DRIVERS OF INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT ALONG THE ETHIOPIA-KENYA BORDER IN MOYALE

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ABSTRACT

Though at the state level Ethiopia and Kenya have had a stable and good relations since they established formal relations, there are ongoing conflicts along their shared border, primarily between ethnic groups such as among Borana, Garri and Gabra communities. This paper aimed at identifying drivers of conflicts among Borana, Garri and Gabra communities in the borderlands between Ethiopia and Kenya in Moyale, using secondary data and analyzing reports and works of others. Many causal factors, ranging from cultural, social, governance, and political, and a mixture of these, account for the emergence of communal conflicts between the communities within each state and across the Ethiopia-Kenya border. Some cultural values and beliefs, such as raiding, cattle rustling, retaliation, and revenge, have not only long been drivers of conflict in the Moyale region but also have become an impediment to the achievement of a lasting peace. Besides the common shortage of land for Pasture and Scarcity of Water, and climate change, the mobilization of ethnic identities for political purposes is another primary political driver of conflict in the area. Political factors such as redrawing boundary administration, the introduction of multi-party politics in 1992, the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons, and the weakening of the traditional governance system have changed the face of conflict. Conflict that was characterized by competition for resources had gained a new dimension-competition over boundaries and territory. It is found out that drivers of conflicts in the Moyale region that have arisen are resource-related disputes (foremost pasture and water) and drought, and climate change. However, the drivers of more recent conflict are related to governance and political dimensions owing to political change in both Ethiopia and Kenya. Even the age-old drivers are linked to politics. Addressing the drivers of communal conflicts, therefore, requires the commitments and coordination of both governments and other local and international stakeholders.

Keywords: Inter-Communal Conflict, Drivers, Moyale, Ethiopia, Kenya, Border

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the state level, Ethiopia and Kenya have had good relations since they established formal relations in 1964. The cordial relations between the two countries have been particularly evident in issues such as targeting Somali irredentism at various times, involvement in Somalia by organizing several Somali national reconciliation meetings, sending their forces to Somalia, and providing support for reinstating the transitional federal government (TFG) in Somalia. It also includes brokering the peace deal between the South and North Sudan, and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), ending the longest war in Africa. Their existing socio-economic and political ties have further been strengthened through signing and reviewing

the status of bilateral cooperation in the areas of political, diplomatic, security, social, and economic affairs (Xinhua, 2006; Special Status Agreement, 2012; BBC News, 2015; ENA, 2022; Borkena, 2024). More recently, they signed a new defense cooperation agreement aiming to strengthen their all-weather partnership and to deepen security collaboration between the two countries (ENA, 2025). The two countries also agreed to launch a cross-border trade to facilitate a simplified trade regime that will enable communities at the border to get access to essential commodities. (APA News, 13 May 2025). Cooperation between the two has expanded to include joint infrastructure projects, such as the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, and collaborative efforts in regional peacekeeping and security initiatives (Horn Review, 26 September 2025). These all show that at the state level, there is good relations between the two states. However, situations in the border area across are somewhat somber.

Peace and security have been the major issues along the Ethiopia-Kenya border in Moyale for many years. The Ethiopia-Kenyan borderlands at Moyale are hotbeds of recurring conflicts, and people are killed nearly every day, and perpetrators are seldom brought to court (Wario, 2023). Last year, for example, intense ethnic-based clashes between the Borena and Garre ethnic groups claimed lives and forced residents to flee into Kenya (Shaban, 2024). Conflicts in the border region mostly display in the form of violent and protracted inter-communal conflict (ICC) based principally on group identities- clan or ethnicity. As Cliffe and White (2002: 53) pointed out two decades ago, conflict-involving communities in the borderland is likely to spill over frontier lines when help is sought from kinsmen across the border. This even holds true today between the communities living along the two countries' border in Moyale. As the Borana, Garri, Gabra and Burji communities occupy both sides of the border, they from each country lend support to their kinsmen whenever they are engaged in clashes. This makes the inter-communal conflict (ICC) to also have cross-border characteristics. A conflict breaking on one side of the border often has a spillover effect on the other side because of kinship ties (clan/communal affiliations) between communities living in both Kenya and Ethiopia. Hence, the conflict in the border region involves both an inter-communal and cross-border nature that existed for centuries with new dimensions (politicized) since the last two and a half decades (FAO, IGAD & Interpeace, 2023; Mercy Corps, 2025; Molla, 2017; Wario, 2023). For example, communal conflict between the Borana and Gabbra, which occurred in Moyale in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, were all associated with political supremacy competition between the two ethic groups (Wario, 2023).

It can, thus, be argued that violent inter-communal conflicts along the Ethiopia-Kenya border in Moyale are mainly based on group identities-clan or ethnicity, between the Borana and the Garri on one hand, and the Borana and the Gabra on the other. Other neighboring clans, such as the Burji, are also involved directly or indirectly through their traditional alliances. The GABU alliance formed among the Gabra and Burji against the Borana (Molla, 2017) is a case in point.

Then, the question that one can raise is 'what are the various factors that account for the emergence of intercommunal conflict in the Moyale region?' What are the drivers of ICC across the Ethiopia-Kenya border? Secondary sources were employed to address these issues. Thus, this paper aimed at assessing the drivers of ICC between the Garri and the Borana on one hand and between the Borana and the Gabra communities on the other in the borderlands

between Ethiopia and Kenya in Moyale, using secondary data and analyzing reports and works of others. The causes of conflict between these communities are reviewed, to place in context the conflict that has persisted. Many causal factors account for the emergence and the prolonged nature of communal conflicts between the communities within each state and across the Ethiopia-Kenya border from 1991 onwards. The conflicts are attributed to resource-related disputes (foremost pasture and water), land ownership claims, expansionist politics, unclear demarcations of boundaries, political supremacy competition and cattle rustling (Wario, 2023). Let us begin with cattle raiding as a driver of conflict.

2.0 LOCAL TRADITIONS/RAIDING

The customs of traditional violence have long been drivers of conflict. In this respect, virtually all reports from recent past studies on inter-communal conflicts (FAO, IGAD & Interpeace. 2023; Mercy Corps, 2025; Shidane, 2020; Molla, 2017; Gakuria, 2013; Handley, 2012; IADC, 2009; Kratli and Swift, 1999; PRAGYA, 2012) claim that some cultural values and beliefs, such as raiding and cattle rustling, or killing member of groups considered enemy have a long history and to some extent continued to be an aspect of traditional culture. The same sources have cited raiding as a major cause of conflicts among pastoralists along the Ethiopia-Kenya border. For example, the study by IADC (2009: 25) conducted on communities in Southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya a decade ago stated that:

Traditional initiation ceremonies put pressure on young men to prove themselves as killers and hunters and the culture of body markings allow the youth to parade their skills as warriors to garner the respect of the community. Heroism is becoming uncontrollable as external factors such as weapon commercialization.

However, heroism has been diminished as the cause of conflict. The issue of land and the quest for boundaries, rather than proving one's strength as killers and hunters, are the reasons behind the act of raiding or the cause of conflict. Unlike in the past, in recent years raids and attacks are carried out to increase one's own wealth or for commercial purposes, or with a more strategic objective such as intentionally displacing communities to gain control over territory or land and resources, which is, most notably, attributable to changes in political system and administrative boundaries in both Ethiopia and Kenya (Shidane, 2020; Molla, 2017).

Tit-for-tat cattle raids have become a common phenomenon in Moyale. Such cultural practice has not only facilitated the continuation of conflict but also has become an impediment to the achievement of a lasting peace. For example, although a comprehensive peace declaration has been enacted by the Borana and Gabra as well as the Borana and Garri communities, raiding and revenge have continued. These factors have eroded social capital, undermined customary rules, increased mistrust and mutual suspicion, and weakened cultural ties of the communities (IADC, 2009:2); and contributed to inflaming communities' animosities; and have become an obstacle to bringing about sustainable peace in the Moyale region. For example, in the Kenyan side, according to the Kenya Red Cross Society (2012), it was as a result of cattle raids and counter raids that inter-clan conflicts between the Borana and the Gabra communities in October 2011 finally escalated into a fully-fledged conflict from mid-January 2012. The recent incident also proves this phenomenon (Shidane, 2020). Other sources (Shidane, 2020; Molla, 2017) also contend that raiding and cattle rustling have a long history and have continued to drive inter-communal conflict in the Ethiopia-Kenya border in Moyale.

3.0 RETALIATION AND THE REVENGE CULTURE

Retaliation and "revenge culture" are other sources of conflict between the communities. Such acts manifest themselves in a vicious circle. Whenever there is killing, raping, harming any person, or stealing an animal from one group, it is common practice to retaliate. Retaliation is common not only because of culture, but it also for other reasons – out of impunity or lack of trust in government authority. Retaliation occurs for various reasons. First, it is because of women's provocation (e.g., taunting of youth by women, insults, and abusive songs which incite communities to fight). Second, it may be because of not believing in the government's capability in the recovery of the stolen animals. Third, due to the belief that compensating for the killing or harm inflicted against their group and/or protection of one's own wealth (more satisfied when done by oneself) by trying to get back at least the number of animals that have been taken. Generally, retaliation acts have mostly been considered as shared duties of the communities of Borana, Gabra and Garri which has resulted in cycles of conflict in the study area.

As Turi (2013:58) rightly pointed out, the pastoralist societies such as the Borana and Gabra communities have strong norms of revenge that are primarily responsible for escalating cycles of violence. Any aggression against the other in cases of theft, injury, or death is significant enough to activate cultural pressure for youth to engage in revenge attacks. Concerning the Borana and Gabra communities, he further underlines:

The escalating conflicts between the two communities have frequently been mediated by external actors, and these sometimes resulted in the establishment of a peace accord between the communities. However, the accords have not been successful enough. The communities lacked enough faith to respect and uphold the principles that are outlined in these accords. The journey towards a lasting peace has been constantly crippled by individuals who may otherwise desire revenge over peace. The failure by the relevant actors to address the underlying cultural norms for revenge has greatly hampered the cultivation of a lasting peace (Turi 2013:58).

It can be argued that the culture of revenge, which is common among the Borana, Garri, and Gabra communities, is largely to blame for the constant recurrent ethnic flare-ups between communities and deterring to yield of sustainable peace in the Moyale region despite all the positive efforts by various actors. Clan identities are prominent in the social and political life of the people, and the retaliatory history "outbursts of communal violence deepen the clan identities and makes it easy for political entrepreneurs to mobilize clans and tribes as political blocs, potentially leading to armed violence" (Wario, 2023). Clan identities and the culture of retaliation make it easy for political entrepreneurs to mobilize clans as political blocs and, potentially, for armed violence (ibid).

4.0 HARDENING OF ETHNIC IDENTITIES

Hatred among the Garri, Borana and Gabra groups in the Moyale region is another complexion mentioned as a drive behind ICC. Clan/ethnic identification among these groups is common, and the feeling of cohesion among the same clan and falling apart among different group is strong. As sociologist Sara Cobb elucidates (cited in Aiken 2008, 12), "when the personal identity, forged in daily interaction across social networks, collapses into the singular ethnic identity," the potential for ethnic violence to occur is high. This has happened in the study area.

The mobilization of ethnic identities for political purposes is one of the primary political drivers of conflict in the area (Mercy Corps, 2025). Any personal conflict between a Borana and a Garri, or a Boran and a Gabra, will automatically escalate into group violence as communities develop strong negative feelings towards the other group. Even disagreement between children from different groups can also transform into ICC.

Since their early age, they have been indoctrinated by their parents who their 'enemies' are and that they were all told that the other group - Borana, Gabra, and Borana are their enemies. Such acts have produced negative feelings towards the other group and resulted in mistrust of the other group. The 'hate' feeling for one another is, therefore, not only one of the reasons for the causes of conflict in Moyale, but also has reduced confidence and trust among the communities, which has made the conflict problematic to amicably resolve it. Consequently, a simple conflict between individuals becomes communalization of conflict. The most evident among the communities was the blame of individual acts on the community they come from, and any time a person is caught on the wrong side of the law he or she claims that it is not them but their community that was targeted, and hence all individual's predicaments were viewed as that of society (Turi 2013:6).

Hardening of ethnicity has been escalated owing to the change of the political system of Ethiopia and Kenya. The adoption of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia and ethnic based territorial administration in Kenya has exacerbated the conflict between the groups in Moyale. Devolution along ethnic lines result in the decentralization of the budget, which in turn increases competition for more land and resource. The federal restructuring has brought political significance to the question of whether a clan is Oromo or Somali. This is because the Garri and the Gabbra have always been ambivalent about their ethnic identity because they are Oromo…by one set of criteria (language…) and Somali by another set of criteria […religious affiliation] (Schlee and Shongolo, 2012). The response of the Garri and the Gabbra to the new demand, choosing their ethnicity as either Oromo or Somali, was varied. While the Garri ethnic entrepreneurs decided to take on a Somali identity, the Gabbra remained divided. Thus, it can be argued that one contributing factor to the radicalization of cohesion among the same group and against the other is the political system of the country or the policy of the government.

With the 2004 suspended referendum to demarcate the boundary between Borana (Oromia) and Garri (Somali region) in Moyale, following the adoption of the 1995 constitution in Ethiopia and parliamentary constituencies as well as county governance following the 2010 constitution in Kenya, clan/ethnic identity is intensified, which has attributed to tension among the communities living across the border. For example, CEWARNa (2006:11) reports:

Related to exclusive control of territories, there is a corresponding rise in the hardening of identities because of a rise in ethno-nationalist sentiments. Pastoralists who used to have fluid and flexible attitudes towards ethnicity have now adopted serious and hard feelings about their identities. The result has been a proliferation of conflicts and a rise in the level of ethnic mobilization to exclude or evict rival clans from disputed territories.

This indicates that the 'hate' feeling among the communal groups has reached its apex, where one communal group tries to evict another group from the disputed land. Such action is against the spirit of the constitution of both countries. It is not the constitution per se, but misunderstanding and the failure of governance that have inflamed the hate attitude.

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The increased ethnicization of Ethiopian and Kenyan politics has intensified ICC, which in turn has made the effort to resolve conflicts tricky. With respect to the Kenyan side, for example, Turi (2013:63) argue₤ that both locals and civil servants working in the Mersabit County and Moyale sub-county are not spared either, and they have been accused of leaking and distorting critical information, hence fueling differences among the population. Hardening of ethnicity makes the Moyale region challenging to hold peace meetings among the communities.

Media and technology have also played their role in hardening ethnicity in the Moyale area, particularly on the Kenyan side. Different key players in cultural stereotyping included vernacular FM radio stations, which relayed news and played offensive music aimed at enemy groups, the yellow press, which circulated alarmist information, and politicians from particular communities whose inflammatory language against other communities lit the fires of confrontation (Oucho, 2009:17, citing Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2000). On social sites, youth using hate speech are a common occurrence, such notorious sites include, Eye on Marsabit County Politics 2012 (Turi, 2013:64). The extreme hatred that are displayed on this site came to surface in 2012 when the photo of a dead man who was killed in 2012 during the conflict between Gabra and Borana in Moyale district was apparently tagged on the page for the members to comment. The administrator of this page is so lenient to members of their ethnic community, while barring others from using the page for going against the "norm" (ibid). The diaspora is also behind the scenes. Here, hatred was bred and thus every peacemaking effort are discounted.

Hence, it can be argued that the negative feeling among the Borana, Garri and Gabra is one of the contributing factors for the radicalization of cohesion among the same group and falling apart among different groups as well as the source of ICC in Moyale. As Malcolm X used to say, hate produces hate. The relationships are so fragile that a simple rumor of a clan member having been attacked or a normal crime having been committed easily takes a clan-based dimension. That is why simple conflict – say between children or individuals – can easily be transformed into clan/communal conflict. This causes not only inter-communal conflict but also makes challenging attempts at conflict resolution and transformation.

The condoning of clan hatred is justified and propelled by stories of victimization and rights denied by the other side. More strikingly, each group is proud of its group culture but demonizing the behavior of the other group and misuses their tradition to look down upon the other groups as uncultured. This remains one of the critical hurdles to achieving sustainable peace in the Moyale of Ethiopia and the Kenya borderlands.

5.0 SHORTAGE OF LAND FOR PASTURE AND SCARCITY OF WATER

Borana, Garri and Gabra communities frequently cross local boundaries and national borders in search of pasture and water. Such movements can be problematic as they usually cause inter-group conflict. Many clashes between the Gabra and Borana communities in Moyale district have been caused because of competition over pastoral land and water, which led to the death of dozens of people. Each communal group wants to push the other one back from the pastureland in order to secure such scarce resources in the area. Such attempts to dominate pasture lands usually lead to conflict with each group competing for exclusive rights of access.

Shidane (2020). Gakuria (2013) and PRAGYA (2012: 15) remark that the scarcity of water and concentration of people and livestock in the available water points often leads to conflict between the different communities over the rights of use of the water source. Water points draw pastoralists from very faraway territories, and they form a flash point of conflict. As the pastoral groups move with their livestock across the border to search for water, they often clash. For example, in early 2005 and in the months of May-Aug of 2008 communal incidents over resources were linked to the Gabra-Boran-Garri border dispute which has at its root - competition over access to resources such as water (CEWARNa 2006; CEWARN 2008).

One of the root causes of many conflicts between groups in Moyale is based on access and use of grazing areas. Unlike in the past, where competition used to be for temporal pastureland or water, however, the purpose of raiding or conflict over pastureland or water in recent years is intentionally displacing people to control the territory/land and resources available in the area, most notably attributable to changes in the political system and administrative boundaries in both Ethiopia and Kenya (Molla, 2017; Abebe, 2016), and thus ethnic groups in Moyale and its environs have not only contiguous habitant, but also competitive administrative structures over the same land (Abebe, 2016).

As the joint report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Interpeace Eastern and Central Africa states, "Pastoralists engage in such conflicts as communities with a view to securing control of a territory to guarantee access to these resources and to secure routes that facilitate movement of livestock to locations where the resources are situated "(FAO, IGAD, & Interpeace, 2023).

6.0 DROUGHT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental stress such as drought and climate change as well as resource scarcity (shortage of water and land for pasture) are interrelated factors that cause conflict, both Moyale Ethiopia and Moyale Kenya are arid and semi-arid areas in terms of ecology. Several studies (Gakuria, 2013; IACD, 2009; IRIN, 2009: Kidane, 2013; CSR 2011; CEWARN/IGAD 2006/2007/2008/2009; Handley 2012) point out that within the semi-arid and arid of the southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya along the border, environmental degradation and drought as well as intense competition between communities for postural lands, water points often arise that give rise to inter-group conflict between communities. Droughts and climate change, which resulted in shortage of rain are two of the triggers of ICC in the Moyale of Ethiopia and Moyale of Kenya. The Moyale district has been hard-hit by drought and famine-related stress, which resulted in severe food, which led to an increase in cattle-rustling. Several studies (Wario, 2023; Shidane 2020; Gakuria, 2013; IACD, 2009; Kidane, 2013; PRAGYA, 2012; CEWARNa 2006) contend that drought and climate change have caused ICC in the study area. CEWARN-IGAD (2006) and Gakuria (2013), for example, point out that droughts that had affected the Moyale region in the past such as 1972-74, and 1984-85 have also continued in the post-1990 period. A recurring drought in the last two decades in the 1991-92; 1996-97, 2001-02 and 2005-06, and 2008/09 has seriously undermined the lives and livelihoods of the communities, intensity of drought offset normal activities of people and results into a struggle or competition for resources. The drought which occurred in 2005-06, 2008 and 2009 (CEWARNa 2006) led to intense competition for scarce resources resulted in clashes between pastoralist communities. Shidane (2020) postulates that the negative effects of climate change

such as drought among the communities often pushes them to unending cycle of conflicts. Gakuria (2013: 32) also argues that Oromo from Ethiopia cross border into Kenya to graze when faced with drought in Ethiopia, and pastoralists from Kenya also flock areas of Marsabit, Garissa, Isiolo or Moyale in order to escape drought in their areas. Such movements have often led to clashes among communal groups. Similarly, CEWARN-IGAD (2006:18) reports that the lack of pasture and water in Moyale, Dollo and Bare areas brought by drought had resulted in huge movement of livestock in search of grazing lands and competition over meager resources. For example, the Jan-Apr 2009 country update of the Conflict Early Warning and Response mechanism of IGAD report (CEWARN-IGAD 2009: 11) stipulates that environmental pressures reached the highest in September 2009, which could be mostly attributed to the high level of drought condition in the Moyale caused massive movement of livestock in search of grazing lands. Clash encountered among groups due to the inability to share resources among the groups which partly attributable to the simmering tension among the Gabra, Garri and Borana owing to unresolved regional boundary issues. All this reveals that environmental drivers of conflict are linked to shortage of water and pastureland as well as governance.

7.0 DECENTRALIZATION AND BOUNDARY DEMARCATION

Before the 1990s, the most preferred policy of managing ethnic diversity in Africa was advocating for national unity in a centralized governance system; but the approach proscribed/banned dissent and saw diversity as a threat rather than a resource. Consequently, many voices emerged demanding for reduction of the powers of the central government (Mbugua, 2013: 8). Hence, in the 1990s, most African countries introduced decentralized governance to address the problem of concentration of power at the center, which has resulted in more plural governance systems, where devolution is preferred. Hence, since the 1990s, the quality of local administration across much of the Horn of Africa has changed (ARD, 2012:19). In Ethiopia, the decentralization of power and the formation of regional governments to empower each nationality were established in 1992 under Proclamation number 7/1992. This proclamation allowed regions to utilize part of their revenues and to formulate their own rules in the same year. The new federal state system under the 1995 constitution was envisioned to bring "about a solution to the age-old crisis of the Ethiopian state and society characterized by conflicts" (Asnake, 2004:52). As per Article 40 (5), the Constitution provides for pastoralists not to be displaced against their wishes. However, there is not detailed law to affect this constitutional provision.

In Kenya, the 2010 constitution is advancing political decentralization by replacing the old system of provinces and districts with a new system of counties (Article 6(1). As per Article 6 (2), "The governments at the national and county levels are distinct and inter-dependent and shall conduct their mutual relations based on consultation and cooperation." The objects of the devolution of government, inter alia, are to give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers; to recognize the right of communities to manage their own affairs (Article 74). Hence, the new constitution of Kenya has created counties, which give more voice and resources to regions. According to ARD (2012:19), the county boundaries have been drawn to roughly correspond to ethnic territories in which the new Kenyan system is a variation on the theme of ethno-federalism first introduced in the region in Ethiopia in 1995.

The idea of redrawing regional borders along major ethnic lines and vesting regions with a degree of autonomy is, indeed, in itself a conflict management measure (Glowacki and Gönc, 2013: 24). Such a policy theoretically is believed to address past mistakes. It is also expected that decentralization could have a dramatic impact on cross-border conflict management, as local leaders have now emerged from the local community, representing their interests. Tactlessly, however, this change has brought new ground for ICC in both Ethiopia and Kenya. Reforms naturally destabilize the status quo, and hence, beneficiaries of the old order are bound to oppose the new (NPI-Africa, 2012:4), which has enormously changed the relations between ethnic/clan groups and has led to conflict. As Bernabini (2012:122) notes, the issue of territorial presence of different communities became particularly hot after 1991 due to the process leading to the new federal constitution aimed at the identification of ethnic borderlines dividing the regions.

The attempt to redraw the border between Oromiya and Somali regional states is a good illustration. Further to the Proclamation of the Federal constitution in 1995, nine regional states based on linguistic groupings of "nations, nationalities and peoples" were established as devolution of power which has also led to the creation of new administrative units even at Wereda level. For example, the former Borana Awraja (equivalent to sub-region) was split into two and fell under the Oromia and Somali regional states, including the Moyale town. Such shift in boundary has had a detrimental effect for pastoralist who are used to constant mobility looking for pasture and water (CEWARN-IGAD 2006 11); and affected relations among the Borana, Garri and Babra.

From 1992 to 1994, by formal decision of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 11 kebele of Moyale woreda were annexed to Somali Region. These include the crucial tulaa wells and surrounding rangelands of El Leh and El Gof. Seventeen Kebeles, including the entire town of Moyale, were instead entrusted to the administration of Region 4. Region 5 obtained the administration of the key pastoral area of Hudet, removed from Arero woreda of Region 4 (Bernabini, 2012:125). The claim over the Moyale town and its surrounding areas by the Oromia and the Somali regions began since 1992 due to the division among the the Borana, the Garri and the Gabbra groups over their ethnic identity (Asnake 2009:183). Until 1994, however, the Moyale town was put under the newly established Oromia region, and served as the capital of the Oromia Moyale woreda (Ibid: 185).

However, the Garri whose political class sought to join the Somali region challenged this decision. Garri wants the eastern part of the Addis Ababa-Nairobi main road that dissect the town to be administered by Somali region whereas the western part to be apportioned to Oromia. This is, however, strongly opposed by the Borana (FGD 2, 2013). The town serves as the capital of two competing woredas – Oromia-Moyale and Somali-Moyale without any clear demarcation."

Several sources (Schlee and Shongolo, 2012: Bernabini, 2012; Asnake, 2009; CEWARN-IGAD, 2006; Greiner 2013; Oucho, 2009; ARD, 2012; CEWARNb 2006; NPI-Africa, 2012; Carrier and Kochore, 2014:139; Feinstein International Center, et al, 2013:9) pointed out that the failure to determine the status of Moyale has produced a continued stalemate between the Garri, Gabra and Borana communities which in turn resulted in the prolonging conflict and tension between these communities in the area since the aborted referendum in 2004. Though

the nature of the conflicts in Moyale has roots in the competition over resources, the radicalization of the inter-ethnic confrontation developed after the adoption of the new federal constitution (Bernabini, 2012:76). This, he notes, has changed the face of conflict. Conflict that was characterized by competition for resources had gained a new dimension-competition over boundaries and territories. The claim for more territory and demarcation between the Garri and Borana since 1991 has also bought them into serious and protracted conflicts. One such illustration is the ongoing conflict between the two regions as a result of unresolved demarcations between region 4 (Oromia) and Region 5 (Somali).

As Asnake (2009: 189) notes the issue of marking the boundary of the Somali and Oromia around Moyale has become controversial because not only there were longstanding resource and territorial conflicts among the three clans but also due to the difficulty of dividing the three clans into clear-cut ethnic categories. The question of either joining the Somali or the Oromo regions has been internally divisive for the Gabbra that led to conflict with the Borana (Asnake, 2009:189). Moreover, demanding the establishment of a Gabbra special woreda within the Borana zone of the Oromia region brought them more conflicts with the Borana (IADC, 2009: Asnake, 2009).

Some sources have also identified incidents of conflict related to boundary. In early 1992, a conflict broke out in Moyale woreda between the Borana and the joint Gabra Miigoo/Garri forces over demanding boundary demarcation (Bernabini, 2012:121). The conflict between these communities has become severe since the 2004-aborted referendum. In late 2005, dispute over the referendum associated with the control of territory resulted in violent conflict and aggravated the simmering tension between the communities (CEWARN-IGAD, 2006:18). Between August and September 2008 there were three incidents, between the Gabra-Borana over demanding own admiration by Gaba (CEWRARN 2008). In May 2008, the months of May-August 2009, and more recently, in July 2012, there were conflicts between Garri and Borana in Moyale of Ethiopia over boundary demarcation (OCHA 2012; BBC 2012).

In the Kenya Moyale too, somewhat similar experience is observed. Some (Greiner 2013; Oucho, 2009; ARD, 2012; CEWARNb 2006; NPI-Africa, 2012; Carrier and Kochore, 2014:139) acknowledge the issue of administration boundary to be the sources of ICC. The splitting and subdivision of the larger administrative units created new winners and losers, and facilitated the emergence of rivalries at lower levels. The fact that access to and utilization of major resources, like water and pasture, are determined by administrative boundaries, creation of divisions, locations and sub-locations and the posting of chiefs is an extremely sensitive issue. The boundaries of ethnic and administrative units have remained coterminous ever since Kenya was colonized (Oucho, 2009:3; Carrier and Kochore, 2014:139). Its reappearance in political, however, exploits immediately before the 1992 multi-party elections as administrative units are generally coterminous with ethnic names and parliamentary constituencies aligned with ethnic boundaries (ibid). This indicates that the structure of Kenya's administration which is aligned with ethnic boundaries further fuels ICC.

Since introduction of multi-party politics in 1992, the communities were motivated by gain of political power, making the conflicts deadlier and more difficult to resolve (Feinstein International Center et al, 2013:9). In Kenya Moyale, the demarcation of parliamentary constituencies and administrative boundaries has been a source of tension and sometimes

resulting to outright violence. For example, the Marsabit Conflict Assessment Report of July 21 – 28, 2005 (cited in CEWARNb, 2006) stated, "Political leaders in North Horr have insisted Moyale stays in Marsabit district while Moyale politicians have always claimed it." The assessment report further stated, "When Moyale district was created, areas around Forole and Turbi, it is alleged should have formed part of that district" which led to conflict between the Gabra and Boran communities."

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that governance related to the unresolved boundary in Ethiopia Moyale, and the demarcation of parliamentary constituencies and competition over positions in the County Government structures as a result of the 2010 constitution in Kenya Moyale is the one of the cause of the Borana-Gabra and the Borana-Garri conflicts.

8.0 POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND ELECTION

Politics of ethnicity and election is largely cited as one of the major cause of conflict in the Moyale region. Clan has become central to the political environment in the region since the introduction of multi-party. The character of ethnicity and its political and economic implications have changed a lot, whereby the most important form of change and the root of other changes has been the territorialization of ethnicity (Groups that did not have bounded territories now have them) (Schlee, 2010). When resource competition takes place in a political and not in an economic realm, ethnicity becomes the most efficient base for political mobilization, and it gives enough ground for new local elites to compete on the basis of ethnicity (Sisay 2007:15). Hence, people who want political positions rallied their clans against others. Carrier and Kochore (2014:139) note that though the current ethnic dynamics in the north Kenya have a long history, owing much to earlier inter-ethnic interaction in the region and to colonial policy. the 'hardening of lines' and 'territorialization of ethnicity' – whereby differing groups of pastoralists made stronger claims to certain territory as their own – has been intensified in the post-1992 era of multiparty elections. This is where political power within constituencies became the prize, and ethnic strategizing a means to achieve it.

During election periods, politicians with the aim of maximizing on their votes and reducing votes to opponents, engage in parochial politics of incitement and ethnicity (Feinstein International Center et al, 2013:11). The combination of poverty, frustration, and general deprivation in the population makes it easier for manipulation along ethnic divides. This resulted in localized clashes in both 1992 and 1997 and in widespread violence, displacement, and killing in early 2008 after close and disputed national elections (ibid.). Election-related ethnic alliances in Marsabit County just before the 2013 elections and after, erupted into violence in the already volatile district (Mohamud and Mosley, 2014). The violence pitted the Borana on the one hand and an alliance of the Gabra, Rendille, and Burji (ReGaBu) as well as Gabra and Burji (GaBu) on the other. This alliance was formed a few months before the elections to lock out the majority Boran from elective posts and administration of the new county. The alliance won all the high-profile positions, including governor, senator, and women's representative, which led to conflict between the Borana and Gabra. The violence that took place in December 2013 caused loss of lives and the displacement of around 30,000 people, and the burning of houses (ibid.).

Ethnic allegiance is certainly felt deeply enough in the region for it to be a key resource that political figures can manipulate. In the multiparty era, candidates have gone to great lengths to ensure that the numbers from their own ethnic groups or clans were maximized, often by transporting large numbers of their fellows from other regions to their constituency to register (Carrier and Kochore, 2014:139). In this connection Schlee (2010:10) states:

Electoral politics in northern Kenya made use of group rights which were granted or denied. In the materials collected … there are cases in which MPs favoured the admission of pastoralists moving in from elsewhere into their district, hoping to get the votes of these groups, or practiced a violent rhetoric of exclusion in order to gain the vote of those opposing the newcomers. All this is based on the assumption that there are group rights to specific territories.

In line with this, Hub, (2012: 3-4) notes that political competition between the Gabra and Borana groups (since there is a perception that one is more dominant than the other), accusations and counter-accusations of importation of voters from Ethiopia in every electioneering year may worsen existing tensions. According to Feinstein International Center, et al (2013), in many of the conflicts leading up to the 2013 elections (including Moyale and Tana River) the immediate conflict was about politics— "people crossing the river to vote."

9.0 PROLIFERATION OF FIRE-ARMS

A proliferation of weapons in Moyale of Ethiopia and Kenya has also been considered crucial factor for the cause of conflict in the area. However, the small arms themselves do not cause conflict or criminal activities, but their availability in a volatile environment causes the violence (Menkhaus, 2008). Availability of automatic weapons lowers the strength required for participating in violent conflicts and thereby extends the participation to young boys as well (PRAGYA, 2012:49; Sisay 2007). Hence, in a context of increasing vulnerability at the household or community level both from insecurity and economic decline, firearms are regarded as a means of protecting, replacing or accumulating assets from both cross-border and internal raiding (Gakuria, 2013: 15; CEWARN/IGAD 2007:29). In the past owning guns were considered as the source of security, but now have become a source of insecurity (PRAGYA, 2012:49). The proliferation of fire-arms and their misuse results in high casualty rates and indiscriminate killing extending to women and other vulnerable groups. The existence of firearms in a community, whether coming out of a war or otherwise, is a threat to peace and stability. They are responsible for conflict escalation due to their destructive power, which triggers vengeance and counter vengeance leading to a vicious cycle of violence. The very easy availability, affordability and accessibility of arms reduce the incentives to find non-violent solutions to conflicts and breed a spiral of insecurity (the UN Secretary General Millennium Report quoted in CEWARN/IGAD 2007:29). It accelerated the conflict in the Moyale region and serves the livestock theft/cattle rustling industry among pastoral communities (ibid)

Some works like CEWARN-IGAD (2006:12) attribute the proliferation of weapons to the collapse of the Somali state and the down fall of the Derg regime in Ethiopia. However, the history of arms proliferation even goes back to the Mau Mau insurgent movement for the initial circulation of illicit small arms (Muhereza, Wairagu and Kimani, 2011:12), and during the shifta war in the late 1960s and the Ogaden war of 1977/78 (Mahmoud 2011:162). These movements have contributed to the infiltration of arms in the area.

Firearms are an important factor in the dynamics of pastoralist conflicts as arms acquisition is now both a cause and consequence of insecurity and conflict. Almost two third of the pastoral populations in Kenya possess illegal small arms in Kenya (CEWARN/IGAD 2007:144), and the Ethiopian pastoralists are said to possess up to 74 per cent of civilian-held firearms estimated at 320,000 (Karp, cited in Muhereza, Wairagu and Kimani, 2011:7). Proximity of Moyale to the porous border has significantly contributed to a steady inflow of firearms and infiltration various armed groups available to be hired as mercenaries. However, the factors that have led to the proliferation of firearms are varied, which include insecurity, cultural practices and values, commercialization of livestock raiding, underdevelopment, political and economic marginalization (Tigist, 2010: CEWARN/IGAD 2007; Muhereza, Wairagu and Kimani, 2011). Moreover, inadequate policing manifested by poor facilitation, low deployment, and rogue elements among law enforcement agencies have led to complacency in the control of weapons proliferation (Muhereza, Wairagu and Kimani, 2011:13).

Arms that are easily transported across borders by pastoralists find their way into criminal groups and agents for further transfer in the center. This situation is further aggravated by the presence of insurgent groups such as the OLF in Borana Zone of the Oromia regional state adjoining Kenya (Tigist 2010: 33; Mahmoud 2011:165). The security problems that are closely linked to existence of the OLF splinter groups in Moyale and parts of Wajir North districts could not be underestimated as this had gone a long way in disrupting community peace, trust and confidence not only across the inter-district but also across Kenya – Ethiopia international border (Grima 2011: 29). He further notes that these sensitive issues of security concern threatened not only reverse the blood compensation process through peace agreement but also frustrate the cross-border peace and stability (ibid.). The peripheral status as well as the vast and porous borders arms smugglers frequently straddle across the border and their unmonitored movements facilitates arms transfers has escalated conflict in the area. This has security implication for the region. The abundance of arms in the hands of non-state actors means that new conflicts can readily be started and that peace is implausible.

10.0 WEAKENING OF TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The Gabra, Garri and Borana communities have their own institutions to administer their community and to deal with conflict prevention, management and resolution through councils of elders or traditional courts. The decision of elders and clan leaders had dominant power and were respected. However, the evidences from the respondents and several studies reveal that the role of traditional leaders and governance systems in Ethiopia and Kenya Moyales have generally weakened, reducing the capacity of communities themselves to manage and prevent conflicts and crime.

There are various reasons for the weakening of the traditional system, but in general can be categorized into two: changing dynamics within the community and externally imposed. One of the arguments used in support of the thesis that customary institutions for conflict management are breaking down is that the position of the elders has been undermined by modern changes. According to Duffield (cited in Krätli and Swift 1999:31), the elders' authority has been undermined by the introduction of a market economy and the increasing polarization of rich and poor, that resulted in labor migration. The youth have found new

sources of influence and wealth including the flourishing armed militias of young men and the new income available through banditry.

In the view of CEWARN-IGAD (2006: 11-12), decentralization and the rise of local elites have also weakened the authority of traditional elders who used to play an important role in settling dispute over access to resources. Similarly, Odhiambo (2012) claimed that traditional authority is being eroded by the progressive replacement of elders' councils and tribunals with government-appointed agencies and functionaries. Meanwhile, urbanization and increasingly frequent migrations to town of young people, especially men, expose them to other cultures and make them question traditional values. For example, one of the causes of conflict between Borana and Gerri was the introduction of new rules and regulations for land management by local government that contradicts with the indigenous management system, which has its own rules and regulations (Sisay 2007:9) This in turn has resulted in a culture of impunity where competing pastoralists have taken the law into their hands (CEWARN-IGAD 2006: 12).

Another way in which elders may have lost their authority is through increasing distrust from the communities, particularly from the warrior age sets (Krätli and Swift 1999:32). This may have various causes. One may be the association with an increasingly distrusted administration. The elders may increase their influence and prestige by providing an interface between their communities and local government. Let me use the words of PRAGYA (2012: 49) to summarize the reasons for weakening of traditional institution:

The elders' peacemaking role has also been undermined by the development of modern state, market economy, the introduction of armed warfare and the institution of state-based ascribed authority. The multiplicity of actors and influences (local states, international organizations, development agencies) has also contributed to the breakdown of indigenous traditions and practices, and overpowered the culturally approved rules and mechanisms of conflict management.

Hence, the role of the elder is becoming increasingly down-graded and as such, social restrictions that once limited escalations in conflict are becoming less effective.

11.0 CONCLUSION

Inter-communal conflicts along the Ethiopia-Kenya border in Moyale are mainly based on group identities-clan or ethnicity, between the Borana and the Garri on one hand, and the Borana and the Gabra on the other. As both ethic groups are residing in both borders, a conflict breaking on one side of the border often has a spillover effect on the other side because of kinship ties (clan/communal affiliations) between communities living in both Kenya and Ethiopia. Hence, the conflict in the Moyale border region involves both an inter-communal and cross-border nature.

As the Moyale of Ethiopia and Kenya is highly prone to drought and flooding, conflict in this region is frequently associated with resource access, exacerbated by drought or other acute events that sharpen competition. However, the drivers of conflict in the region are multiple and in the post 1990s that have got new dimension. Much of the pastoral conflict has started to transform into more political conflict, as groups vie to have a representative of their ethnicity in a seat of power. Consequently, conflict that was characterized by competition for resources

had gained a new dimension-competition over boundaries which makes the resolution of conflict complex and problematic. The commitment and willingness of governments of both countries along with multiple local and international stakeholders' engagement are critical to address the drivers of intercommunal conflict in the Moyale region.

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