, could bring effective administration and accelerated development and address the lopsided distribution of the national cake, the concentration of development at the center, high illiteracy, and unemployment (Kassim 2009).

Map 1: The Current Structure of the Northern Region



Source: Haruna, A. 2018. *Bliss Art Works*

It is noteworthy to state that the two main political parties in Ghana – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the New Democratic Party (NDC) – captured their intention to create additional regions in their 2016 manifestos if voted into power (NDC Manifesto 2016; NPP Manifesto 2016). In his electoral victory tour, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo reiterated the NPP government’s commitment to carving new regions out of the three regions namely, the Western Region (WR), the Volta Region, the Brong Ahafo Region, and the Northern Region. The NPP created the Ministry of Regional Reorganisation and Development (MoRRD) and charged with overseeing the creation of the new regions. In line with Article 78 (1) of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, Dan Kwaku Botwe was on 31st March 2017 to run MoRRD (Ntramah 2017).

No sooner had that MoRRD started its work than there emerged an intense struggle between and among the various interest groups in the then Northern Region over the formula the reorganization should take. One theme that immediately seized the Ghanaian political landscape was the non-cessation of cultural boundaries. The traditional authorities’ strong desire – as expressed in various petitions, negotiations,

meetings, and public fora – was that reorganization should be done in ways that would maintain the cultural boundaries and make them coterminous with the administrative regions. This cultural factor – to put it more bluntly kingdom-maintaining attitude – featured prominently in the politics, the lobbying and the conflict that surrounded the reorganization of the region. This paper focuses on the scramble for the partitioning of the NR with a particular focus on two kingdoms, namely Dagbon and Gonja.

The paper is structured into seven principal sections. The first section marks this introductory note and the second section explains the study's methods of data collection and analysis. The third section addresses the theoretical and conceptual issues, the nationalist factor in political restructuring, and the pros and cons of ethnic-based political restructuring. In the fourth section, the paper traces the history and the politics of political restructuring in Ghana starting from the three-region structure in the colonial era to the current 10-region structure. The fifth section examines the establishment of the MoRRD, the appointment of a nine-member CoI, its terms of reference and its mode of consultations. Section Six deals with the politics of the coterminality and the associated non-cession of the Dagbon's territory. It also explores how the protracted Dagbon chieftaincy conflict made in-roads into the debate and the stances associated with the RR. The section also studies the bilateral proposal from Dagbon and Nannug. In Section Seven, the paper investigated the politics of the Gonja Traditional Council's (GTC) non-cession of its territory, the minority questions it unearthed and the politics exclusion from the proposed Savanna Region. It concludes with a note that highlighted the power which the kingdoms wield in modern states in Africa.

The Study's Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

This paper disseminates the findings of a qualitative research work that took place between October 2017 and June 2018 in the Northern Region of Ghana. The research's overarching aim was to investigate the politics and conflicts that accompanied the two kingdom's (Dagbon and Gonja) claim of non-cession of their territories to a new region in a bid to ensure the coterminality of their cultural boundaries and the new administrative regions. To achieve this overarching aim, the other relevant research objectives are: Why do kingdoms still wield so much influence in multinational African states in matters of political restructuring? What opposition did the campaign for non-cession of territory encounter in the two kingdoms? What were the motivations for the various proposals for the reorganisation and the oppositions against them? What are the implications of the opposition for inter-ethnic or group relations?

Through purposive sampling, the study interviewed some *naanima* (chiefs), opinion leaders, ethnic youth associations' activists and leaders, and politicians as key informants. With a semi-structured interview guide with largely open-ended questions – that allowed

the respondents to express themselves freely –, the interview focused on some research themes. The research themes were: reasons for reorganisation of the regions; making sense with non-cession; inclusionist and exclusionist campaigns, inter-ethnic relations; land ownership issues; development motivations; rejuvenation of old conflicts in the reorganisation; majority/minority issues, and traditional governance and sovereignties among others. Also, the study complements the findings from the qualitative interviews with a critical content analysis of petitions, reports, letters and archival and historical documents, and secondary data from books, journal articles, and newspapers (both print and electronic). The study adopted deconstruction analysis and discourse analysis techniques in analysing the various sources of data.

The Nationalist Factor in Political Restructuring: The Theoretical Prognoses

For a critical analysis of the nationalist factor in political restructuring, a natural start would be to establish the interconnections between three key concepts, namely: an ethnic group, a nation, and a state. There are no unanimously accepted definitions of these concepts, although some definers somewhat agree on some key elements of these concepts. According to Hutchinson and Smith, an ethnic group is, “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity.” (Hutchinson and Smith 1996). “A nation” in the words of Guibernau, “is a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a demarcated territory, having a common past and common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself” (Guibernau 1996). It would appear, in the first instance, that there are no differences between the concepts of an ethnic group and a nation but a closer examination of these definitions reveals dissimilarities. An “ethnic group” is more narrowly defined than a “nation”. Also, whereas ethnic groups are more exclusive, nations are more inclusive. In distinguishing between the two, Smith noted that an ethnic group – which he prefers to call an “ethnic community” – has no “political referent’ and in many cases lacks “public culture”. Attachment to a territory and the proclamation of public culture are necessary ingredients in a nation’s aspiration to nationhood and self-determination (Smith 2000).

The concept, “nation” has been one of the most contested concepts in social science owing to some scholars’ inability to diagnose the true essence of the concept. Also, it has attracted a high degree of contention because of some politicians’ constructionist tendencies of homogenizing the state. Consequently, concepts such as “nation-state”, or a “national state” have come up as false state-building constructions that attempt to claim that the state emerged from one national background (Connor 1994). A

classic example of this scenario is Giddens' (1985) attempt to describe a nation in the typical Weberian state of the state as "a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory." (Weber 1946). Giddens' definition of a nation effortlessly passes for the state in the Weberian style, when he states that,

[A] collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states... A 'nation'...only exists when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which sovereignty is claimed (Giddens 1985: 116).

To avoid what Walker Connor calls "terminological chaos" (Connor 1994), an ethnic group, a nation, and a state should be treated as the natural extension of each another in that linear succession.

African politicians and academics are also guilty of conflating the concepts nation and state due to the Africans' experience with colonialism and the subsequent adoption of the modern state system that encounters the Herculean challenge of integration. The African states, except Ethiopia and Liberia, emerged from the colonial states that resulted from Africans' encounter with the European colonialists from the first half of the 19th century to the second half of the 20th century. Guided by the arbitrary demarcations approved by Bismarck's conference of 1884/1885 – that desecrated their cultural and national boundaries and brought many cultural and national groups under one administrative state (Mackenzie 1983) – nationalist factor has always been very prominent in their politics in general and in their political restructuring in particular. With the notable exception of Somalia, African states are primarily multi-national and multicultural states. Therefore, these multicultural states unavoidably have "two publics" (Ekeh 1975) – the cultural and the political – thereby making the African a subject to a kingdom with strong nationalistic impulses and a citizen to a state with shuddering patriotism (Mamdani 1996). Nonetheless, this evident attachment to the nation is a rebuttal to the modernist scholarship of the 1950s and the 1960s that had predicted the eventual death of all primordial attachments and a corresponding triumph of the homogenizing initiatives of the state. Owing to this theoretical mishap, the post-modernist scholars have instead emphasized the rise of ethnonationalism as a reaction to the overarching influence of central governments (Smith 2000). Therefore, to avert such ethno-nationalistic reactions, the nations within the state play crucial roles in political restructuring.

Nationalism – as an ideology that finds expression in socio-political life – is based on some principles. The first principle sees the nation as the core of the human organisation

and the natural division of humanity. Second, there is the principle that nations can be identified based on some characteristics that may be linguistic, cultural, physical, historical, and geographical, among others. Also, another principle stipulates that the only legitimate type of state or government is national self-government (Kedourie 1960). The legitimacy that results from sovereignty is tied to territory. Therefore, the nationalist proclaims that the cultural boundaries must be coterminous with political boundaries. Highlighting the importance of these principles, especially those that relate to identity, autonomy, and self-government, Smith has indicated that they are needed in the appropriate portions for the survival of the nation (Smith 2006). Conversely, stretching Benedict Anderson's seminal notion of a nation as an "imagined community" further, Appadurai (1996) has stated that nationalistic tendencies and attitudes that are demonstrated in the non-national settings have indicated that the cultural and political boundaries must not necessarily coincide (Appadurai 1996).

It is imperative to state that the nationalist claim that demands the coterminality of the cultural boundaries and political boundaries is a political project of the nation in which it tries to add statehood to nationhood. Nonetheless, this political project in a multinational state must be understood as a compromised project in which the state, as a result of its Weberian attributes, constraints the nations within it in achieving a national state or state status (Paasi 1999 and Ackerén 2009). Therefore, since the state constraints the nations within it in achieving external self-determination as a compromise, it is fair, according to international legal reasoning, that it grants the nations within its boundaries internal self-determination. The internal self-determination, which Thornberry (1993) calls "democratic self-determination", relates to the concept of territorial autonomy in which people – in a given locality within the state – direct their own affairs without external interventions. Nootens underscores the conflict and politics that are associated with political restructuring when he notes that,

[O]rganising national self-determination on the basis of the territorial principle compels the nations to struggle against each other to get more power in the state. Those struggles amount to a zero-sum game and jeopardise national minorities in the areas where national majorities are concentrated. Even if the state is a federal one, a minority nation constantly risks remaining a minority in the decision-making process (Nootens 2006: 42).

Given that a state emerges from a nation or a fusion of two or more nations, especially in the case of the African states that emerged from colonialism, when issues of "boundaries are concerned, [the] nation(s) must be considered in relation to [the] state." Nationalism emphasizes the importance of territory and boundary in the construction of national identity and places a premium on the energies that constantly create and maintain

ethnic and cultural barriers. In arguing that sovereignty and territory are core to any state, Passi has justified the need for culturally-determined demarcations when he notes that “[t]his is based on the fact that sovereignty, and the ideas of control, governance and administration that it implies, must be bounded and can be distinguished from other sovereignties, i.e., states as power-containers” (Passi 1999). Boundaries, as an expression of the cultural wealth of a nation, energize ethnonational politics and conflicts whose recognition must be factored into the state’s political restructuring and programmes of integration. Boundary, to a nation, is an “identity for resistance” against the state and what it considers an outsider. Therefore, de-territorializing a group means lessening their power of resistance against the state and de-identifying the group against other groups.

Some scholars argue that when political restructuring within a state, be unitary or federal, applies the nationalist claim, it can address groups’ inequality, initiate economic development, bring the government closer to the people, encourage “ethnic harmony” and promote integration towards the state. On the other hand, others also contend that ethnic-based political restructuring can formalize ethnic-based discrimination, “obstruct individual citizen’s rights (sic), strengthen centrifugal forces, introduce zero-sum ethnic competition and generate dangerous reactions like ethnic cleansing, expulsion, and disintegration.” (Balcha 2008) It needs to be acknowledged that while political restructuring in federal systems has received enormous attention in the literature owing to the contentious and insidious politics that it evokes, it is instructive to state that political restructuring in unitary systems is not less conflict-ridden as the scramble for the partitioning of the NR of Ghana demonstrates below.

The History of Political Restructuring in Ghana

The Gold Coast, from which modern-day Ghana emerged, was conquered piecemeal, a history that shaped its initial political structure. The Gold Coast Colony was established in 1946, and the Ashanti Colony and the Northern Territories (NT) were declared protectorates. However, the Northern Territories was isolated from its two southern counterparts. It was not until 1951 that the Northern Territories had northern representatives in the Legislative Council thanks to the recommendations of the 1949 Coussey Constitutional Reforms Committee (Brukum 1998).

In 1923, the Gold Coast administration divided British Togoland into the northern and southern British Togoland with Kete Krachi and Jasikan in the former and the latter, respectively. Thanks to the 1949 Coussey Committee, the northern part of the British Togoland including Krachi District was added to the Northern Territories. In 1953, the Eastern and Western Provinces of the Gold Coast Colony were transformed into autonomous Eastern and Western Regions, while Accra and Tema were merged with the Eastern Region. In 1956, the United Nations organized a plebiscite for the

people in Trans-Volta Togoland (TVT) to decide whether they wanted to be with the Gold Coast or with the French. With 56% of the people indicating integration with the Gold Coast, Trans-Volta Togo (TVT) became the Volta Region (VR) (Bening 1999).

At the traditional governance level, the Brong's and Ahafo's agitations for autonomy from the Ashanti Confederacy and Ashanti hegemony mounted to the degree that Nkrumah could not ignore. Thus, on 4th April 1959, the Parliament passed an emergency Act – the Brong Ahafo Region Act No. 18 of 1959 – to restructure the Ashanti Region and the NR by pulling out the northern and the western parts of the then Ashanti Region and Prang and Yeji areas which were hitherto parts of the NR. The new region was called the Brong Ahafo Region (BR) (Bening 1972; and Harvey 2015).

In July 1960, the Western Region (WR) was split into two regions. While the western part that coincided with the hitherto Western Province became the remnants of the WR and the Central Province became the Central Region (CR) with Cape Coast as the capital city. As part of the 1960 reorganization, the Upper Region (UR) was carved out of the NR with Bolgatanga as the capital. In July 1982, with the Greater Accra Region (GAR) Law (PNDCL 26), the GAR was created out of the Eastern Region. In 1983, Flt Lt. Rawlings issued a military fiat to split the region into two – Upper East and Upper West Regions. This is the trajectory of the ten-region political structure of Ghana. Nonetheless, with this ten-region political structure agitations for the splitting of some regions continued (Bening 1999).

The Commission of Inquiry's Modus Operandi

As soon as the MoRRD was established chiefs and their opinion leaders, youth associations, and politicians, among others in the designated regions started to petition the president. The president, having received petitions from four regions² and in line with Article 5 clause (2) of the 1992 Constitution, referred the petitions to the Council of State for its advice on 26th June 2017. The Constitutional Instrument 105, stating the Council's response on 15th August 2017, noted that,

... after a thorough examination of the matter, [the Council] unanimously stated that, in its view, there was the need and substantial demand for the creation of new regions, and advised the president to proceed with the processes involving the creation of new Regions (Ghana Constitutional Instrument 105).

On 19th October 2017, the president inaugurated a nine-member Commission of Inquiry (CoI) headed by Stephen Allan Brobbey, a retired Justice of the Supreme Court.³ According to the president and as contained in paragraph three (3) of the

Constitutional Instrument (CI) 105, the CoI had its terms of reference as:

- a. to inquire, pursuant to the petitions, into the need and substantial demand for the creation of new regions and, thereby, the alteration of Western Region, Brong Ahafo Region, Northern Region and Volta Region;
- b. to make recommendations to the president, based on its findings, on the creation and alteration of regions; and
- c. to specify the issues to be determined by referendum and the places where the referendum should be held, where it makes recommendations for the creation and alteration of regions (Constitutional Instrument 105).

In pursuance of Article 5 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and the CI. 105, the commission designed three broad phases of consultations. The first phase was at the Osu Castle in the form of in-camera hearing of the six petitions which the president had received. Between 21st November and 5th December 2017, traditional rulers and other stakeholders from the four regions took turns to justify their requests for new regions. In the case of the NR, two groups at two separate meetings met the commission. The first group was made up of the petitioners from the Gonjaland who proposed that Savanna Region should be carved out from the current NR. Lepowura, Alhaji Jawula, the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee (CC) for a new region, led a delegation on behalf of the people and the overlord of the Gonjaland, His Majesty Yagbonwura Sulemana Tuntumba Boresa I (Nunoo 2018).

The Commission conducted the second phase of consultation in the form of visiting the regions. On 12th March 2018, the Commission was in the Northern Regional House of Chiefs where it categorically stated that it had come to listen to two petitions: one from Gonja and the other from Mamprugu. The Chairman noted that the Accra meetings in the first phase of the consultation would have sufficed, but the commission believed that certain subsequent happenings might have changed the chiefs' and opinion leaders' decisions. On 13th March 2018, it had an exclusive meeting with petitioners from the Gonjaland at the Radach Lodge in Tamale. Nonetheless, it went out of its planned schedules to listen to some petitioners from the eastern corridor stretch of Dagbon who gatecrashed at the Radach Lodge. Afterward, from 13th March to 19th March 2018, it held similar public hearings.⁴ The third and final phase of consultations started on Thursday 5th April at the Accra International Conference Center. On 10th April 2018, the overlord, chiefs, and the people of Gonja and also met the Commission.

In tune with its terms of reference, the CoI presented its report to the president on 26th June 2018. It recommended the creation of six additional regions, namely Oti Region (OR) from the existing Volta Region (VR); Western North from the current WR; Ahafo Region and Bono East Region from the then Brong Ahafo Region (BAR); and North East Region and Savanna Region from the then the NR (see Map 2). After the government has given the green light for the Electoral Commission of Ghana (ECG) to conduct a referendum on the proposed regions, the voter-turnout must be at

least 50 percent of the people and the votes must be 80 percent for a region to be created (Frimpong 2018).

MAP 2: The proposed 16-Region Political Structure of Ghana



Source: Haruna, A. 2018. Bliss Art Works

The Politics of the Coterminality of Cultural and Political Boundaries in Dagbon

As soon as the politics of the RR was gaining momentum with the government's establishment of the CoI in October 2017, the Regent of Dagbon, the Kampakuyanaa, Andani Yakubu Abdulai, set up a 20-member committee⁵ to explore the long-term implications of the RR of the NR on the Dagbon kingdom. The expanded meeting of the Dagbon Traditional Council (DTC) of 23rd December 2017 in which the high-ranking chiefs, *Magazias* (women leaders), and some prominent members of the Andani-Abudu divide attended, deliberated on the recommendations of the 20-member committee. The meeting stated its support for the government's initiative to reorganize the Northern Region and its respect for any group that desires to clamor for a new region. However, it categorically "resolved that it will not cede any part of Dagbon lands for the convenience of new regional formations." (DTC 2017) In a communiqué that the Council issued later, the Council stated its intention to present a joint memorandum with the Nanung Traditional Council on the reorganization of the NR (Naatogmah 2017a).

No sooner had the DTC issued a communiqué than the Dagbon protracted chieftaincy conflict on Yendi skin between the Andani and Abudu royal gates since the 1950s successfully infiltrated the debates and the stands on the reorganization of the NR in Dagbon. To a casual observer of Dagbon politics, one thing that has characteristically been the unswerving supporter and sympathizer of the two royal gates has been their political affiliation. The majority of the members of the Andani gate and its sympathizers have always lent their support to and enjoyed the political clout of, parties that are friendly to the Nkrumahist tradition starting with the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) and now with the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Similarly, the majority of the members of the Abudu gate and their sympathizers have always lent their support to, and enjoyed political capital from, the parties that lean towards the Danquah/Busia tradition except for the late 1950s when they joined the CPP en masse in order to disarm Nkrumah and his government in deskinning their king (MacGaffey 2006; Bolaji 2016; 2018). It was against this background that the Abudu youth identified the stance of the DTC under the leadership of an Andani regent as the Andani's and the NDC's positions on the reorganization of the NR. "In Dagbon, chieftaincy and politics go together. One cannot be divorced from the other." – One youth activist concluded (Interview with Iddrissu Alhassan).

The first public reaction to the stance of the DTC was the comment which Prince Imoro Andani – the one-time minister for the Northern Region under the Kufuor's administration and a known sympathizer of the Abudu gate – made.⁶ Having urged the people of the region to embrace the development that would accompany the reorganisation, he stated that: "[w]e must critically look at this [reorganization] from

the development point devoid of that kind of ethnicity or tribalism because I don't see this position [being] different from when we talk of Gonjaland....” (Naatogmah 2017b).

The Non-Cession of Dagbon's Territory versus the Proposed Eastern Corridor Region

The most vociferous opposition against the non-cession of Dagbon's territory and the most ardent campaigner for the creation of the Eastern Corridor Region (ECR) was the Coalition of Eastern Corridor Youth (COECY). In its two petitions⁷, it tabled strong rebuttals to the DTC's position. Its first petition proposed ECR with ten administrative districts and that its multi-ethnic composition would promote cultural diversity (see Map 3). Also, the population of the proposed ECR of 2.4 million doubled the population of some of the regions in Ghana. Furthermore, Yendi, as the capital city of the proposed region, had a cluster of a decentralized system already and had that its historical relations with the rest of the proposed region as a district in the 1960s were an added desirability. Moreover, Yendi's proximity to the other parts of the proposed ECR was destined to reduce traveling costs and accelerate development. The last justification stated that the resultant development from the creation the proposed ECR would “engage the youth, reduce poverty and bring lasting peace” and address the vulnerability of the unemployed youth to the constructionist agenda of the elites who used them for conflicts (COECY 2017a; 2017b).

Map 3: The proposed Eastern Corridor Region



Source: Haruna, A. 2018. Bliss Art Works

In the second petition, the COECY challenged the democratic credentials of the expanded meeting of the DTC and the lop-sided presence of Western Dagomba who had shown their disinterest in the creation of the proposed ECR. Also, it criticized DTC's communiqué as being ambiguous since it nullified the Council's earlier promise to support the creation of the proposed ECR. It unequivocally stated that "we the concerned citizens of Yendi would feel comfortable to be in the ECR." It added that "all the arguments so far centres on chieftaincy and yet they have not addressed the core of the rationale for the creation of new regions." The COECY, therefore, asked the DTC to temper their desire to protect their traditional demarcations with the youth's concern for development (COECY 2017b).

The second petition suspected and the debunked the thought of Balkanising Dagbon into two administrative regions might have invoked some fears that the Yaa-Naa would lose his land, legitimacy, and control over Western Dagbon (COECY 2017a). It further stated that the 1992 Constitution had allayed such fears with appropriate provisions that tended to maintain the traditional sovereignty of the kingdoms in case the kingdoms transcended one administrative region. To demystify the fears, the petition quoted Article 270 of the 1992 Constitution on the subject,

Nothing in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with, or in contravention of, clause (1) or (2) of this article if the law makes provision for (a) the determination, in accordance with the appropriate customary law and usage, by a Traditional Council, a Regional House of Chiefs or the National House of Chiefs or a Chieftaincy Committee of any of them, of the validity of the nomination, election, selection, installation or deposition of a person as a chief; (Ghana 1992).

To buttress its point further, the COECY also referred to the Chieftaincy Act (Act 759), Article 53 (1) which recognizes that there might be a need for two Regional House of Chiefs to address a common issue when it notes that, "[w]here a question that affects customary law is common to more than one Regional House there shall be a joint committee of the Houses affected to consider that question.". Furthermore, the Act also anticipates trans-regional allegiance when it stipulates in Article 72 that, "[a] provision of this Act does not prejudice a right of allegiance to which a chief in one region is entitled to from a chief in another region or a right of a stool in one region to property movable or immovable in another region." (The Chieftaincy Act quoted in COECY 2017a) Furthermore, the petition cited how the Asantehene was enjoying traditional allegiance over his subjects outside the administrative convenience of the Ashanti Region (COECY 2017a).

On 1st February 2018, another petition by a group that called itself the Concerned Citizens of Eastern Dagbon (CCED) was addressed to the acting president of Dagbon, the Kampakuya-Naa. This petition that was signed by some of the heavyweights of the Abudu gate opposed the non-cession of Dagbon's territory with the highest literary courtesy. While it shares similar concerns with earlier petitions, it believed that the position of non-cession of Dagbon's territory emanated from lack of "a proper understanding of what administrative borders mean to traditional borders, we need to look at contemporary as well as historical cases in which the two borders have not been perfectly aligned...." (Concerned Citizens of Eastern Dagbon (CCED) 2018: 1) Furthermore, it stressed that the colonialists' partition of African societies had created a situation that some kingdoms enjoy some transnational allegiance and authority. It advised that as much as the districts in Dagbon would be shared between two administrative regions with two regional capitals (Tamale and Yendi) it was desirable. Moreover, it recommended that the DTC should endeavor to circumvent a situation in which one or two Dagbon districts would be trapped as a minority group in a new region. Nonetheless, it did not see the creation of the proposed ECR from the NR as ceding Dagbon's territory (CCED 2018).

It is noteworthy to state that the proposed ECR enjoyed monolithic support from the Abudu royal gate and its sympathizers. One characteristic pattern of the RR's modus operandi was that it gave the traditional authorities a leading voice in the presentation of petitions. The Abudu gate and their supporters who were campaigning for the proposed ECR knew that very well. Having failed to secure the signature of the Bolin-Lana (political head) to their petition, they managed to persuade the Abudu matriarch, the Gundo-Naa, Hajia Samata Abudu to lead the delegation to the president. In pursuance of that, a letter dated 2nd November 2017, purported to have been written by the Coalition of Eastern Corridor Chiefs and signed by the matriarch, was submitted to the presidency through the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs (Abudu 2018). Two letters, one from the presidency and the other from the ministry, conveyed the presidency's preparedness to meet the chiefs on 4th January 2018 (Denkyira 2017; Asante 2017). However, on 3rd January 2018, a day before the meeting, a phone call came from Mr. Kwabena Denkyira and canceled the meeting with the justification that the president was not available, leaving the Gundo-Naa and her team disappointed (Interview with Gundoo-Naa Samata Abudu 2018).⁸

It will be analytically rewarding to explore why the meeting was canceled and more so at the last minute. First, that the 23 December 2017 meeting of the DTC that resolved on non-cession of Dagbon's territory took place after the presidency approved the Gundo-Naa's proposed audience with the presidency, the presidency may have thought that chiefs may be interested in presenting something contrary to the dictates of the DTC. Second, since the proposed area for the ECR was entirely within the Dagbon's territory, the presidency may have thought that the appropriate authority to lead such a delegation of chiefs should have been the Kampakuya-Naa, as the acting president of DTC. Third, since

the Gundo-chieftaincy was an appointee of the Yaa-Naa or the regent, the presidency may not want to be seen as breaking traditional protocols and encouraging insubordination. Strategically, the meeting may have been canceled at the last minute probably because the presidency did not want the Gundo-Naa to counter the former's unpreparedness before the scheduled date. Nonetheless, intra-Abudu critical discourse cautioned the matriarch not to pursue any further the campaign for the proposed ECR since Balkanizing the kingdom would nullify the efforts of their grandfather Yaa-Naa Abdulai II (1920-1938) who, together with the British, reunited Dagbon. Also, partitioning Dagbon would have meant losing the essence of what the Abudu royal gate had sacrificially struggled for since the 1970s (Interview with the then Mion Gbon-Lana Abudu Zibilim Katini).⁹ While the Abudu openly expressed their support for balkanizing Dagbon through the creation of ECR, the need they desired to satisfy, though simplistically it may appear to a critical observer, was to balkanize the Dagbon skin so that they Andani would take eastern Dagbon where they have the majority and the Abudu would occupy the skin in the western Dagbon (Interview with Mr Idrissu Alhassan, 2018).

The youth of some minority groups such as the Chokosi and the Konkomba also expressed their support for the proposed ECR. However, their chiefs and elders indicated that they wished to go with the dictates of the DTC. The secretary to the Saboba Naa lamented the lack of a unified stance on the RR when he stated that,

Our youth do not understand what is going on. But we do. The land on which we are is under the Dagbon kingdom. We, the elders understand the implications of what is going on. We do not want to disobey our overlord, the Kampakuya-Naa. In the absence of the creation of the proposed Eastern Corridor Region, we may have to go wherever our overlord goes (Interview with the secretary to Saboba Naa, Mr Dabaabe 2018).¹⁰

The Konkomba did not also enjoy a unified stance on the RR. The youth thought that going with the proposed ECR would bring development quicker than being part of the remnants of the NR. The president of the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) captured the mood of the Konkomba youth when he noted that,

We are looking for development. We are looking for administrative convenience. When you mention Saboba, everyone knows the overlord is the Yaa-Naa. Therefore, if the reorganization of the Northern Region puts us in another region, it will not affect the traditional sovereignty of Dagbon over Saboba. There are many examples in modern Ghana to show that (Interview with Mr. Charlse Nyoja 2018).¹¹

However, the CoI – in its consultation – appeared to give the utmost attention to the petitions and voices from the traditional authorities.

Having pursued the non-cession of Dagbon’s territory forcefully, the Kampakuya-Naa in collaboration with the Nyelinboligu presented a joint memorandum to the CoI on what the remnants of the NR should be (see Map 4). The two councils would have a total of 15 districts (see Map 4)¹² with an estimated total population of 1, 489,524, which would be 60% of the then NR according to the 2010 population census. The joint memorandum noted with lamentation the loss of territorial control by the Bimbilla Naa, the Yagbonwura, and the Nayiri with the creation of the VR in 1956, the BAR in 1959 and the UR in 1960, respectively. It concluded that the RR should be carried out in ways that recognized the cultural sovereignty of the kingdoms in order not to give way to social upheavals (Dagbon & Nanung Traditional Councils 2018).

MAP 4: The proposed Remnants of the Northern Region



Source. Haruna, A. 2018. Bliss Art Works

The Coterminality of Cultural and Political Boundaries and the Minority Questions in Gonjaland

The Gonjaland Youth Association's (GYA) voice had been louder than any other group in the NR regarding the call for a new region to be carved out of the NR since the beginning of the Fourth Republican Democracy. In "an extraordinary general meeting" of the Gonja Traditional Council (GTC) that took place at Kempe in the East Gonja on 12 August 2017, the Council, without dissension, agreed to petition the government for the creation of Guan Region in Gonjaland Boresa 2017). Nonetheless, in a reaction to the non-Guan speaking ethnic groups' protest, the proposed name was changed to Savanna Region, a geographic characteristic of the location of the proposed region rather the initial choice whose identification transcended the proposed region (BYA 2017). The proposed region would be multi-ethnic and house the Gonja, Nawuri, Nchumuru, Basari, Vagla, Safalba, Lobis, Mos, Dargaba, Tampulma, Birifo, Hanga, Mmara, Pantra, Mibor, Bartige, Dagomba, Konkomba, and Bator. Also, it would be made up of seven administrative districts, namely, the East Gonja, Centra Gonja, North Gonja, West Gonja, Bole, Sawla/Tuna/Kalba, and Kpandai District Assemblies (see Map 5). Like the DTC, the Gonjalanders had stated that they would not cede part of their kingdom to any region. The public relation officer (PRO) of the GYA, once stated that "[w]e have a duty to protect our land so either we all fall into one region or remain in the original Northern Region." (Tanko 2018). That the proposed capital city for the Savanna Region was Damango meant that there would be coterminality of the kingdom's capital with the administrative capital of the region (Interview with Abu Forgor 2018).¹³

The primary motivation for a region in Gonjaland, according to GTC's petition to the president, was "to accelerate socio-economic development and to enhance administrative efficiency." Also, it stated that the Gonjaland was a development paradox where there was visible underdevelopment amidst its "abundant natural resources", its "under-utilized fertile agricultural lands", its mineral deposits (limestone, gold, barite and brine), and its tourist attraction sites such as the Mole National Park, Hippopotamus Sanctuary, the Ancient Mosque, the Mystic Stone, the Slave Market, and the Royal Mausoleum. Finally, it concluded that the creation of the SR would actualize the government's decentralization policy, boost economic growth and development, create employment opportunities, arrest the rural-urban migration, and a vital resource for inter-ethnic co-operation (Boresa 2017).

Map 5: The proposed Savannah Region



Source: Haruna, A. 2018. *Bliss Art Works*

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to state that the politics of partitioning the NR in Gonjaland coupled with the GTC's insistence on non-cession of Gonja's territory to any region revitalized the minority question in Gonjaland. To understand and appreciate the politics and the minority question, we need to revisit how the Gonja traditional governance structure evolved briefly. Between 1625 and 1675, what is now known as the Gonja kingdom experienced a struggle between a group of invading aristocrats from Mande on the one hand and the non-chiefly autochthonous groups such as Nawuri, Nchumuru, Konkombas, Vagla, Safalba, and Mos among others on the other hand. The invading group was under the tutelage of Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa. Owing to their better weaponry and chiefly antics, the encounter saw the conquest of the invading aristocrats over the indigenous groups. Before the invasion, the indigenous groups had a system of rule that was clannish, a system that did not go beyond the clan level. It is this system that some analysts erroneously described as acephalous. Therefore, the governance structure that evolved permitted the progenies of the invading royal to be resident rulers over the indigenous groups throughout the kingdom. However, the

indigenous groups continued to be the custodian of the land through the headship of the *Tendaana*, the earth priest who was in charge of sacrifices and rituals. Alongside this power-sharing, a system in which the indigenous groups paid tributes and royalties to the rulers developed (Amenume, 2011). That the British found the arrangement very congenial to its indirect rule policy, it sanctioned and adopted it. Also, that the post-colonial governments have not been able to address this internal colonialism has transformed this into a constant source of tensions and conflicts among the Gonjas as the overlord and the minority groups as the subjects. It is against the foregoing background of the Gonja traditional governance structure and the accompanied post-independence internal colonialism that some minority groups, namely, the Nawuri and Nchumuru in the eastern periphery of the Gonja kingdom (Kpandai District), the Tampulma and the Mamprusi in the northern periphery (North Gonja District) and the Birifor/Lobi in the western periphery (Sawla/Tuna/Kalba District) saw the NPP-initiated RR as an escape route from Gonja hegemony.

Regardless of the GTC's warning of non-cession of Gonja territory, the Nawuri and Nchumuru in the Kpandai District indicated that they would prefer to be included in the proposed Oti Region (OR) to be carved out of VR.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Konkomba who had lived as immigrants on the same land with the Nawuri and Nchumuru, although with less stake in the land, also indicated their willingness to be part of the proposed Savanna Region. Also, the Tampulma and the Mamprusi in the North Gonja District also stated that they wished to be with their brethren in the proposed North East Region (NER). Additionally, the Birifor/Lobi also stated that they preferred that Bole District and Sawla/Tuna/Kalba District joined the Upper West Region so that they could join their brethren who were part of the Upper West Region UWR). In response to these minority groups' politics of exclusion from the proposed SR, their Gonja overlords stated that they could vacate the land, move and join the region they wished to be part of because Gonjaland would not cede part of its territory to any region.¹⁵ The paper shall examine the motivations for the three cases of the politics of exclusion in turn.

Since the colonial era, the Nawuri and the Gonja have been engaging in intermittent conflicts over the allodial rights to the land in the Kpandai District. They clashed in 1935, 1991, 1992 and 1995 and each time with huge human and material casualties. While the causes, processes, and consequences of these conflicts go beyond the scope of this paper, suffice to state that these conflicts get revitalizations from the unresolved conquest versus autochthony dynamics (Yahaya 2016). That the government failed to accept and implement the findings of the two committees that were set up to investigate the 1992 and 1995 crises, it is logical – as we will later find out in their petition – that Nawuri and Nchumuru were using the RR as a decoupling tool from Gonja domination and as a decider on their century-long conflict.

As part of the on-going RR, the Nawuri/Nchumuru petitioned the government

to include the Kpandai Districts in the proposed OR rather than the proposed SR, contrary to the proposal that their traditional overlord was championing. In the petition, the Nawuri and Nchumuru contended that they did not have “a common tradition of origin with the Gonjas.” Also, regarding culture, they were more similar to the people in southern Ghana, a factor that disqualified Krachi from inclusion in the Northern Territories in the colonial era. Stretching the similarity in customs further to spirituality, they cited that they worshiped Krachi Denteh. Additionally, they maintained theirs was not a case of conquest over autochthony, but it was the Germans – and subsequently the British – that brought the Kpandai District under the Gonja political hegemony. Furthermore, they claimed they had linguistic affinities with the ethnic groups in Kete Krachi and its environs, affinities that stimulated their nostalgic feelings of cordial ethnic neighborliness when they were part of the Kete Krachi District prior to the British policy of indirect rule in the 1930s (Hassan 2018). They contended further that if they were included in the proposed SR, accessing development and maintaining contacts with the regional capital would be problematic since the proposed capital city would be farther to Kpandai than the proposed capital city of the proposed Oti Region (OR). Given the intractable conflict over allodial rights to Kpandai and its environs between the Nawuri and Nchumuru on one side and the Gonja on the other side as alluded to earlier, the petition reasoned that it would be strategically conflict-resolving to include the Kpandai District in the proposed Oti Region (OR) (Tanko 2018).

In the North Gonja District, there is a cluster of about 32 Tampulma and Mamprusi communities around Daboya. Of these 32 communities, 22 are predominantly Tampulma communities, whereas the rest of the ten communities¹⁶ are principally Mamprusi communities. These communities – of the Tampulma, the Mamprusi and the Gonja – had lived together for many centuries under different regimes from the pre-colonial, to the colonial and the post-independence eras. These regimes had shaped their inter-ethnic relations and brought them under Gonja hegemony. Since the pre-colonial era, there have been persistent claims of allodial rights to the land that housed these minority groups (Northern Province 1929). In the case of the Mamprusi in the North Gonja District, they contended that they were unlike the communities that Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa conquered in the 17th century. They claimed that they had lived in their present location since the 14th century, about three hundred years before the Jakpa’s seventeen-century warfare with the indigenous groups. They claimed further that it was the 1930 political demarcation that brought them under Gonja suzerainty. The Gonja, capitalizing on the anomaly, imposed Gonja chiefs on them like their conquered territories. However, the imposition of chiefs had led to parallel authority in these communities since – as people who are accustomed to chieftaincies – they also had their chiefs and chieftaincy structures. They also stated that their desire to employ the 2012 district creation to rectify this problem by joining their brethren in the Mamprugu Maudguri District failed when the government rejected their request (Regional News 2018).

The claim over the ownership of the Mamprusi villages between the Mamprusi and the Gonja got to the point that the colonial administration had to intervene. In an arbitration meeting in Daboya on 12th and 13th February 1913 in which Major R. A. Irvine, the Commissioner for the Southern Province, Major B. M. Read, the Commissioner for the North Western Province, and Captain C. J. Elkan, the Ag. District Commissioner for the Gambaga District were presented, the meeting without dissension agreed that “the Chief of Daboya (the Gonja) ha[d] not made any good his claim to the [Mamprusi] villages ...” (Northern Province 1913) Also, in a letter on boundary issues from the Provincial Commissioner (Navrongo) to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, the former stated that the understanding was that the Mamprusi communities around Daboya belonged to the Mamprusi before the arrival of the British (Chief Commissioner 1924). Despite these colonial interventions, the GTC continued to claim the allodial rights to the land occupied by the Mamprusi in the North Gonja.

According to their petition, the North Gonja’s Mamprusi’s most compelling motivation for their decision to join their brethren in the proposed North East Region (NER), was “underdevelopment, constant threats, intimidation and oppression from their neighbours.” Also, they complained about the payment of tribute and royalty by their communities to the Gonja traditional system. Referring to inter-ethnic relations that had been characterized by suspicion and tensions, they cited the 2011 burning of Kutula (Nyuagbeni) as an example of their neighbour’s atrocious activities (Citinews 2018).

On their part, the Tampulma claimed that their present location in North Gonja is their ancestral home. They claimed that the allodial rights to the land in Daboya that stretches beyond the present-day Wa East District and shares a boundary with the Mamprusi West District (Chief Commissioner 1913). As a group who had been on the move, they managed to found their capital at Kadichari around Mole Game Reserves. That the 1983 creation of the UWR brought some Tampulma communities under the UWR had affected their cultural unity. Fearing further division that may lead to their extinction, their leaders were campaigning to join their brethren in the Moagduri District in the proposed NER (Musah 2017).

The Tampulma claimed to have exceptional good neighborliness. In antiquity, some moved to Mamprugu in defense of the kingdom against foreign raiders from the Sahel. Also, they stood on the side of the Gonja to fight the Konkomba in the 1990s. However, suspicion, tension, and conflicts characterized their relations with their Gonja overlords (Latif 2018). The Tampulma have been resisting the Gonja control, particularly the paying of tributes and royalties to the Wasipewura (the paramount chief of Daboya). It was some Tampulma youth’s interception of some royal emissaries who were going to take royalties from some Fulani herdsmen that led to the January 2018 conflicts. In this conflict that provoked the fleeing of innocent people, two people were killed, many were injured and about 80 houses were burnt down in two Tampulma communities of Saleligu and Dissah (Ismail 2018).

Against the foregoing backgrounds, the Tampilma have been seeking autonomy through a paramuncy from the GTA. They see paramuncy as a way of attaining internal self-determination that would allow them to adjudicate their own civil cases and also decouple their governance from the antagonistic parallel governance structure at the local (Naatogmah 2018b). However, their campaign for the restoration of over three centuries' controversial paramuncy of Kadichari-Tani – and by extension, their campaign for exclusion from the proposed Savannah Region (SR) – were fraught with leadership and representation complications (TYA 2018). At the center of these campaigns was one Musa Mahamadu II asserting himself as the Kadichari-Tani, the paramount chief of Tampilma Traditional Area (TTA). He was a signatory to the Nayiri's petition for the proposed North-East Region (NER), and he also presented a petition to the president dated 31st August 2017 on the position of the Tampilma people on the RR (Musah 2017). Nonetheless, it is crucial to state that three Tampilma chiefs, namely: Kparia-Tina, Yagbo-Tina, and Tamulma-Tina saw him as 'persona non-grata' and wrote to the GTC that he did not represent the Tampilma people (Kparia-Tina 2018).

In its petition, the Birifor Youth Association (BYA) stated that the Birifor were not consulted on the RR, but their people were asked to contribute money towards the campaign for the proposed SR. With the politics that ensued with the RR, they drew the attention of their Gonja overlords to the internal colonialism that had shaped their ethnic relations, which had not been anchored on democracy, equality and fundamental human rights for the following reasons. First, the practice which required the Birifor to pay tributes and royalties (food produce) to Gonja chiefs continued. Second, one of the Yagbowura's final funeral rites – which required the minority groups to slaughter some of their animals for sacrifices – had now been extended to the funerals of the divisional Gonja chiefs. Additionally, besides that, the Gonja traditional governance structure did not recognize their chiefs whom they inaccurately referred to as "herdsmen", they were not even allowed to resolve civil cases among their people. Having indicated that the traditional boundary should not be coterminous with the political boundary, the BYA's petition concluded that their preferred option was to let the Bole and the Sawla/Tuna/Kalba Districts join the UWR in the spirit of their 1983 petition that sought to keep the Birifor in one administrative region (BYA 2017).

Besides embracing formal education as a tool for unlocking their socio-economic status, the Birifor resorted to the use of the social movement approach in the form of organizing annual congresses. The BYA and the Birifor Youth and Women Association (BYWA) had been at the forefront of these congresses that focused on enlightening their people on education, health, and socio-economic issues. However, in 2015, the GTA banned the BYA's annual congress that was scheduled to take place at Nyange. Also, the annual congress of the BYWA was disrupted in 2016 despite that they claimed that they observed the necessary protocols. The previous ban that was lifted in 2017 was

imposed a week again in advance of the 2018 annual congress which was scheduled to take place from 16th April to 23rd April 2018. The Birifor's interpretation of the ban was that the GTA feared that the congress would be used for Birifor's anti-new-region campaign (Interviews with William Sande and Mathew Chorchituy 2018).¹⁷

The April 2018 ban of the BYA's annual congress was followed with an urgent summons of the leadership of the Birifor people and the BYA at the Jakpa Palace on 26th April 2018. The monarch queried the Birifor people regarding some suspicious and strange events that were heralding the congress coupled with the rumors that the Birifors were preparing to wage war against the Gonja people. The Sawla/Tuna/Kalba District had to place a ban on the congress when the Birifors at Sanyiri were bathing their youth in herbal concoctions amid dancing and displaying cutlasses and bow and arrows. The Birifor's stated that it was an unfortunate coincidence of normal but occasional practice. The explanation that one of the Birifor's numerous clans¹⁸ was conducting a rite of passage for its youth did not appease the angered monarch. To Yagbonwura, this was a notorious addition to the 2017 ban of the BYA's congress which was stimulated by the Birifor's rumored attempt to enskin their own Yagbonwura at Nyange, the traditional capital of the Gonja kingdom. For the benefit of the doubt, the Yagbonwura asked Mr. Joseph Tii Dari, the BYA's president, Hon Andrew Dari Chiwetey, the MP for the Sawla/Tuna/Kalba constituency and the two former MPs, Hon. Joseph Trumah Bayel and Hon. Donald Dari Soditey, to go and sign a bond of good behavior at the District Court. For Mr. Jol who organized and led the controversial rite of passage, he was asked to present the following items to sacrifice and pacify the gods: two bulls, two bottles of schnapps, seven fowls, three kola nuts and a ram. The Yagbonwura then told them to go and sort out the issue of the ban with the Sawla/Tuna/Kalba District Assembly that imposed it. Mr. Jol presented the items but the leadership of the Birifor refused to sign the bond with the argument that the Birifor were not preparing for a war against the Gonja. To the leadership of the Birifor, the ban and the signing of the bond of good behavior were meant to disempower them toward their anti-new region campaign (Interviews with Opinion Leaders 2018).¹⁹

The Conclusion

The RR saw a plethora of groups and interests in the form of traditional authorities, opinion leaders, youth associations, minority groups, politicians, and others. With these actors and their positions and interests, the reorganization brought some core issues to the forefront of politics in the Northern Region. First, it has demonstrated, through the politics of non-cession of Dagbon and Gonja kingdoms' traditional boundaries, the power that the kingdoms wield in modern governance. Second, it also demonstrated how some youths – notably in Dagbon – have damned the non-cession of Dagbon's

territory and the accompanied ethnicization of land and called for the development that would accompany the RR. Also, related to the campaign for, and opposition against, non-cession of Dagbon's territory is that the RR witnessed the re-animation of some of the unresolved conflicts among some groups.

In the report that the Brobby Commission submitted on 26th June 2018 to the president, the Commission did not work entirely with the threat of non-cession of the territory of the DTC and GTC that accompanied the politics of the partitioning. The Commission took out the Chereponi District out of Dagbon or the proposed remnants of the NR and also took out the Kpandai District out of the Gonja kingdom. With the inclusion of the Chereponi District in the proposed North East Region, the aspiration of the Chereponi youth had been met, while the chiefs and elders preferred to be with the remnants of the NR. Also, the desire of the majority of the Abudu sympathizers to use the partitioning to change the contour of the context of the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict through the proposed ECR was dashed. Also, while the Nawuri and Nchumuru may be disappointed that their wish to be part of the proposed Oti Region had not been granted, but their wish to be out of the Gonja hegemony and to have exclusive rights to their contentious land may soon be in sight. Furthermore, the escape root which the Birifors in Sawla/Kalba and Tuna District, the Tampulma and the Mamprusi in North Gonja District saw in the RR had not materialized.

1. The districts which were in three categories – District, Municipal District and Metropolitan District – were namely: Mamprugu Moagduri; West Mamprusi; East Mamprusi; Bunkpurugu; Yunyoo; Chereponi; Saboba; Zabzugu; Tatale/Sanguli; Yendi Municipal; Mion; Karaga; Gusheigu; Savelugu; Nanton; Kumbungu; Tolon, Sangnarugu; Tamale Metropolitan; Nanumba North; Nanumba South; Kpandai; Bole; Sawla/Tuna/Kalba; North Gonja; West Gonja; Central Gonja; and East Gonja.
2. They were the Western Region, Volta Region, Brong Ahafo Region, and Northern Region.
3. The other members were Mr. Jacob Saah, (secretary); Dr. Grace Bediako, Maulvi Mohammed Bin-Salih, Prof. Kwasi Kwafo Adarkwa, Mrs. Gladys Tetteh, Mr. Robert Ajene, Mr. David Wellington Essaw, Prof. George Owusu, and Ms. Josephine Hughes.
4. The places were Damongo, Sawla, Bole, and Salaga.
5. Some members of the committee sought anonymity as a result of the reactions of some Abudu youth to the recommendations that informed the resolve of the expanded Dagbon Traditional Council on 23rd December 2017.
6. He resigned after the killing of Yaa-Naa Yakubu Andani II in March 2002, although he took concrete steps to avert the war that led to the killing of the Yaa-Naa.

7. One to President Akufo-Addo on 6th October 2017 and the other to the Kampakuya-Naa on 30th December 2017.
8. Interview with Gundoo-Naa Hajia Samata Abudu, 29th December 2017.
9. Interview with the then Mion Gbon-Lana Abudu Zibilim Katini, 12th October 2017; Interview with Alhassan Mahamadu (brother of the then Bolin-Lana) 22nd November 2017.
10. Phone Interview with the secretary to Saboba Naa, Mr Dabaabe, 2nd April 2018.
11. Phone Interview with Mr. Charlse Nyoja, the president of the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA), 2nd April 2018.
12. The districts in the Dagbon Traditional Council are Chereponi, Gushegu, Kariga, Kumbungu, Mion, Saboba, Sagnarigu, Savelugu, Nanton, Tamale, Tatale/Sanguli, Tolon, Yendi, and Zabzugu, whereas the districts in Nanung are Nanumba North and Nanumba South.
13. Interview with Abu Forgor, a Gonjaland Youth Association activist, (Tamale, 24th March 2018).
14. The Oti Region was the proposed region that comprised northern part of the current Volta Region.
15. Interview with Mr Kapori Abutu, registrar, the Gonja Traditional Council, (Damango, 4th April 2018).
16. The communities are Lukula, Kutula, Kuchualim, Sakpega, Mempeasem, Kuldani, Sakpala, Zooyiri, Bugsa and Sagya.
17. Interview with Mr. William Sande, a Birifor youth activist, (Wa, 12 April 2018 and 17th May 2018); Interview with Mr. Mathew Chorchituy, an assemblyman for Gindabour, (Sawla, 27th June 2018).
18. Some of the important clans of the Birifors are: W lb , Bachel, Bifaal, Sonbo, W rtulbo, Ponalba, Burwayi, Birifor-Dagaaba, Birifor (Kankandeme).
19. Sande (2018); Chorchituy (2018); Interview with Mr. J. K. Jimah, a Vagla opinion leader (Tuna, 24th June 2018); Interview with Mr. Felix Dasah, a Dagaaba opinion leader, (Tuna, 23rd June 2018). Najaal; Tapuri; & Tunyine 2018); Interview with Mr Mathew Najaal, the northern sector BYA vice president (Tuna 22nd June 2018); Interview with Rev. Daniel Tapuri, a local pastor (Tuna, 22nd June 2018); Interview with Mr Samuel Tunyine, a teacher (Tuna, 22nd 2018).

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