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Challenges to Peace and Security in Pastoralist areas in the Case of Borana and Guji Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Review

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Abstract

Pastoralist areas of Ethiopia continued to be afflicted by the scourge of conflicts, drought and famine. Conflicts in this area are often linked to conflict over scarce resources and new boundaries limiting their movements. Conflicts between pastoralists in southern oromia are not a new phenomena, it has existed in different forms for centuries. However, these conflicts have intensified and changed over the last decade due to a range of factors. There is a long history of conflict among various pastoral groups, which raised sections of clans, tribes and ethnic groups against each other. Today, internal border are creating more challenges for pastoralist communities than international challenges. Cattle raiding and counter raiding in which people are deliberately killed are among the main feature of pastoralist including pastoralist areas of Borana and Guji zone. Pastoralism is a cultural and economic system in communities founded on livestock rearing as the primary economic activity. It incorporates and defines social structure, resource management, productivity, trade and social welfare mechanisms. The majority of the world's pastoral community lives in the horn of Africa. The pastoralist livelihoods require both extensive use of land and freedom of movement. For pastoralists mobility is a necessary response to climate and vegetation variations.

Key word; Conflict, Security, Pastoralism, Peace, Livestock

1. Introduction

Pastoralism represents a symbiotic relationship among three elements: people, livestock and often-fragile environments (Kelemework, T.,2011). Conflicts between pastoralists in southern oromia are not a new phenomena, it has existed in different forms for centuries. However, these conflicts have intensified and changed over the last decade due to a range of factors. There is a long history of conflict among various pastoral groups, which raised sections of clans, tribes and ethnic groups against each other. Pastoral conflicts in the past were less devastating as they mostly relied on traditional weaponry such as spears, bows, and arrows. However, the widespread availability of firearms has significantly increased the lethality of these conflicts. Indeed, the pattern and forms of the recent violent conflicts in pastoral areas indicate that they have involved large-scale livestock raiding, seizure of the neighboring ethnic group' s territories by military force and what has virtually become warfare (Getachew, 2003). The conflict between Borana-Oromo and Garri-Somali in recent years can be the best example of this reality. The Borana, and Garri pastoralists share common pastoral resources. They dwelt in one administrative province in the pre-federal Ethiopia. In their long lasting relationship, they developed a common approach to shared resources, culture and governance system. In the past decade a number of large-scale clashes have occurred among Ethiopian pastoralists, resulting in major losses of life and displacement (Hagman and Mulugeta,2008:21).

The Borana-Garri incident is among the many clashes between groups publicized. The relation between Borana Oromo and Somali clans has been characterized by competition and conflict⁵. Besides the violent resource conflicts existing between and within the Somali's and Oromo's pastoral groups, currently the issues of where the administrative boundaries between the two Regional States should be drawn in areas of mixed cultural, linguistic and ethnic affiliations have resulted in boundary disputes⁶. In February 2009 alone, some 16,000 people were driven from their homes by the conflict between the Somali region and the Oromiya region over a contested piece of land(<http://www.internaldisplacement.Org>). Displacement was triggered by conflict between different ethnic groups over access to political power or scarce resources such as water and pastoral or agricultural land. BBC has also reported that some 70,000 people have fled their homes to a remote part of southern Ethiopia,after a deadly conflict broke out between rival groups, Borana-Oromo and Somali clans, apparently triggered by the construction of a new borehole⁸. Recently, in July 2012, there was a clash in the southern part of Ethiopia involving the Garri and Borana communities, in which more than 30,000 people crossed into Kenya to escape the fighting and dozens have been killed(<http://somalilandpress.com>). The pastoralist livelihoods require both extensive use of land and freedom of movement. For pastoralists mobility is a necessary response to climate and vegetation variations. The need to provide for the varied foraging needs of different livestock and to afford a margin of safety against the vagaries of rainfall, demanded ecologically specialized and seasonally varied grazing lands over a considerable space and watering points. So the best protection against unreliable rainfall is control over extensive territory, preferably containing a regular supply of water (Abdulahi, 2005:7). government development efforts have focused on sedentarization of pastoralists in favor of cultivation instead of transhumance nomadism and ease of provision of social services. Such

perception has made Ethiopian pastoralists subject to economic and political marginalization (Elias, 2008:1; Abdulahi, 2005: 8).

1.1 Objective of the Review

- The Objective of the Review to highlighted the challenges to peace and security in pastoralist area of in case of Borana and Guji Zone, Oromia Regional State,Ethiopia.

2.Challenges to peace and Security in Pastoral Community

Pastoralist areas of Ethiopia continued to be afflicted by the scourge of conflicts, drought and famine. Conflicts in this area are often linked to conflict over scare resources and new boundaries limiting their movements. Today, internal border are creating more challenges for pastoralist communities than international challenges. Cattle raiding and counter raiding in which people are deliberately killed are among the main feature of pastoralist including pastoralist areas of Borana zone (Oromia National Regional State, Regional State Task Force 2011:115) The Borana, the Guji and the Garri pastoralist region of the southern Ethiopia have been characterized by widespread conflict today. Unlike before, current conflicts in pastoralist area involve heavy machine gun that leads to high human and material destruction. Besides its huge catastrophic effects, the actors in today's conflict are not only the herders/pastoralists like before, but also politicians from the local to zonal level playing a proxy role in escalating or instigating conflict whenever their personal or communal interest is negatively affected in the areas. According to the study conducted by Ochieng (2012:10), from 1990 up to 2005 alone, about eleven violent conflicts took place in the Borana and Guji Zone. The mechanism mandated to resolve this conflict by the government through formal state machinery have suffered from serious limitation because of its neglect to local perspective of conflicts, dynamics at grassroots levels and less significance attached to the values and norms at local levels. Conflicts are common in developing countries where there is resource scarcity, widespread poverty and limited participation in economic, political and cultural decision making. Moreover, in remote rural areas where the government structure is weak, culture can become one of the factors contributing to conflict. Yet such tensions would not necessarily result in violent conflicts if institutions and mechanisms were in place to resolve them peacefully. *In pastoralist areas a major source of conflict has been competition over the use of natural resources (water and pasture), but there are also cases of conflict and violence related to the cultural practices of heroism, livestock raiding and the demand for justice (political, cultural or religious).*

3. Type of Conflict in Pastoral Community

3.1 Inter-group conflict

The concept of conflict is applied in different contexts, ranging from intrapersonal conflict, a conflict people experience when deciding between doing what they want and what they should to violent confrontation, which can lead to an elimination of another person or groups of persons. Intergroup conflict involves two or more groups with different and sometimes incompatible interests or goals, which may be expressed as material or in other ways; and they behave and react accordingly. In his “triangular” model of conflict and violence Galtung (1996) has asserted that if there are evident incompatible goals; like one group’s goal is blocked by the other group’s goal, contradictory attitudes; and violent behaviors; (physical and/or verbal) concurrently, there exists an intergroup conflict. The more basic the blocked goals are- such as access to grazing land and other basic needs, the more likely the conflict will turn violent (Finlev, 2012:47). Intergroup relations are embedded in complex social settings. Conflict and violence that emerge in such settings are shaped by different interacting forces. There by, the conflict and violence takes complex dimension. Conflicts emerge as a result of different backgrounds and sparking events. In his discussion about emergent conflict and conflict transformation Miall (2007:14) has pointed out that: “conflicts emerge as a result of a combination of background factors, proximate causes and trigger events. Each is unique and has a particular relationship with its historical setting”. According to the statement, the usage of “historical setting” appears like a foundation for each particular cause as they seem to get their meaning from their particular historicity. According to Mayer (2000:11), According to Hugh Miall (2007:33) social change or restructuring of social lives brings emergent conflict and violence if it is not handled carefully or transformed peacefully. Perhaps, the reaction of individuals on groups is not limited to the actions and policies of the state actors but also in relative moves and positions of other groups, and such responses are “shaped by their past history which they carry with them”(2007:34).

3.2 Ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic conflicts are conflicts in which the warring parties are defined by a combination of historical, linguistic and cultural features (Schlee and Shongolo,1995:8).In the academic arena, another point of divergence about ethnicity besides its definition is whether ethnicity causes action or it’s supplemental to other factors to justify action. For primordial theorists, the primordial attachments inherent in ethnicity, which are seen as stable and constant, cause communal action or conflict (Aalan, 2008:29). This approach contends ethnicity as a cause of inter-ethnic conflict. For instrumentalists, actions have material causes and ethnicity can be a by-product or a resource in achievement of other events but doesn’t cause actions (Vaughan 2003:45). Instrumentalist theorists argue that the elites manipulate group differences (Hamesso, 2001:47) and states’ involvement in instigating rivalries between groups for political advantages (Udogu 2001:21,35).

3. Borana-Garri Conflicts

3.1 Inter-Regional boundary making as a triggering factor for the Borana-Garri conflicts.

With the adoption of ethnic based regional administration in Ethiopia, as it is mentioned earlier the constitution has divided the country into nine ethno-regional states and two multi-ethnic citystates. Accordingly, the Oromiya and Somali Nation Regions, Region 4 and 5 respectively were formed. Until the last years of the Derg Regime, both the Borana and Garri were under the same administrative province- the then Borana *Awraja*. However, the new ethnic based territorial restructuring put in place by the EPRDF regime split this province between two ethnoregional states- Oromiya and Somali, in 1992 Ethnic regionalization required people with fluid identities like the Garri, who share both Oromo and Somali ethno-linguistic features, to identify themselves with either the Oromiya or Somali Regional States. The process of inter-regional boundary making was thus linked with renegotiation of identity (Kefale,2010:621). The Garri opted for Somali identity and thus, the Borana and Garri found themselves on the opposite sides of the administration boundary. This led to the shrinkage of the Borana customary territory as the Garri and other Somali speaking inhabitants of the area were placed into the new Somali regional state.

Most of the Borana informants argued that the choice of the Garri to be Somali in 1992 was a calculative move to own resources. Their major argument was that at the beginning of the 1990's the Garri were emphasizing their Oromo identity and even they formed a political alliance under the Oromo Abo Libration Front (OALF). For instance, Bayo noted: *at the beginning of 1990s, the Garri settled in Borana land. They claimed that they are Oromo and they inhabited in the Oromo land as Oromo, and all of the sudden, few years later, they claimed that they are Somali. So, they took a piece of our land with them to their newly chosen identity, Somali* (Interview, Sep.2012).

It appears that the Garri were emphasizing their Oromo identity during the TGE (Transitional Government of Ethiopia) when the OLF was considered the second most important political force in the country behind the TPLF/EPRDF (kefale, 2010:621). Soon after, when the politics of the post 1991 Ethiopia began to change; when OLF was no more part of EPRDF, the Garri ended their affiliation with the Oromo and decided to join the Somali.

The Borana informants agree that they were deeply dissatisfied with the new territorial arrangement. For instance, Debela stated: *Our problem is this new territorial arrangement based on ethnicity, we were okay with the old administration* (Interview Sep. 2012). While many Garri informants reflect otherwise. Unlike the case during the Derg regime, the Garri seems to enjoy the self-ethno-regional administration provisions of the constitution; this is partly because they didn't like the Borana dominated administration of the Derg regime. Mohammed noted: *The Derg and the Imperial Regime was biased to the Borana, our people had suffered because of the Ethio-Somalian war. Our people were displaced and they had lived in refugee camps in Kenya and Somalia for years. We were happy when we were told that we could have our own administration, which is not Borana dominated anymore* (Mohammed, Interview Oct. 2012).

Besides the challenge the new ethno-regional administration brought to ethnic-negotiation among some local people, the new state structure has not addressed the issue of who should now administer the areas that were previously shared by the two groups. This situation created violent conflicts among the Borana and Garri. Both Borana and Garri informants agree on the fact that most of their conflicts since the 1992 were mainly border issues across the Oromiya and Somali regional states. Between 1992 and 2004, 8 major conflicts happened between the Borana and Garri in the border area (Odhiambo, 2012: 11). Thus, the nature of the Borana-Garri conflicts from one caused primarily by resource competition, to one in which boundary issues play an increasingly important role.

4. Guji – Burji and Amaro conflict .

According to the Guji elders of aged above 85 years, the people of Burji or Gara gara, were not living around the areas they are occupying today. According to this oral history, this people of Burji came from Abunu area which currently found in Guji zone of oromia regional state. The cause of conflict among these Guji pastoralists and particularly Burji people is partly rooted in above mentioned historical facts. Following their historical legend and the historical facts, the Guji pastoralists do not recognize their land ownership in the area.

Because, since time immemorial, before their coming to the area the Guji pastoralists were dwelling in the areas nowadays mostly occupied by Burji, Amaro, konso and others. According to the interview conducted with Guji elders, the huge amount of pastoralists' land has unfairly been taken by the Burji, Amaro, konso and others particularly Burji people. Before the expansion of this Burji and Amaro people, the Guji pastoralists were raring their livestock encircling the nowadays Burji and Amaro land. In other words, encircling the Burji and Amaro lands the Guji land starting from Konso and Borana borders, it elongates to very near areas to the Capital city of SNNPs- Hawassa. This means in short, most of the areas currently demarcated as Segen Zone and even allocated to investors by Ethiopian Government as if it was south region land were the land on which Guji for long period of time raring their animals.

Since their coming to the area, for the people is predominantly farmers, particularly the Burji people, they began highly cultivating the land which was sources of living for Guji oromo in different ways. As the number of Burji population increases, one Burji father inherits piece of pastoralists land to his son and the situation goes on. As the agricultural activities and the population of the Burji people increase, on the pastoralists' side lose of important natural resources such as water sources, palatable range lands, sacred sites, individual, village and common enclosures increases.

And increase of Burji population and their agricultural activities and lose important natural resources on the side of the Guji Oromo pastoralists gave birth to the conflict of interest among the surrounding community- the Burji, Amaro and Guji Oromo.

3.2 Competition over scarce resource

Competition over scarce grazing fields and water, and clan based raiding of livestock has been ongoing causes of pastoralist conflicts. Borana and Garri pastoralists move to different areas searching for pasture and water for their animals and for human use. Their movement varies according to the distribution of pasture and water. Some areas are suitable for use during the dry season and some during the wet season. During the dry season, the Garri pastoralists move to the dry season reserve areas along the lower banks of Genale and Dawa rivers and the areas outside the riverbanks. The Borana pastoralists also move during the dry season to the banks of the upper Dawa river. However, these areas are not suitable during the wet season, some areas become infested with biting flies, ticks, and tsetse fly. Shrinkage of rangelands due to different factors intensifies competition over pasture and water in the area between the Borana and Garri, resulting in frequent violent conflicts. The rangelands that are suitable for irrigated farming (typically the dry season reserves) have been taken away from pastoralists for farming schemes. The grazing land has also been fragmented by settlements, by national parks, and critically by war and conflict, all of which have reduced access. This competition over resources is shaped by economic changes. As it is discussed in the third chapter, the Borana who were exclusively cattle herders have become camel herders around 18 years ago. This was caused by the increased aridity of the area and the Borana began investing in camels as an alternative or addition to the cattle. This economic change increased the competition between the Borana and Garri. In general, due to the deterioration in their livelihood triggered by a number of factors discussed above has increased conflict over scarce pastoral resources. Moreover, the erosion of pastoralist institutional arrangements around natural resources management has also affected the situation. This is in part attributed to the state policies and actions that have not recognized the right of the pastoralists to own or manage their rangelands, and have therefore ignored their institutional system

6. Conflict prevention mechanisms

The Guji and the Borana zone is known by its richness in indigenous institutions, traditional mechanism of conflict resolutions and managing resources are widespread in this zone. Desaleng (2007:150) indicated that the traditional institutions of conflict resolution in the zone have been derived from the Oromo Gadaa system. Gadaa represents an overriding Oromo customary way of life and their worldviews rooted in the Oromo customary institutions of *aadaa* (custom and traditions), *seera* (law), and *safuu* (Oromo concept of ethics). These institutions form the building block of the Oromo indigenous institutions of social, cultural and political administration. In addition, Tache and Irwin (2003 as cited in Desalegn, 2007: 152) also “presented the evidence of how the diverse local communities in the Borana zone of Oromia coexist under the traditionally negotiated system of shared management of natural resources”. They further indicated that conflict tends to be rapidly resolved through the application of the indigenous institution of conflict resolution. In his earlier study on Indigenous systems of conflict resolution in Oromia, Desalegn (2005:11) concluded that in the Borana zone and Guji zone, customary institutions of resource managements and conflicts resolutions are combined; and as a result of the highest respect and confidences it received from the local communities, customary institutions has to be given full authority to deal with issues related to conflict and management of resources.

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