

# Conflict Management Methods in Ghana: Farmers and Nomads Conflict in Asante Akyem North District in the Ashanti Region

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## Abstract

The farmer and nomad conflict in the Agogo area seems to become more and more severe which has led to loss of lives and destruction of properties. The severity of the farmer-nomad conflict has precipitated a number of conflict management methods in controlling this protracted conflict in the Agogo area, but to no avail. Therefore, this study sought to examine why the various conflict management methods adopted to control the conflict have not worked and explore the community perspectives concerning how the conflict should be managed. Qualitatively, a case study design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select of all the twelve (12) participants for this study. The main instrument used for data collection for the study was interview guide. The study revealed adjudication, confrontation and the use of force as the management methods adopted to control the farmer-herder conflict in the Agogo area. Also, the study showed that the various conflict management methods proved ineffective owing to ineffective policing, interference from political players, bribery and corruption and failure on the part of the cattle owners to resort to the ranching system. The study further revealed that the community perspective on how to manage the farmer and nomad conflict in the Agogo area is total evacuation of the nomads from the area, and preferably the ranching system as well as effective policing. Hence, it is recommended that the Government of Ghana and traditional authorities in Agogo State should be firm and fair in the management and implementation of court decisions with regard to the farmer-nomad conflict of Agogo.

## Keywords

Conflict Management Methods, Farmers, Nomads, Fulani, Asante Akyem Ghana

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## 1. Introduction and Background

Conflict is a situation in which there are incompatible goals, thoughts, or emotions within or between individuals or groups which lead to bitterness and opposition [1].

Extrapolating from the above expositions on conflict, it can be understood that conflict cannot be eradicated completely but it can only be managed and reduced. This is to suggest that as inevitable as conflict may be in many ways, it is natural due to the natural tendencies present in almost every human being; and so, irrespective of the establishment of the

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kinds of conflict management methods, conflict cannot be completely stamped out from human institutions.

Conflicts between farmers and nomads have always been a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa [2]. A researcher argues that, the vital reason of the conflict between nomads and farmers is economic with land related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts [3]. The effect of nomadic conflicts ranges from the economic (such as loss of income/resources/yield) to physical loss (such as home/farm destruction, bodily injury or death of family member) and socio-psychological effects such as emotional exhaustion [4]. The nomads are typically armed to protect their herds from rustlers, wild animals, and other threats, and in recent years, the ubiquitous AK-47 has replaced the more common machete as the weapon of choice [5].

The grazing appetites of animals for nomads dictate their place of abode. This explains their mobile and nomadic status [6]. The livelihood of nomads is highly dependent on cattle rearing. This explains why they are often mobile in search of fresh grasses and suitable grazing areas that are disease and tsetse fly free. The social interaction of the nomads with their host communities in Agogo is not cordial because of their different cultural and religious norms. Limited access to formal education particularly for women and girls also creates a barrier. The issues of different cultures and poor education attainment marginalise the Fulani community resulting in the feeling of insecurity in any local farming community they find themselves.

Farmers and nomads all over the world, and especially in semi-arid areas, have always shifted between relationships of co-operation, competition, and conflict. The farmers and nomads share the same living and farming spaces and rely on each other for the supply of essential services and goods. This demonstrates an important interdependence between the two groups which also translates into close socio-economic and political relations. The two groups, however, still maintain very unique identities and find themselves competing for the limited amount of natural resources that can be found in the district [7].

By and large, human beings by nature, exhibit differences not only biologically or physically but socially and psychologically; and that differences between individuals and groups are natural. However, the divergent perceptions and manipulations, or exploitations of these differences with reference to access to scarce resources for individual or group advantages are man-made, a condition constituting a premise for conflict. The conflict between the nomads and farmers in Agogo is always prevalent during the dry season when farmers' burn grasses in preparation to farming and hunting while the nomads burn in order to induce the growth

of fresh grasses for their cattle. Grass burning by local farmers and water scarcity during this period impels the nomads to graze in areas where they can still find grasses and water for their cattle. During the grazing process, they cross the paths of farmers who find fault in the destruction of their crops by these animals and this often results in conflict.

In most instances, the nomads have to move across and graze on farmlands that belong to crop farmers. Thus, nomads and crop farmers are intertwined, sharing land, water, fodder and other resources. Due to this, several conflicts are bound to occur on the relationship between farmers and nomads, foremost of which is the perennial conflict over resource use. Ghana, particularly those in the Afraim Plains, Asante Akyem (Agogo) and some other parts of the country correspondingly seem to be engulfed with the devastating manifestations of farmer-herder conflict. As a matter of fact, conflict between crop farmers and nomads has become particularly acute in the Asante Akyem (Agogo) area.

Cattle rearing and farm businesses have gained popularity in the Agogo area in that the land is very fertile and supports farming activities throughout the whole year. The cattle, reared by nomads are mostly not controlled popularly and thereby, are left to destroy many farmlands. This has led to an unending conflict between the nomads and farmers in the Agogo area. Indigenous farmers grow foodstuffs such as tomatoes, plantain and other vegetables. However, farmers had suffered a great deal in the hands of these nomads who show less regard for farmers' yield on their farms and as such, the nomads leave their cattle to destroy the farmers' produce.

Quite prevalently, Asante Akyem Agogo has been battling with the daunting and incessant occurrences of farmers and nomads' conflict, with varied management methods and measures in dealing with the issue, but to no avail. The conflict between farmers and nomads in the Asante Akyem North District has been in existence since the 1990's and the management of it has been very difficult [8]. For instance, between 2000 and 2010, it was alleged that 20 farmers were killed by Fulani herdsmen in the area; not forgetting some Fulani's who have also been killed in these clashes. The Fulani have also accused the farmers of deliberately poisoning their cattle or inflicting machete wound on them [9]. Consequently, the natives, especially the youth in Agogo, the leaders of the farmers' and cattle owners' association, various Members of Parliament, the Asante Akyem Agogo District Chief Executives and various political administrations or parties have all put in measures to manage the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo; but the conflict still continues. It is rather unfortunate to admit that all the various measures and methods put in place to curtail or manage the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo have not yielded any

significant results; and conflicts between farmers and nomads over land occurring within a nation or state do not merely affect individuals or groups of people, but can be an important threat to a country's stability, especially in developing countries [9]. This requires that the conflict between farmers and nomads in the Asante Akyem-North District in Ashanti Region of Ghana is managed as it is becoming a troubling situation in the area and Ghana at large.

Though nomads are always accused of brutalizing farmers, there has also been an attack on nomads and their cattle and this has heightened the conflict in the Asante Akyem North District of the Ashanti Region. Nonetheless, nomads still live in Agogo as they are at times seen in market places, hospitals, veterinary offices and religious places in the midst of their "enemies" and the nomads also live in the areas where the farmers have their farms far away from their homes.

Over the years, conflicts between farmers and nomads living in the Asante Akyem North District have disrupted life and properties in the area over crops damaged by cattle or killing/rustling of cattle. Clashes between the farmers and nomads in the Agogo area over the years have also turned bloody and left in their trail a lot of casualties. This has gained popularity in the newspapers, radio and television as it has also resulted in the destruction of farms, lives and properties and rape of married and unmarried women in the area. The print media and electronic media in Ghana have engaged their readers and viewers with screaming captions and documentaries on the harrowing effects of the conflicts between farmers and nomads in Agogo. Indeed, Agogo has earned reputation in farmers and nomads conflict in Ghana.

Besides being destructive, the farmers and nomads conflict has lasted for decades. As a result, conflict management and resolution experts and the whole society and the nation have been seeking for ways to resolve and manage the conflict but without any significant success. Despite several attempts such as operation cow leg, arbitration, mediation, court rulings, evacuation plan for nomads and demonstrations to curb and manage the conflict, farmers and nomads conflict still persist in Asante Akyem North District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana as the relationship between these two groups keeps worsening. Civil society activists and the leaders of the affected groups attempt to solve the issue and Government usually adopts ad-hoc measures which are built around peace enforcement have all been unsuccessful. Indeed, as far back as 2003, the issue of farmer and nomads conflict attracted the attention of Parliament when the then Minister for Food and Agriculture proposed an identification exercise for both the owners and their cattle to help identify the illegal ones [9]. This confirms a previous study that "even though several strategies were adopted to resolve the conflict, 82 per cent of

the farmers in the study area claimed the conflicts were not resolved while 16.5 per cent claimed they were partially resolved. In a similar vein, 88 per cent of the herders remarked that the conflicts had not been resolved" [9].

The numerous studies that have been conducted on the causes, effects and measures to solve the conflict in Agogo among others did not give due recognition to the previous attempts at solving the conflict that have failed [8, 9]. Again, evidence of systematic research on the prevailing dynamics of nomads and farmers' conflict, and on the methods of managing it in the Asante Akyem (Agogo) area is quite scanty despite its obvious consequences. This does not however suggest that scholars have not engaged in the general description of the methods of managing nomads and farmers conflict in the area [11]. None of these studies has undertaken an assessment of the various methods of managing the conflict between the nomads and the farmers in the Asante Akyem (Agogo) area.

Similarly, no research seems to be focused on examining the effectiveness of the existing conflict management methods being used and why these methods are not working as the conflict keeps re-escalating but rather keeps on suggesting plethora of ways of solving this canker. This creates an empirical gap which needs to be filled by the current study. This study therefore investigated how the conflict should be managed by examining the conflict management methods adopted to curb farmers and nomads' conflict in Asante Akyem North. The purpose of the study was to examine farmers and nomads conflict management in the Asante Akyem North District in the Ashanti region. The study was guided by this research question - What are the conflict management methods adopted to curb farmers and nomads conflict in Asante Akyem north district?

## 2. Review of the Literature

### 2.1. Conflict Management Model or Approach

As far as the present study is concerned, a narrow concept of conflict management has been adopted which relates to the farmers-nomads' conflict in Agogo. This conflict is a clear example of conflict management by violence, coercion, bargaining, negotiation, arbitration and adjudication. The aim of conflict management is to prevent destructive consequences of the conflict and to promote positive outcome. Positive outcome means that the benefits ensuing from it are common and are mutually satisfying to both parties [12].

The current researchers situate the management of the farmers-nomads' conflict in Agogo using conflict

management methods [12, 13]. A study identified three methods of conflict management: (i) violence and coercion ii) bargaining and negotiations iii) the involvement of third party. His typology of conflict management is based on dual approach which makes it possible to give the typology greater generalization so as to be inclusive of other modes of conflict management as well [12, 13].

Violence and coercion can have two sources [12]. One of the two parties in a conflict may have such superiority of strength that it may seek to end the conflict through the use of its superior capacity for violence, or alternatively, in the given equation between the two parties. It can coerce the adversary to withdraw from the conflict by a mere show of its strength. Bargaining and negotiation is also a traditional method in use. It is a mode in which the parties involved in a conflict themselves take initiative and make efforts to manage a conflict at some stage during its course. The success or failure of this method in the management of conflict depends upon the importance of the issues and their estimate of the cost of continuing the conflict. However, in the first place what brings the adversaries to the bargaining and negotiation is their respective estimates of their mutual equations. This has been the dividing line in the choice between either of the two traditional modes of conflict management [12].

The course and form of conflict management with the involvement of a third party depends on the type of conflict. Since conflict is as a result of several factors, the management may focus on either one or more factors like an incompatible situation or attitude or behaviour. The distinction is important. If the focus is upon an incompatible situation, the content of learning needs to be fed into the process which will be different from the one in the case of conflict's manifest aspect, such as violence and aggression. However, an erroneous impression should not be formed that the traditional modes of conflict management and resolution have become obsolete and therefore defunct. In fact, they are as active as ever and are still being applied in a variety of situations. If at all there is going to be a resolution of the conflict, its management has got to precede it, and therefore, conflict management in the first place is inescapably essential for any conflict resolution [12].

## 2.2. Conflict Management Methods to Curb Farmers and Nomads Conflicts

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions. Conflict can be prevented on some occasions and managed on others, but resolved only if the term is taken to mean the satisfaction of apparent demands rather than the total eradication of underlying sentiments, memories, and interests. Only time

really resolves conflicts, and even the wounds it heals leave their scars for future reference [14].

This study explores the strategies used by the various parties in resolution to conflict. Farmers-nomads' conflict begins as a quarrel between a farmer and a nomad, but if not managed well could then escalate into a whole communal or ethnic conflict. With the frequent occurrence of farmers-nomads' conflicts, pragmatic strategies need to be adopted to help resolve them [2].

Conflict management is the purposeful intervention of managers to stimulate and encourage beneficial conflict and to resolve, suppress, or prevent harmful conflict [15]. This means that conflict management involves strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and highlight the positive effects but not necessarily to eliminate all conflicts. Basically issues of conflict management strategies are growing and increasingly becoming sophisticated both theoretically and practically. He goes further to identify five stages of conflict. These are conflict formation, conflict escalation, conflict endurance, conflict improvement, and conflict transformation [16]. What this means is that different strategies with different procedures need to be adopted to deal with different situations.

The full range of methods and instruments that constitute conflict management is quite wide [17]. It varies from coercive measures, through legal processes to third party intervention and multilateral conferences. To this end, conflict management activities can be put into two broad categories: violent (force, coercion) and non-violent (for example, negotiation, and mediation). Scholars agree that there is no single best approach to manage conflict. A study identified five conflict management strategies which are avoidance, negotiation, mediation, arbitration and coercion. Concluded that avoidance and mediation are common at the early stage of conflict where people try to prevent conflict out rightly from escaping into violent attack. Another research also identified five specific conflict handling styles:

The first style is *integration*; which indicates high concern for oneself and others with a focus on collaboration, openness and exchange of information. It also includes looking for alternatives and examining differences to reach a solution in a manner which is acceptable to both parties. This is appropriate when the issues are complex and there is availability of time. The second strategy is *obligation*; this involves minimising the concern for oneself and highlighting the concern for others. Whoever uses this style to resolve conflict plays down on the differences and focuses on the similarities so as to satisfy the concerns of the other party. The next strategy is *domination*; which is characterized by high and low concerns for oneself and the other party

respectively. One goes all out to achieve his objectives thereby ignoring the needs and aspirations of the other party. This style creates a win-lose situation. Besides, there is also *avoidance*; this strategy involves minimising the concerns for oneself and other parties. It is associated with withdrawal, setting aside, or ignoring the issues. The last strategy that can be adopted is *compromise*; this reflects moderate concern of oneself as well as the other party. This style emphasizes on give-and-take position or sharing whereby parties give up something to make a mutually satisfied decision [17].

A research identified five strategies of dealing with conflicts. These strategies are: competitive, collaborative, compromising, accommodating and avoiding. These techniques vary in their degree of cooperativeness and assertiveness. Individuals need to understand what is entailed in conflict management and need high conflict competence to be able to be effective in managing the conflict [18]. A study concentrates on strategies specifically labelled as resolution techniques. He lists eight techniques such as: problem solving, super-ordinate goals, avoidance, smoothing, compromise, authoritative command, alerting the human variable and altering structural variables [19].

The unavoidable nature of conflict in every human society creates the room for mitigation of conflicts and its management at least, if not completely resolving them when they occur. Those who believe that conflict is difficult to either settle or resolve, thus, coined the concept 'conflict management'. Their argument is that; it is more reasonable to conceive of managing or controlling conflict rather than resolving it. Conflict management is thus, the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures, and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict [20, 21].

Professionals use three major behavioural strategies; avoidance, competition, and compromise; during a fight. Based on these theoretical arguments, literature shows that conflict management can take different forms, and each group of classification may differ from one author to another [20, 22]. In the light of these findings, it can be said that in all of the above-mentioned classifications of conflict management strategies, three major approaches are promoted: competing, compromising and avoiding. However, this study has been based on the five common approaches avoiding, competing, compromising, accommodating and collaborating. It is better if, the conflict management technique reduces the dysfunctional dimension of conflict so as to take advantage of its functionality for the good of all concerned with the conflict [14]. Many conflict management methods have been employed in this study. These include: confrontation, negotiation, adjudication, compromise, competition, accommodating and collaboration.

### 2.2.1. Confrontation

Some conflict requires confrontation of the parties. This strategy requires the victim to openly attack the person causing the harm to him or her. This is mostly because the victims have used all means to resolve the issue and nothing seems to be done. This is the case of the conflict between farmers and nomads in Agogo. There have been several confrontations between the nomads and the farmers in their quest to manage the conflicts in the area, notably the one that happened on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2010.

The confrontation is mostly as a result of the pains the farmers mostly go through especially with the loss of loved ones. It is in this light that a study opined that shooting and killing of innocent citizens especially farmers, destruction of food crops like plantain, maize and water melon by the herdsmen, pollution of water bodies by cattle and herdsmen raping women in their farm has created fear and panic among inhabitants of the land [23]. The study further opined that since 1990, the Fulani herdsmen have either shot and killed or butchered not less than twelve people in Agogo [23]. A study on the causes and management of pastoralist-farmer conflicts in Ghana, twelve percent said they avoided open confrontation with the herdsmen when their farms are destroyed [23]. A researcher confirms this when he opines that confrontations over damaged crops are typically followed by armed herders responding to the farmers' anger with violence, inevitably leading to reprisal attacks on herding camps by farming communities. However, the farmers are mostly talking about how they will fight the herdsmen anytime they appear on the media [5]. This is a clear case of the maxim "talk is cheap".

### 2.2.2. Negotiation

Negotiation is "the process whereby the parties within the conflict seek to settle or resolve their conflicts" [24]. Thus, negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least, two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. Both parties come to the realization that they have a problem, and both are aware that by talking to each other, they can find a solution to the problem. The goal of negotiation is to reach agreement through joint decision making between two parties [25].

From the definitions of negotiation offered, it can be seen that communication is critical to the process of conflict management. Thus, it can take place only when there is communication between parties [26]. At later stages of conflict where conflict might have escalated and communication is threatened, or has stopped, negotiation becomes harder. Negotiation typically takes place during the early stages of conflict when the communication between parties is existent and good, or at the de-escalation point



when communication has been resolved. Negotiation is a key approach to the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflict that may arise among parties [26]. This by far, could help the management of the farmers and nomads conflict in Agogo. Even during the Rwanda war, this was the management method that was effectively employed. This was confirmed in a book “*Guns over Kigali*” when the writer opined that “If any tool or mechanism for peace was effectively used in Rwanda during the war, it was that of *negotiation*” [27]. The more people are getting involved in the management of the conflict, the more compelling for them to use skilful negotiations. Negotiation requires skills on the part of the negotiator and careful planning before engaging in negotiation...the process of negotiation involves an open exchange in which both parties work towards a mutually beneficial solution” [26]. Indeed, this is to say that, the two parties must form a joint process of finding mutually acceptable solution to a complex conflict.

### 2.2.3. Adjudication

Adjudication involves the use of the courts and litigation process. Parties to a dispute may choose instead to take their case to a court of law, before a judge of competent jurisdiction [27]. According to the concise Oxford Dictionary-10<sup>th</sup> edition, adjudication is the process of making a formal judgment on a disputed matter. Adjudication is, or at least, expected to be a peaceful means of resolving conflict and disputes. However, its peace is only relative. This means it is because litigation tends to destroy trust, love, respect and other forms of confidence between parties. It increases suspicion and the bitterness of litigation lingers on for a long time after the judgment must have been given. That way the bitterness stays. Nonetheless, the judgment should be further enforced, where necessary, by the law enforcement agencies of the state as it is legally binding on both parties. A researcher in his findings showed that the majority of the people of Agogo preferred adjudication [23]. Clearly, the people put their trust in the law courts to help them in this menace. A study concluded that, the lukewarm way in which the government of Ghana and for that matter the Asante Akyem North District Assembly is implementing the court’s ruling [23].

### 2.2.4. Compromise

In compromise, individuals try to solve the conflict cooperatively. In compromising, conflicting parties may have acceptable solutions that provide a certain degree of satisfaction with a ‘give-and-take’ attitude [28, 29] This occurs when each party gives up some of their assertions. As a result, no one fully achieves his or her desires [28, 30] In this strategy, conflicting parties try to solve the conflict cooperatively. Studies indicate that when individuals discuss

their opposing views openly and cooperatively, their relationship and commitment to the organization may be strengthened [31]. In compromise, the individuals concerned ask questions and understand the position of the opposing party [33, 32]. In this strategy, conflict is considered as a mutual problem-solving process. Compromise is often made in the final hours of management negotiations, when time is of the essence. Compromise is also an effective backup style when efforts towards collaboration are not successful [27]. The main benefit of compromising is the quick way of dealing with a conflict. It does not maximise satisfaction, but only a partial satisfaction for each party. It is therefore a win-win situation [27].

### 2.2.5. Competition

Another conflict management style is competition. As a highly aggressive, unco-operative approach in which one person tries to win over another [33]. Competing strategy comes from an assertive and confident base from a person who thinks well of himself and his work [28, 33]. In this form of conflict resolution, victory is achieved through force [28, 30] Forcing or competitive conflict frustrates communication and imposes a solution that undermines problem-solving processes and relationships [31]. In competing, a solution may temporarily be found. However, the conflict may still be unresolved and most likely, repressed [28]. However, relying solely on competing strategies is dangerous [27].

### 2.2.6. Accommodating

Accommodating referred to as “appeasement”. To the researcher, accommodating is highly co-operative but passive approaches that occur when one gives in to someone else [35]. Accommodating is effective when one or both conflicting parties finds out that they have made a mistake, realise the issues are more important to others, see the need to build good will for more important matters, minimize losses when defeat is inevitable, when harmony and stability are particularly important and allow subordinates a chance to learn from their mistakes [36].

### 2.2.7. Collaboration

A researcher defines collaboration as negotiating or problem solving approach to conflict, in a co-operative and assertive style that stems from integrative attitude [38, 39]. Be that as it may, researchers believe that when both sets of concerns are so important that only an integrative solution is acceptable and compromise is unsatisfactory, when the goal is to learn, to integrate insights from individuals with different perspectives, when consensus and commitment are important to break through ill feelings that have hindered relationships, collaboration is effective [40]. In contrast to

collaborating, a researcher pointed out that, collaborative problem-solving frequently opens the door for disagreements among the individuals or groups concerned, which can then lead to incongruities or incompatibilities in the organization [41]. Other studies also report five methods of conflict resolution namely, avoiding, smoothing, forcing, compromising, and confrontation [28].

### 3. Methodology

Qualitatively, a case study design was adopted for the study. The researchers employed the qualitative approach because, the nature of the study generated knowledge by examining farmers and nomads conflict management at the Asante Akyem North District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The Population of the Study includes leaders of the various conflict management group/individuals who have been involved in forestalling peace in Agogo: the District Chief Executive (DCE) of the Asante Akyem North District, District Police Commander (DPC) of Asante Akyem North District, leading elders of the community, Spokesperson for the nomads, leading member of the cattle owners, Registrar of the Agogo Traditional Council, leading member of the farmers' association, youth leaders from the affected communities and assembly member and an agricultural extension officer. Purposive sampling technique was used to select of all the twelve (12) participants for this study. For the purpose of this study, there were two major sources of data available to help the researcher to complete the study. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. In the case of primary sources, the researcher collected 'fresh' data from participants who are termed as source of primary data in the work. It was useful to employ the primary source of data such as the interview guides to gather data on the objectives of the research. The primary sources were the original responses and reports which were solicited from the participants. Secondary sources of data, on the other hand, constituted different written documents. For instance, press releases, newspaper publications, articles, court rulings and other related documents linked to the farmers and nomads conflict in Agogo. The interview guide was the main instrument used for the study. Data collection was done through the administration of interview and analyses were done by the use of descriptive and interpretive techniques based on the themes arrived at in the data collection.

### 4. Findings and Discussions

This section presents findings on the research question - What are the conflict management methods adopted to curb farmers and nomads conflict in the Asante Akyem North District? The research identified negotiation, adjudication or

arbitration, confrontation, and use of force as the conflict management methods adopted to curb farmers and nomads conflict in Asante Akyem North District.

#### 4.1. Negotiation

As part of the conflict management methods adopted to control the conflict between the farmers and the herders in the Agogo area, information garnered from the participants confirms that negotiation, which is a process in which parties reach agreement through consensus building, has been used in controlling the farmer-herder conflict in the Agogo area. The extracts below, which capture the responses from the interviewees, confirm the use of the negotiation in dealing with the farmer-herder conflict in the Agogo area.

Leader of the farmers' Association in Agogo asserted that:

*"Even our queen mother was trying to sit down with the Fulanis' to make sure that all these atrocities such as destruction of lives and properties are avoided... so we were even giving them plantain but to no avail... We therefore decided that, these people are not human beings that we can stay with. However, since we could not have a direct discussion with the Fulanis, we negotiated with their leaders so that they could talk to their workers on how best they can control their animals".*

The police commander also reiterated that:

*"The Police instituted periodic meetings between the farmers and herders to enable the police have first-hand information on the conflict. This was to lead to timely redress of most farmers and herders conflict issues. Though regular meetings with the herdsman and farmers were ad hoc... it was a sure way of managing this conflict but this too did not work. Even after the court judgment, the stakeholders met to plan how to evacuate the animals with the first three months being voluntary and six months' time Police force will be applied and third phase is maximum force, thus shoot to kill the animals".*

The cattle owner representative reiterated that:

*"In as much as there have not been direct meetings with the Fulanis and the farmers on this issue, the leaders have been meeting to help curb this menace for harmonious living. Last year (2017) the leaders of the community (DCE, DSP, farmers, cattle owners and some other personalities) met at Petreansa (a town near Konongo) to deliberate on this issue".*

As can be seen from the extracts above, negotiation has been one of the conflict management methods adopted to control the farmer-herder conflict in the Agogo area. Quite clearly, from the leader of the farmers, it can be noticed that the farmers actually initiated the negotiation process in order to

end the atrocities of the nomadic people. The queen mother, according to the leader of the farmers' association, tried to negotiate with the Fulanis and also, the farmers tried to give the Fulanis some gifts so that the matter could be put to rest. Indeed, it is very surprising that though the farmers are seen as the natives of Agogo, they rather triggered a peaceful resolution as they tried to give the nomads gifts so that peace could prevail. This revelation seems to be conspicuously missing from earlier research work on the conflict between the farmers and the nomads.

Also, the police instituted periodic but ad hoc meetings between the farmers and nomads to enable the police have first-hand information on the conflict. This approach was also used because it is a peaceful way of managing the conflict as observed by [23]. The use of negotiation is a key approach to the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts that may arise among parties [27]. Negotiation as a conflict management technique is seen as an open, cooperative or collaborative conflict management approach. Other studies supported the current study that, when individuals discuss their opposing views openly and cooperatively or collaboratively, it strengthens relationship and opens the door for commitment [31, 41].

In fact, the information given by the participants was quit revealing. In an effort to find an amicable solution to the conflict in the area, it was always the farmers that found it expedient to initiate it. The Fulanis did not find it necessary to start the process of negotiation. This actually raises eyebrow when given a second thought because it appears that the Fulanis seem not to be interested in the resolution of the conflict; and therefore they may probably be protected by some high profile personalities, who command authority in and outside the area. Indeed, this issue will be considerably looked at in my subsequent discussions on why the conflict management methods have so far been fruitless in the Agogo area. However, judging from the position of common sense and inferential thinking as we have already intimated in our earlier discussions, some highly influential personalities or hidden factors may be rallying behind the conflict; hence, the continuity of the conflict in Agogo.

#### 4.2. Arbitration or Adjudication

Arbitration or adjudication identify as one of the conflict management strategies, happens to be one of the conflict management methods adopted to control the conflict between the farmers and the Nomads in the Agogo area [36]. Arbitration or adjudication, which refers to the process of resolving disputes between people or groups by referring them to a third party, either agreed on by them or provided by law, to make a judgement. The extracts below, which is information from the participants considered for this study

throw more light on the use of arbitration or adjudication as a conflict resolution method in dealing with the situation in the Agogo area. One of the participants who is a youth leader revealed that *"The two sides especially the farmers, who are mostly indigenes, have gone to court to seek redress on how best the nomads can be contained without their farms being destroyed."*

The registrar of the Agogo Traditional Council reiterated the court case in 2012 when he asserted *that:*

*"The courts ruled in favour for the petitioners for the Fulanis to be sacked from Agogo. The communities thought Nananom were in favor of the Fulani but when it went to court, the Traditional Council gave its blessing to the judgment to be executed".*

The youth leader for the Agogo Youth Association asserted that *"the court order was not fully being implemented as given."* Opanyin Kwadwo Oduro who has being vociferous in seeing to it that there is peace between the nomads and the farmers asserted that *"they were forced to go to court, looking at the suffering they were receiving from the nomads."*

Clearly, as shown by the words of the youth leader, the registrar of the Agogo Traditional Council and Opayin Kwadwo Oduro, the court has been the prototypical and principal means for the farmers to put the matter to rest. This is due to the fact that the court is the legally instituted and mandated body, where people who feel they are unfairly treated seek redress. In the case of adjudication, the study showed that the courts have been used extensively by the farmers in managing this conflict. The preference and use of adjudication by the people of Agogo suggests that the indigenous people trust the law courts, but information gathered from the Fulani suggests that they are quite indifferent concerning the law court and that for them, it is not their intention to flout the orders of the court; only that they feel they have nowhere to go as they seem to have taken Ghana as their home. They therefore feel that they are treated as aliens in the country, as some see themselves as Ghanaians and no other national.

This is evident in the spokesperson of the nomads when he asserted:

*"look masa, we are now Ghanaians; some of us do not know any country apart from Ghana. Though some of our parents are from Burkina, Mali and the rest; I cannot go there. So where should I leave Ghana and go my brother. As for the court, we don't have anything to say; whatever they will say, I am saying we can't leave Ghana".*

Again, the use of the courts by farmers to redress the conflict is indicative of the fact that adjudication is a peaceful and



proactive way of managing the conflict. As a matter of fact, this is to be expected in the early stages of, people try to prevent conflict out rightly from escaping into violent attack, and therefore may resort to third parties, who are possibly mandated by law to determine the matter amicably [43]. It can then be argued that the farmers in their estimation felt that the court had the judicial powers to pronounce final judgment on the matter given the fact that their leaders, who should have exercised authority in controlling the activities of the nomads in the Agogo area have failed them.

Notwithstanding the powers of the court as the final arbiter or adjudicator in matters of this nature, the Fulanis in the Agogo area did not respect the orders of the court. Therefore, in my estimation, as I have opined earlier in this discussion, the nomads could be acting under the auspices of some personalities who command authority in and outside the area, who might not be willing to allow the nomads leave as per the orders of the court; but the Fulani feel that they have nowhere and that they also Ghanaians. However, that is not within their purview to decide, rather the law court and so they have no audacity to disrespect the orders of the court. We hold this view because, as a researcher noted that, in arbitration or adjudication, the third party makes the final determination of the matter, which becomes binding on either of the parties, especially when the third party is constituted or mandated by law, as in the case of the law court in the determination of the matter between the farmers and the herders [44]. However, information garnered from the Fulani seems to suggest that they did not yield to the orders of the court because they have nowhere to go and that they feel comfortable living in the area with their cattle and that for them explains why they flouted orders of the court.

A study postulates that, violent farmer-herder conflicts are seen as a consequence of state weakness as seen in the lack of security that has resulted in the flourishing of illegal arms use, lack of enforcement of property rights laws and the inability to resolve these conflicts [45]. This confirms one of the participants' assertion that *"operation cow leg should be given a permanent station in Agogo to Patrol the area to effectively curb this conflict"*. A study also looked at state weakness as resulting from the failure of the state to secure its population from violent conflict and to resolve such conflict [45]. A research defines weak states as:

*"Countries that lack the essential capacity and/or will to fulfil four sets of critical government responsibilities: fostering an environment conducive to sustainable and equitable economic growth; establishing and maintaining legitimate, transparent, and accountable political institutions; securing their populations from violent conflict and controlling their territory; and meeting the basic human needs of their population"* [45].

The Ghanaian Government, does not meet any of the criteria above. A researcher confirms that, the Ghanaian state has remained very democratic and is pursuing economic development to fulfil the needs of its people and has not had any conflict of any national scale [45]. Nevertheless, the disregard for the court ruling to evacuate the Fulanis from the Agogo area and the unresolved nature of farmer-herder conflict has a very daunting effect on the livelihood of both the farmers and the herders, which rather fit the state into the criteria [46]. Again a study equally finds out that the Fulani never seek arbitration or adjudication [9]. This finding confirms the assertion that, the majority of the people of Agogo preferred adjudication because they trust the law courts [7].

### 4.3. Confrontation

The findings of the study established the use of confrontation by both the farmers and nomads as a way of resolving the conflict in the Agogo area, as revealed by the secretary of the Youth Association in the extract below:

*"Demonstration has also been used in the management of the conflict in Agogo. This was in 2008, when even the Member of Parliament joined the Youth in protesting against nomadism in the area. We were in our Red with our MP, we went on the street to demonstrate our displeasure of the way the nomads are living with us in our own land. The youth have written several petitions to various dignitaries but to no avail. Our next move will be picketing at Parliament House for them to really see that the people of Agogo are truly suffering. This has led to the arrest of many people"*.

It unfolds from the extract that the confrontation by the farmers was largely in the form of peaceful protest and demonstration of anger from farmers. In the case of the nomads, confrontation of the farmers is in the form of aggressive and violent reprisal attacks on nomads. This finding confirms a previous study that, confrontations over damaged crops during the nomads and farmers conflict at Agogo are typically followed by armed herders responding to the farmers' anger with violence, inevitably leading to reprisal attacks on herding camps by farming communities [5]. It can be seen that the farmers are really disturbed by the fact that precious lives are lost and properties being destroyed, which as a result, used confrontation. The confrontation as noted during the process of the interview became very severe on both sides: the farmers and the nomads, as lives were lost and properties destroyed. The findings reveal that confrontation by farmers is mostly as a result of the pains they go through, especially as a result of the loss of their farms, property and loved ones. This finding supports earlier study that, some conflicts require

confrontation of the parties. This strategy requires the victim to openly attack the person causing the harm to him or her [23]. It means that confrontation between the farmers and nomads always end in aggression and violence. This finding also substantiates assertion that, the nomads have been killing innocent citizens, especially farmers in Agogo, raping women, destroying their farm crops and polluting water bodies [23]. This is a recipe for fear and panic among inhabitants of the land.

The surest way to end the conflict in confrontation were justified by the interviewees in that while the farmers felt that the activities of the herdsmen are threatening their livelihood owing to the destruction of crops by the cattle, the herdsmen also felt that their source of income and place of abode are on the line. This led to the farmers putting some poisonous substances on their crops, which led to the dying of the cattle. This action, according to them, became necessary because they thought the animal after eating the crops would die, which in turn would deter the herdsmen from allowing their cattle to graze in their farms and destroy their crops. However, this approach was like petrol on a flame, as it infuriated the herdsmen to kill and rape the farmers at will. Also, the indigenes in retaliation, took measures to protect their lives and their family by mobilizing the youth to go after the herdsmen, which as a matter of fact, resulted in a blood bath. The nomads also feel that the farmer or better still the indigenes of the Agogo area intentionally kill their cattle under the pretence that the cattle have destroyed their (farmers) crops, as evident in the words of the spokesperson for the nomads:

*“The farmers at times kill our cattle under the guise that the cattle destroyed their farms especially during Christmas. So they use our animals to celebrate the Christmas. So the fulanis also burn the farm of the farmers in revenge of their killed cattle”.*

This counter accusation from both parties heightened the conflict in the area, and therefore got the attention of the entire nation, as various newspapers, radio stations and television stations took the matter up for public discussion. The government therefore thought that the Fulanis were wrecking unnecessary havoc on the indigenes since the cattle were brought by the Fulanis from nowhere to destroy the crops of the farmers; and therefore devised a strategy dubbed “Operation Cow Leg”.

#### **4.4. The Use of Force (Operation Cow Leg)**

Also, when all peaceful methods aimed at resolving the conflict in the Agogo area did not yield result, the farmers and the nomads confronted each other, but that even heightened the conflict, which resulted in blood shed and

destruction of properties. The participants of the study gave a full and comprehensive account of the use of force in dealing with the conflict in the Agogo area. The extracts below shed more light on the use of force in dealing with the conflict in the Agogo area.

According to the DCE:

*“There have been security measures in managing the conflict from the national level through to the regional and district levels. The Government approach has largely been the “Operation Cow Leg” in the area. The “Operation Cow Leg” is a combined force of the Police and Military personnel”.*

The Registrar of the traditional council had this to say, “for this year (2017), it has been successful in the operation...as they have driven away 95% of the nomads and the farmers are able to go to their farms”.

Nonetheless, the chairman of the Agogo Youth Association asserted that:

*“This is a reactionary approach which even causes financial loss to the district but their lives are still in danger. “Operation Cow Leg is an attempt to come and deceive them during the dry season...He sees this as a way to house the security personnel and after six months go away”.*

Another participant, Yaw Manu, arguing against the presence of the soldiers was of the view that:

*“More should be done to totally put a stop to this menace. If you kill an animal and do not cut the head, you have not done anything and also if you put an animal on fire and does not burn, you cannot sleep. The Operation Cow Leg, he sees it as a “half-baked solution” which he thinks solves the problem for a period of time”.*

Indeed, according to the Police Commander:

*“The Police also patrol the affected areas unannounced to ascertain whether there is anything untoward happening in that area. For instance, we did effective patrols, where they have farms...so that there will be a line where the cattle should go. The police met the two major stakeholders, thus, farmers and nomads, to create a fund where people will be paid for the destruction of their farms or killing of a cow by the farmers. This was a step in the right direction but still did not work. It was not going to be just personal estimation of the value of the destroyed property but evaluators will have gone to check and that will have made people to understand that. He however denied the allegations by farmers and nomads that the Police is demanding money from them”.*

One Assemblyman reckoned that:

*“Peace is needed in Agogo and that various groups or individuals must be involved in bringing peace to Agogo. Although the nomads seem to have left, there are some still at Kowreso, Aberewapon, Adokorom and some other villages in Agogo. These places are closer to Afram plains, and that area is not good for farming...they have therefore used that place as their hide out for the soldiers to leave”.*

As can be seen from the views of the participants above, there was the deployment of security personnel for the management of the conflict. National, regional and district security measures were put in place to manage the conflict. This approach which is a brainchild of the Government of Ghana has largely been the “Operation Cow Leg”. This is a combined force of the police and military personnel.

The periodic resurfacing of the farmers and nomads conflict in recent years in the face of the existing judgment made the inhabitants to ask if it will ever come to an end. The conflict seems to be intractable in nature and one of the lands related conflicts in the Ashanti Region and several of those in other parts of the country, Ghana. The failure of all these strategies to work is a clear manifestation of a weak institutional capacity in Ghana to manage these conflicts right from the traditional council to formal institutions. Even though the Operation Cow Leg provided an impetus to the policy of expulsion or eviction, it has not been a total success in the case of Agogo. This is attributable to self-seeking interest, cattle ownership and the involvement of traditional and religious institutions and political interests. This revelation corroborates the views of previous research that, Operation Cow Leg has been carried out several times without total success [38]. Nonetheless, a similar policy proved successful in the Atebubu District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana in 1999 and 2000 although it was fraught with inadequacies as observed in another scientific study [40].

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that, the conflict between the farmers and the nomads in the Agogo could only be dealt with if there is the political will since the migration of the Fulani herdsmen is surrounded by political, economic, and social factors, as there are middlemen, politicians, chiefs, security officers with vested interest in the cattle business in Agogo. These do not only attract the Fulani herdsmen, but also make their stay in Agogo more comfortable, and this clearly explains why the various conflict management methods in the Agogo area have all failed. The Fulanis have been able to defy the orders of the court by not withdrawing from the Agogo area, it means that there is nothing that they cannot do in the area, as evidence has shown in this study one the atrocities that they

have caused and yet nothing has been done to them as to that effect. The farmers and nomads conflict in Agogo rages on because the conflict management methods that have so far been employed have proven ineffective.

It is recommended that, the farmers and the indigenes of the conflict zone should be educated by experts on the economic benefits of cattle in order to build co-existence between the farmers and the herdsmen and their cattle. This requires the involvement of all stakeholders such as the Government of Ghana, traditional rulers, local institutions, local CSOs (NGOs, CBOs and FBOs) and actors in the conflict. They should carry out periodic sensitization of stakeholders, including farmers and nomads alike, on the need for farmer-nomad conflict management through awareness creation, education, prevention, amelioration, mutual co-existence and peace. This would help to forestall needless provocations and opportunistic violence. More so, there is a need for the provision of mobile education by National Commission of Civic Education which could assist in social enlightenment and general behavioural pattern of the nomads.

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