

Dynamics of Pastoralist Relations at Change: An Exploration into the Causes of Afar -Karrayu Conflict in the Awash Valley

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of the underlying causes and the dynamics of the conflict between the Afar and Karrayu pastoralists in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia. Its prime objective was to uncover the interplay of causes and dynamics of the conflict between these two ethnic groups. It entirely relied on qualitative method; therefore, used both primary and secondary sources in the process. The primary data was generated through both in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The study indicated that the causes of the conflicts in the areas are multiple; relating to socially generated natural resources scarcity, inappropriate development interventions, cattle rustling and related revenge attacks, culture of violence emanating from cultural values and devaluing of traditional institutions and resemblance of pastoral lifestyle. Above all, the marginalization of pastoralists from major political, economic and other considerations, and prejudices attributed to the pastoralist way of life has led to persistent social conflicts. Besides, memories of historical animosities between the Afar and Karrayu ethnic groups served as adhesive glues for the pervasive conflict, mounting negative attitudes and perceptions to each others' group. The dynamics of these causes across time can be associated with the involvement of various actors with incompatible personal/group interest and needs. In an attempt to address the causes of conflict, efforts have been made so far through formal and informal institutions but in vain. Therefore, peace building endeavors should consider the burning and at times diametrically opposed interests of the parties, and have to address the major cause/s of the conflicts through both changes in attitude and in the application of policies designed within the context of the region that is first consulted and largely approved by the local people.

Key words: Afar, basic causes, conflict, dynamics, Karrayu, pastoralists, triggering causes

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Introduction

The Afar region is located in the North Eastern part of Ethiopia sharing international borders with Eritrea and Djibouti. In terms of area coverage, the Afar region is the fourth largest region in the country with a total area of 100,860 square kilometers. It is structured into 5 zones and 29 *Woredas*. The Karrayu on the other hand inhabit the Fentale *Woreda* which is situated in Eastern Showa Zone of the Oromia regional state. This *woreda* has a total of 20 *Kebeles*, out of which 10 are inhabited by pastoralists, 8 by agro-pastoralists and the remaining two are urban *Kebeles*. These two regional states share boundaries. The Karrayu often refer to the Afar as their 'eternal' enemies and inter-group disputes are driven by competing claims over water points and rangeland resources. Conflicts between Afar and Karrayu have been taking place for the last six decades. In fact, of the many areas in Ethiopia which have been prone to such violent conflict, the Middle Awash Valley, a home for pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, and cultivators, is recorded among the inexorable. Ayalew (2001), Buli, (2001) and Getachew (2001) in their studies asserted that the Afar and Karrayu Oromo have been traditional enemies that engaged in intermittent raids and counter raids.

Statement of the Problem

The Afar-Karrayu conflict is explained in terms of competition for scarce resources. In his seminal work on the Karrayu, Ayalew (2001) rightly argued that the underdog status of the pastoralists in the Awash valley has considerably shaped their relations and aggravated inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. As the same source stated, development interventions carried out in the Awash Valley, specifically the ever-expanding of commercial farms worsened the conflict. Corroborating Ayalew's view, Buli (2001) adds the role of culture, especially prior to the launching of state farms in the area, in the conflict between the groups in focus.

Furthermore, as many scholars (Asnake 1994, Merera 2003, Bahiru 2008) have argued, the ethno federalism presented as a solution to the perennial ethnic questions, has saddled the existing ethnic problems, by giving it a new dimension. This new dimension is partly asserted by Markakis (1994) who remarks on the necessity of looking at the factors of pastoral communities' conflict beyond the old agitating reasons such as warrior ethos and disagreement upon pasture land and water; as they began to act in collaboration with other social groups and across ethnic boundaries, which marks a departure from the traditional practice.

However, despite the growing interest in the study of inter-ethnic conflicts, yet much is left either unstudied or scantily addressed. Although, conflict is a

critical problem of the country in general and the study areas in particular, less is known about the nature and underlying causes of these conflicts. Furthermore, apparent expressions of power asymmetry, land and territorial annexation as reflection of this, and basically resource as an underpinning cause fueling conflicts and contributing factors related to geo-political, historical and cultural factors are taken in composite to explain the case at hand. Research questions include: What are the underlying roots and the immediate triggering causes of these conflicts? What explains the dynamics of these conflicts? Hence, the studies made so far are general and they give a very limited account on the causes of the Afar-Karrayu conflict. Therefore, there exists a knowledge lacuna. The broad objective of the present study is to uncover the interplay of causes, causal relations and dynamics of Afar-Karrayu conflict including the security implication on the region at large.

Theoretical Literature Review

Existing theoretical frameworks of conflicts are about civil war, political instabilities including coups d'état and/or inter-border conflicts. Conflicts are inherent in any society. Conflict can be physical, verbal, and emotional struggle between individuals or groups that have actual or perceived incompatibility of values, needs, interests and goals to the actualization of competition over scarce resources, power and influence (King Mary and Ebrima Sall ed. 2005). Given that societies are inherently heterogeneous entities, incompatibility of interests and hence conflict prevails in any country at any time. But conflict of interest is only a necessary condition for violent conflict to take place. The essential condition is the difference in the capacity of countries and communities and their institutions to manage conflicts. In some countries violent conflicts do not recur. In others they are dynamically sustained, evolving to a conflict trap (Collier, 2007).

In an attempt to understand conflicts, various theoretical frameworks have been put forward. One such framework is strategic conflict assessment (SCA), which is a holistic and systematic basis for analyzing the structures, actors and dynamics of conflict, using a multi-disciplinary approach. These structures include the security, political, economic, and social forces that underlie conflict (DFID, 2002).

A number of literary works have attempted to explain civil wars and inter-border conflicts in terms of greed theory, which is a lust for control and possession of strategic resources such as oil and mineral resources. However, whether this theory holds true for conflict in pastoralist context is debatable.

In the pastoralist context, conflict among groups involves fighting for resources, which apparently may be interpreted as greed. But in many cases, pastoralists fight for access to critically scarce resources in a given area and at a

given time. In other words, the fighting is for temporal access to resources and not control and possession of pastoralist resources. The quest for survival that dictated the degradation of rangelands and the lack of alternative sources of livelihoods as well as the weak institutional capacity to prevent and contain inter-group conflict cannot be explained by greed, since greed and need are different concepts.

The other version of conflict analysis approach is the grievance hypothesis, which attempts to explain civil wars and related politically motivated fighting. However, inter-ethnic conflicts in the pastoralist context are not fully explained by this grievance hypothesis. Accordingly, this study attempts to explain this inter-group conflict in terms of the initial state of underdevelopment, the process of impoverishment, and degradation of the natural resource bases of pastoral economy, as well as inadequate development endeavors and poor governance in development management (Collier 2007).

Empirical Literature Review

Different case studies try to explain causes of inter-group conflicts in terms of different factors and processes. Some understand the causes of conflict as inter-ethnic polarization, and argue that the ethnic-based federal arrangement has polarized inter-ethnic relationships, leading to conflicts. Some other studies explain conflict in terms of the interplay between a number of factors, including ethnicity, clan structure, politics, and resource shortage (Medhane 2006, Hangman 2005, 2007, Mohammad 2004, Kassahun and Tegegn 2006).

For years, studies have also been conducted on the ethnic conflicts in the Awash Valley; and many of the studies look at the Karrayu conflict from the “marginalization of herders approach”. As such (Ayalew 2001, Bekele 2008, Alemmaya 2008) all blamed the commercial land expansion policies of governments since the imperial regime for the root causes and intensification of the Karrayu’s conflict with their neighbors such as the Afar, the Argoba, the Arsi and occasionally the Issa Somali. In the same fashion, Melaku also declared that “pastoralists are faced with a double-edged marginalization: first, as a member of the ‘dominant ethnic groups’ and second as pastoralists”. For him, as one of the dominant ethnic groups in Ethiopia, they faced national oppression while as pastoralists, they are considered as ‘uncivilized’ and neglected by the dominant ruling classes that in the end they face both intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts (Melaku, 2001).

The aforementioned reductionist view of marginalization runs a risk of overgeneralization as it neglected environmental, cultural, social, security and other factors as causes of conflicts in pastoral areas. As a result, some writers tried to reconcile the marginalization paradigm with other specific factors. Ali (1994)

for example analyzed the multiple impacts of the large-scale mechanized irrigation schemes in the Awash Valley with environmental alienation. His work contained detailed analysis of how environmental vulnerability of producers, coupled with external factors like the policy environment, will eventually cause and aggravate conflicts between and among producer communities. In the same token, Baxter (1999), cited in Kebede (2005), stated that fighting and raiding have been regular features in these areas particularly in the dry season and in the prolonged drought years. In addition to these environmental analyses, the role of warfare, culturally motioned livestock raid, livestock raid to restock after drought and cattle epidemic and other internal agitating factors are also well addressed by writers like Buli (2001) and Gamaldin (1993).

From the general observation of the above cases, there is one important conclusion we should draw as far as analyzing different cases of conflict in Ethiopia is concerned. This is the fact that parallel to the diversity of the production systems, the population profiles and the different roles played by indigenous and state institutions, the nature and causes of conflict escalations varies with the geographic and administrative differences of various case areas in the country. Accordingly, one or the other approach may apply asymmetrically for analysis of the situation in case areas.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is a qualitative one. To use the words of Holliday, 'in opposition to the notion of survey in quantitative research, in the qualitative one the aim is to go deep into a definable setting in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific environment. Such an environment can be groups of people, institutions, cases, geographic areas and communities' (2002). Other scholars like Flick (2002) also stressed the advantages of the qualitative approach in the study of social relations and in easily attaining the perspectives of the participants and their diversity. Hence, my study employs a qualitative research design and the data is analyzed qualitatively.

In the sampling process, the two *woredas* (Fentale and Awash) were represented by six *kebeles* by taking three from each *woreda*. The selection of key informants was through purposive sampling, a non probabilistic method. To qualify this purpose, snowball sampling was used as I relied on my first contact persons, i.e. village chiefs that they in turn helped me to identify and contact with other key informants in each parish. Therefore, the traditional *Gada* leaders of Karrayu, clan leaders in Afar, religious leaders, chiefs, counselors, and government appointed provincial administrators, political representatives and

members of peace committees and others who were directly or indirectly affected by the conflict were included.

In the data gathering process, due attention was paid to attain information regarding the genesis, sole factors in current conflict, historical state of affairs between the two communities. The empirical data was collected through employing different techniques throughout the fieldwork which lasted 45 days.

One set of the instruments used to collect data was unstructured and semi-structured interviews with key informants. Viable interviews were held with elders of the community who are the opinion leaders in the traditional arena as they participate in the daily management of community affairs. One of the easing factors for viability of most interviews was that most of the elders were willing to participate in the interviews as they assumed it is a good opportunity to teach their customs as well as preserving the traditional knowledge. In addition to this, the researcher's ability of communication in Afaan Oromo and the availability of effective field assistant further eased the in-depth-interview with the key informants.

Two group discussions (FGD) were conducted in each of the study areas, including different community elders. Inter-ethnic conflict is a very sensitive issue which demands a critical weighing of information; participants chose to cooperate in the safest way possible. As such, for the purpose of data triangulation and methodological merit, FGD has 'high face validity'. So, findings of the present study were based essentially on interviews and discussion with individual key informants. The primary data sources were complemented with an extensive review of literature, documents and secondary data sources.

The analytical approach was dictated by the nature of the data. Since the data set is essentially qualitative, the approach was explorative and analytical, probing into the issues, root causes and logical relationships of issues.

Major Findings

Underlying Causes of Pastoral Conflict: Afar and Karrayu in Context

It is undisputed that conflict is a complex and dynamic social process. Consequently, the investigation of its causes should be done without succumbing to the 'tyranny' of single-cause explanations. In other words, the causes for a conflict are multifold. These multiple causes for conflict can be roughly classified as inherent and proximate causes based on the degree of their contribution to the prevalence, recurrence as well as intensity of conflict as a phenomenon. Inherent causes are causes which create the material conditions for conflict in a dynamic

process. Proximate causes, on the other hand, are the psychological conditions resulting in behavioral changes for conflict. The relationship between the two is explainable by the fact that prevalence of inherent causes by itself does not lead to conflict while the proximate causes cannot exist without inherent causes.

Underlying Economic Causes of the Conflict

Inconsiderate Development Policies

There are two contradictory positions on pastoralism in Africa and the strategies these pastoralists have on natural resource management. On the one hand, pastoralists have been criticized for degradation of land because it is assumed that they are fond of augmenting their livestock and over-exploiting or overgrazing pastures. On the other hand, the alternative view is that pastoralists have endured for centuries because they have been subjected to different adaptation strategies and hence have developed a good management of their own land (Helland 1997). The first view is advanced by scholars advocating “tragedy of the commons” especially ecologists, and the second is advanced by social anthropologists and political ecologists. Most of them, however, share the fact that governments consider pastoralists to be poor without having a better understanding of pastoral way of life. Hence, development interventions were/are largely made usually without taking the issue of pastoralist rights into consideration. Consequently, the pastoralist and semi-pastoralist Afar and Karrayu have been repeatedly deprived of their right to hold and use their grazing lands and access to water points due to the inconsiderate state economic development policies and intervention strategies.

The trend in such an endeavor started in the imperial regime and continued till the present and it will be briefly analyzed here. To have a direct presence in the area, the imperial government established the Awash Valley Authority (AVA), which was legally empowered to administer, manage and take charge of the irrigational development projects, game reserves and National Parks located within the main fertile lands of the Awash Valley and its surroundings (Ayalew 2001). This phenomenon led to the eviction of pastoralists from their traditional grazing lands and water stations. This brought to the pastoralists a socially generated scarcity that in turn exacerbates competition and conflicts among the two pastoral groups in the area. At that time, advancing economic modernization for a country like Ethiopia was assumed through the transformation of its ‘traditional sector’ of agriculture into mechanized one that could attract foreign concessionaries. After assuming power in 1974, the Military junta controlled state power and continued large-scale irrigation schemes especially in the Middle and

Lower Awash valleys. The previously foreign owned adjacent companies were nationalized and declared to be property of the state (Kassahun and Tegegn 2003). Similarly, the overthrow of the Derg in 1991 only ended up dissolving some of the state agencies. And the estates and enterprises were reorganized to function as autonomous entities in themselves under state ownership.

The above trend analysis explains the cause for violent conflicts among the Afar and Karrayu versus the State and between the Afar and Karrayu themselves. It can also elucidate the fact that those interventions were made and imposed by the government on pastoralists without their involvement and with little or no regard to their way of life that ultimately resulted in enhanced group conflicts and violent confrontations between and among pastoralists.

Conflict between Afar and Karrayu ethnic groups is not only due to these inconsiderate policies but also attributed to the question of equity i.e. lack of equal benefit from these state oriented development projects. According to one of the Karrayu elders², whenever pastoralist communities of the two antagonistic groups failed to equally benefit, for instance, from the neighboring *Kesem Kebena* development project, conflicts arise. The Karrayu in this regard complained as being disadvantaged especially after the Karrayu daily laborers were dismissed from the project by the federal government in 2004 due to individual clashes with Afar. This became an issue of debate that has not been settled yet. The Karrayu as a result argued that, they are relatively more deprived. Such feelings of deprivation are the result of comparisons with other groups, in our case Afar. Thus, conflict among pastoralist and agro-pastoralists is associated with the ever expanding of commercial farms, national parks and game reserves. One of the officials³ in Fentale *woreda* asserts his view in relation to the inconsiderate expansion of commercial farms, game reserves, national parks and development projects like *kesem kebena* and its impact on pastoralist life as:

Given the growing size of human population with declining climatic assets and resource base, the expansion of commercial farms has destabilizing effect along

² The claim over unequal benefit from the *Kesem Kebena* project was obtained from the interview with Haji Mussa Guro, who is known for his oratorical skill. He is a clan leader in *Haro Karsa* Kebele of Fentale *woreda*. The discussion was conducted on 10 December 2009 at *Haro karsa*.

³ Haji Tedecho Gutto is currently an administrator of Fentale *woreda*. He is an *Ittu* Oromo. He offered me ample information on the impact of inappropriate policies on the pastoralist life. He was interviewed on 22 December 2009 in his personal residence at Matahara.

the course of the Awash Valley. The local community interest and livelihood has not been considered. Hawas (Awash) river is trapped among such installations which is the foci of pastoralist resource. The search for free land and water points turned the two ethnic groups into conflict as pastoralist and agro-pastoralist groups search access and control over meager resources. Besides, Lake Basaka is salty water body which is not suitable for the flora and fauna in its environs. Besides, it is rapidly expanding and covering earlier useful environmental resources and the pastoralist production systems.

Here, therefore, lies the tragedy of the pastoralists. The establishment of large scale mechanized farms by the government since the 1960's and the subsequent eviction of pastoralists was not followed by compensation for their future livelihood. Not only did they lose their traditional rights to land, but the socially generated scarcity has also made them vulnerable to the ever augmenting inert ethnic violent conflicts in the search for grazing lands and water stations for their livestock and themselves. Interventions like development projects and pastoral extension system projects are negligible as compared to how much the pastoralists and agro-pastoralist lost due to large scale mechanized agricultural and conservation projects.

The Paucity of Natural Resources

Often, conflicts are associated with the decline of the "resource pie" or reserved resources. This may be due to interwoven factors like population pressure both natural and through inward migration and rangeland degradation. In the Afar and Karrayu areas, deficiency of grazing resources brought the two pastoral societies to the scene of the conflict.

As mentioned, rapid population growth is one among the many reasons for scarcity. The number of population is tremendously increasing in both the Karrayu and Afar areas. Information obtained from the Focus Group Discussions⁴ at *Doho*

⁴ FGD was conducted among the Karrayu Oromo at a place called *Laga Banti* primary school on 10 February 2010 and is confirmed how population congestions can bring scarcity and this in turn leads into competition and conflicts. The co-facilitator (field assistant) at the time was Ahmed Mussa, a law graduate. The FGD encompasses the *Kebele* leader, religious and clan leaders. Seven individuals were involved in the FGD. Similarly, I have also conducted the second FGD with Afar elders and community leaders at a place called *Doho*, on 26 February 2010 in the environs of *Doho* health center. My field assistant in this case was Ibrahim - a teacher in that *Kebele* who is fluent in both Afar and Amharic languages.

and *Lega Banti Kebeles* of Afar and Karrayu reveals that, the increase in the number of population is mainly attributed to the religious and cultural custom of polygamy and the absence of and/or resistance to family planning practices. Since the responsibility of raising children is shared both at family and community levels, worrying about the future is not in the social psychology of the Afar and Karrayu herder communities. As far as children are concerned, the pastoralists of the two communities believe that, they are considered as being brought up to this world by the “will of Allah” and He will take care of them. Marriage is a source and manifestation of communal bondage for the community hence parents consider having more children as having future potential for making more relatives within the community. For instance the total population of both Afar and Oromia regional states according to the 1994 population census had been 1,106,383 and 18,465,449 respectively. Out of these figures, Awash Fentale *Woreda* constitutes 29,775 while Fentale *woreda* 60,038. Whereas the 2007 population census shows that the total population of Afar reached 1,411,092 while Oromia region constitutes 27,158,471. Out of these figures, the study *Woredas*, i.e. Awash and Fentale hold 37,835 and 82,225, respectively (CSA, 1994 and 2007). The comparison of the censuses clearly shows the steady increase in the number of the population in the area. As a result, the situation of competition has aggravated. Competition for pasture is also taking the form of bringing more stock to the border areas from both sides. Both communities are adopting a strategy of armed group herding for effective herd management. In sum, the augmenting of pastoral population has increased both resource scarcity and inter-group conflict.

Secondly, the migration (displacement) of people from their original land to other areas has also a disastrous effect on inter-ethnic conflict. Ayalew’s work best explains this undisputed truth of how the displacement of *Weima* Afar and *Ittu* Oromo by the further expansions of state commercial farms and the *Issa* Somali from western *Hararghe* into the traditional land of *Debine* Afar and Karrayu caused scarcity and aggravated conflict between these groups (Ayalew 2001). These conflicts are so frequent and usual. Thus, population congestion into a particular area has a dual impact on the people in the area. It brought scarcity of resources and competition for the use and control of the meager resources. Therefore, population congestion on the already scarce resource is like adding fuel to fire. The final result is obviously inter-group conflict.

The last but not least reason for scarcity perhaps is, unlike scattered grazing, concentrated grazing has by itself resulted in rapid rangeland degradation in many areas leading to competition and confrontations. This is to mean that, rangeland degradation pushes the pastoralists to look for other grazing lands with more competition that ultimately results in inter-group conflict. Loss of cattle due to drought and animal plagues is also creating more demand for cattle raiding.

Raiding is a form of conflict than competition. However, the desire to acquire more cattle at the expense of either community is a psychological precondition of competition to raiding as a form of conflict.

The above conflicts clearly manifest the changing condition of supply and demand. The supply of pastoral land is declining because of degradation of rangelands, increasing aridity and desertification at the fringes, drawing out of pastoral lands for irrigated farming and national parks and the continuous intrusion of neighboring agro-pastoralists and non-indigenous peoples into the traditional grazing areas. Therefore, the degree of relations between resource scarcity and inter-ethnic conflict basically relies, as the cases in the Afar and Karrayu reveals, on the relative importance of the resource explained by taking its socio-economic dimension as a backdrop. However, more often than not, scarcity- 'who gets what to eat and who does not' can be a necessary condition for violent inter-ethnic conflict but cannot be a sufficient condition for the appearance of violent inter-ethnic conflicts at least in the Afar and Karrayu of north eastern Ethiopia. Thus, we need to address other factors to which we now turn.

Political Factor

Marginalization and Lack of Good Governance

Afar and Karrayu pastoralists have been marginalized from the political 'games' since their incorporation to the Ethiopian state. According to Gamaldin and Melaku, the pastoralists in the Awash Valley were incorporated into the Ethiopian state not before a century or so. Afar came into the direct control of the state after the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1936/7 and this is a manifestation of state-society relationships and arrangements in Ethiopia (Gamaldin 1993, Melaku 2001). The relationship between political marginalization and inter-ethnic conflict is explained in terms of this arrangement. Ethnic group boundaries have been artificially drawn and redrawn by policy makers of the center. This is intensified especially after the adoption of ethnic federalism in 1991. This resulted in ethnic conflicts which are especially meant for quest of territory. Territorial conflicts existing between the Karrayu border and Awash Fentale of Afar can be a lucid example.

Conflict also arises due to lack of good governance. According to some religious leaders of Afar and Karrayu⁵, local leaders and administrators who are

⁵ Sheik Mussa Waqo, aged 48 is a religious leader of the *Ittu Oromo* living in *Kobo Kebele*. He is also a student of the 6th grade in *Lega Banti* Primary School. I interviewed him on 14 February 2010 at his home in *kobo Kebele*. And Abdo Ali is one of the

assigned by the Regional State of Afar and Oromia have had destructive roles in the relations among the two pastoralists. They argued that, some *Kebele* leaders, for instance, have got their own organized paramilitary groups that undertake raids and some have got attachments with opposition political parties like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an organization accused of fighting for the Karrayu against the Afar and others. According to the two regional states' joint studies document, there were instances where those government officials were seen as obstacles of peaceful negotiations between Afar and Karrayu ethnic groups (Joint Report, 2007). This means, some individuals who have political affiliations have been observed over exaggerating their respective ethnic group's problem during the peace process. Informants from both Afar and Karrayu sides revealed that, political authorities at regional and local levels do not give appropriate and immediate solutions to the pastoralists' problems in relation to conflict⁶.

This supports Azar's (1996) argument that, in a situation where political capacity of the state failed to impartially reach at human need beckons like quality of resource base, institutions, structure of power, participation and decision making, social conflict is most prevalent.

Therefore, irresponsiveness to the public problem, pandering of local politicians to their clans and the prevalence of pseudo-commitment on the part of the government organized members of peace committees on both Afar and Karrayu sides are clear manifestations for the lack of good governance in the region. To this effect, an administration structure, that is prejudiced and which does not enable the population to identify its problems and provide solutions by itself, remains a burden to the society. This in turn widens the gap between the population and government administrative structure. Informants further asserted that, the well-known and widely used role of cultural and spiritual institutions in peace building are weakened and ceased to be utilized as they used to be

renowned and respected community elders in Awash Fentale *Woreda* of *Dudub Kebele*. He is 70 years old; ethnically he belongs to the Debine Afar. I have made a discussion with him on 24 December 2009 at *Doho Kebele* in his home.

⁶ Information on the inefficiencies and irresponsiveness of local politicians and at times their provision of untimely response to the pastoral problem was obtained from Sheik Muktar Fentale who is the Gada leader in the Karrayu community. He is a knowledgeable person on the Gada tradition. The interview was conducted on 28 December 2009 at a place called *Gelcha/Harore*. The other informant on this issue was Hulay Hussen, a renowned elder at *Doho Kebele* of Awash Fentale *woreda*. I discussed the issue with him on 1 February 2010 in his own home at *Doho*.

alternative conflict resolution mechanisms of neighboring communities⁷. This can be associated in one way or another with the weak role of the state. Thus, failure of a government to give recognition to the age-old practices of indigenous institutions which Afar and Karrayu have been using to resolve conflicts can be a reason for the lack of good governance.

Security Related Factors

Contested Borders

The border line between the Afar and Karrayu is not yet clearly delineated. Such blurred demarcation is verdant for conflict to crop up between these historical enemies. This has also complicated resource use and accountability of people in regional governments and acts as a breeding ground for conflict. Indeed, the pastoral way of life is characterized by mobility in times of grazing scarcity. The pastorals may stay in a place for sometimes even if the land is not part of their respective territory.

The Afar and Karrayu land is demarcated by relic boundary such as the Fentale Mountain and the Awash National Park. Thus, people under the banner of the 'principle of effective control' over a certain territory, try to control the area that they settled on for temporary purpose, as being permanently their own. By residing in some places for some months, they instigate conflict that ultimately causes boundary disputes. There are, in fact, studies conducted jointly by the Afar and Oromia regional states depicting the historical grievance and animosity between the two pastoral communities in relation to boundary claims. The following oral history from Karrayu Oromo side is worth mentioning:

In the early days, we (Karrayu Oromo) were living in Awash Fentale *woreda*, Sabure *Kebele*, currently inhabited by the Afar only. Through time, the Afar began pushing and waging war against the Karrayu and made us to settle in what is known as Haro kersa- an area entirely inhabited by the Karrayu. During that time, in an attempt to defend the Afar pressure, repeated fighting took place. The remnant of those Karrayu Oromo in Sabure *Kebele* is self evident that once the area was inhabited by *the Karrayu Oromo (Afar-Oromo Regional state joint report, 2007:11)*.

From the above excerpt, it is possible to deduce that the Karrayu Oromo are still claiming the area around *Sabure Kebele* of Afar as belonging to them. Such claim

⁷ This data was obtained from Sheik Muktar Fentale -Gada leader in the Karrayu community. Interviewed on 28 December 2009 at a place called *Gelcha*

became a necessary condition to exacerbate conflict between the two pastoralists. The conflict that arises as a result of contested border is directly related to the absence of a clear demarcation between the two regional states which ultimately brought constant insecurity in the region.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Pastoral Context

Besides the main security factor in the area under study i.e. contested border is related to easy accessibility and proliferation of arms. Increased proliferation of small arms is like adding fuel to the already existing conflict in the area. One of the interviewees from the Karrayu elders⁸ reveals that, adults and pastoral youths have keen interest towards owning small arms due to the following reasons:

importance to the ownership of semi-automatic rifles such as owning a rifle is considered as a guarantee to gain power over ethnic counterparts. Besides, both of us believed in that, the ownership of a weapon is viewed as an indication of wealth and signifies...manhood and a means of self protection.

Therefore, the possession of arms has been viewed as an important possession in pastoralists' culture and tradition. Accordingly, Afar and Karrayu pastoral ethnic groups have automatic rifles like Kalashnikovs that were probably obtained either locally from small arms dealers or from the former demobilized soldiers of the Derg regime. The increased availability of automatic rifles has exacerbated inter-ethnic conflicts in the areas. This assertion goes with Homer-Dixon's argument in that local conflicts sometimes have global sources (Homer Dixon 1995). Hence, the global production and distribution of small arms and light weapons is one catalyzing factor in the context of Afar-Karrayu conflict. Consequently, globally induced frustration devours local inter-group relations.

Availability of small arms has made it easy for the Afar and Karrayu communities to engage in frequent armed conflicts. The ever increasing appetite for arms in the pastoralists of Afar and Karrayu has created a favorable condition for individuals to form groups and commit murders and undertake livestock raids of each other's groups. Retaliatory acts have frequently led them to bloody clashes. Individual crimes then became causes for organized group violence. This, in turn, created a situation that endangered not only livestock and other resources

⁸ Information on the availability of small arms and the relatively keen interest of the youth to own it was gathered from Haji Roba Saqale, who is a well known Karrayu elder in *Dhebiti Kebele* of Fentale woreda. He is one of the members of government organized peace committee. I interviewed him on 21 December 2009 at Matahara town.

that provides the livelihood security of the pastoralist community but also the security of individual pastoralists and members of the community. As the joint report of the two regional states (2007) reveals, the 2002 episode of Afar versus Karrayu clash can be seen from this perspective.

Socio-cultural Factors

Culture and Tradition of Violence

The existence of a culture of war and violence has been a cause and sustaining factor for inter-ethnic conflicts in the area under study. The long-standing culture of retaliation has a compounding effect and it has sustained conflict cycles. As Buli vividly stated, before the central government launched its development schemes in the Awash Valley, conflicts among the various ethnic groups were instigated by cultural factors. Such culture-induced conflicts had been fought particularly between the Karrayu-Argoba, Afar-Karrayu and Issa with Afar. These groups fought one another for the sake of hunting individuals or collective fame and display their bravery (Buli, 2001). Even though Buli traced the importance of this culture induced conflict back to the 1960's, my interview result from the Afar and Karrayu pastoralists confirm that, the culture of violence still persists with its impact on the conflict between the two groups. The reason behind is that, pastoralists of the area are still practicing that tradition with little change in behavior. As a matter of fact, they inculcate this culture of violence in the minds of the young generations. Pastoralists in the area feel profoundly humiliated if an attack on a family is not revenged. Accordingly, it is true that, retaliatory acts receive positive reactions and are often rewarded by the community. The feeling of humiliation and the subsequent retaliatory measures are usually perceived as collective responsibilities of the entire ethnic group concerned. One of the renowned Afar informants⁹ reported how cultural practices of the two ethnic groups have the potential to induce conflicts:

Culture related war was the direct offspring of the much valued, revered and praised culture. Its influence is quite distinct from conflicts over other issues at least on one basic ground. The distinction could be found from the fact that such war was fought based on the mutual consensus of the conflicting parties.

⁹ The data on cultural practices of violence as sustaining factor for conflict between Afar and Karrayu was generated from Hulay Hussen, a renowned elder at *Doho Kebele* of Awash Fentale woreda. He is a Debine Afar with whom I discussed this issue on 1 February 2010 in his own home at *Doho*.

The above statement rightly asserts that, there is no room for the imminent combat to breakout accidentally. Rather, the belligerent ethnic groups were expected to adapt themselves to the ‘rule of the game’. It was what I called ‘rule of the game’ that inhibited the warring groups from making any surprise attacks on their ‘enemy’. In addition, the ‘rule’ also directed the groups not to hurt or offend the messenger sent from either side. To explain it in more concrete terms, any group that wanted to take the initiative for such war sent a messenger to fix the date and place of the actual combat. The messenger has the privilege of being immune from any form of maltreatment. Accordingly, he received a warm reception and due hospitality in the home of his ‘enemy’. As a war it is an agreed-upon war¹⁰.

The following examples are self evident in Karrayu and Afar cultural practices in connection with conflict. In the Karrayu tradition, for instance, one of the Gada leaders¹¹ explained the role of violent culture in sustaining conflicts as:

Transition from boyhood to youth under ritual initiation to be socially endorsed, killing another out-group man and castrating the genital of the slain as evidence of qualifying for manhood has been considered as one requirement.

In line with this, Buli stated that, the belief that for a ‘man’ in order to be a ‘man’ and get married, he should get men’s genitals as evidence of being victorious on the ‘enemy’. This is evident in the Karrayu culture (Buli 2001). The Focus Group Discussion with Afar elders¹² at *Doho Kebele* reveals that cultural traits of conflict manifested among the Afar herder communities include:

¹⁰ Sheik Muktar Fentale is the Gada leader in the Karrayu community aged 47. But at the time of this field work, he was finalizing his period of rule and had been preparing a ceremony of power transition. He is a knowledgeable person on the Gada tradition. I discussed some of the cultural practices that lead groups into conflicts with him. The interview was conducted on 28 December 2009 at a place called *Gelcha/Harore Hedhe*.

¹¹ Sheik Muktar Fentale. The interview was conducted on 28 December 2009 at a place called *Gelcha/Harore Hedhe*.

¹² FGD with Afar elders and community leaders was conducted at *Doho*, on 26 February 2010 in the environs of *Doho* health center. Such discussion reveals how cultural practices and societal expectations reinforce the youth into conflicts. My field assistant in this case was Ibrahim; a teacher in that *Kebele* who is fluent in both Afar and Amharic languages.

celebrate his transformation with other members of the community at a ceremony called “eidecha” where he receives congratulations. After he is celebrated as a “killer”, he will have the following privileges as an indicator of his social status: on traditional holidays, he will be the lead song maker and receives rewards; his traditional knife called “dubit” will not be used to slaughter animals, rather the knife of those who have not killed is used for slaughter in order to instigate the youth; in wedding ceremonies, there is a special decorated place where only “killers” are allowed to dance; once he killed 4 men, his status will grow further and has the privileges of wearing decorations on his wrist, neck and ears.

On the contrary, those who are not able to gain the status of “killer” will have hard times making a bridal match; they are verbally harassed and generally considered as cowards. Therefore, it is not illogical to argue that, the culture of vendetta/vengeance always leads to conflict escalation. Families who have lost their relatives due to conflict are always under social pressure for vengeance/retribution. Such societal value expectations especially from the pastoral youth have strong powerful implication in igniting further conflict.

The presence of such wars over cultural values could be supported by linguistic evidence. Here I argue that the compound word ‘*Burra-Karrayu*’ which is usually used in the Amharic lexicon, for instance, in times of quarrel between individuals, one may say “*Burra-Karrayu Atibel*” which literally means, do not say *Burra-Karrayu* is perhaps derived from the Afar-Karrayu ethnic conflict. The etymological meaning can be found by splitting the two words. As such, ‘*Burra*’ refers to the war song of Afar which they use during war times to shock their enemy. Karrayu on the other hand is a name of an Oromo ethnic unit frequently in war with the Afar. Therefore, the Afar say ‘*Burra-Karrayu*’ so as to threaten the other group in times of violent conflict between the two groups. This is not to deny the historical animosity existing between these two groups that helped them develop hatred between each other. Such images of enmity and hostilities, however, are results of the fierce competition over resources and territorial claims that they had been through for centuries.

Decline of Cultural and Traditional Systems

In Afar and Karrayu communities, elders used to make important decisions through discussions and debates and solve communal conflicts. In other words, elders were responsible for maintaining peace and order for resolving disputes. They have far-reaching political, social and economic functions. According to one of the Karrayu informants, in recent years, however, customary traditional

governance institutions have been weakened partly due to the failure of the governments to recognize the role of the traditional institutions in management at the community level¹³.

This is self evident in the work of Chesos (2002) who argued that, traditionally, African societies were dominated by elders who were responsible for the governance of the community. They had also structures for conflict resolution through councils of elders, traditional courts and peer or age-group supervision, where each individual or group had to meet certain social expectations.

Therefore, the status and functions of the elders as resource managers have been simultaneously eroded and undermined. Additionally, the indigenous institutions are no longer significant mechanisms for resource management as a result of the emerging individualization and privatization of land, which was previously governed by a common property regime. Therefore, resource scarcity being a necessary condition, the absence of well performing institution is a sufficient condition for violent conflict to erupt.

Similarities of Pastoralists' Lifestyles

Some conflict analysts state that, similarity rather than difference of lifestyle provides a wider chance for the aggravation of conflicts. One of these researchers is Dwayt (2004) who argued that, societies having similar lifestyles like sharing alike material resources and spiritual needs are more vulnerable to conflict than societies experiencing different lifestyles. The same seems to fit with the context and lifestyle of Karrayu and Afar pastoralists. In this regard, one of the local politicians in Afar working as expert in conflict prevention and management¹⁴ narrates that having a similar way of life causes conflict than differences in the following manner:

There are certain common characteristics concerning the lifestyles between the

¹³ Information on the gradual decline of traditional institutions and the reasons behind the weakness of these institutions as conflict resolution was obtained from Sheik Muktar Fentale (Gada leader in the Karrayu community). Interviewed on 28 December 2009 at a place called *Gelcha*.

¹⁴ The idea that similarities than differences in pastoral ways of life leads into conflict was generated from the discussion with Mohammed Awel, who is working as expert in the area of conflict prevention and management office in *Semera*. He has been a civil servant since the Derg period and knows much about the nature of conflicts between the two ethnic groups. I interviewed him on 5 February 2010 in his office at *Semera*, Afar.

Karrayu and Afar pastoral communities. First, the two pastoralists in the area derive a substantial share of their livelihoods from livestock and share communal rangeland resources. The rangelands are, in turn, influenced by erratic rainfall that considerably varies between and within years. The rainfall patterns also have direct implications both for livestock mobility and the land-to-livestock ratio i.e. carrying capacity or grazing pressures of the rangelands. Second, in the arid pastoral areas of the two regions, the production potential of livestock and the rangeland resources are low due to rainfall patterns. Third, the threat of looting and raiding which are an age-old practice associated with the Karrayu and Afar communities forced them to engage in conflict. All these similarities in their way of life and their common interest to fulfill these lead them to continuous conflicts.

Therefore, the above statements clearly depict that, livestock significantly contributes to the pastoral production, herd size affects pastoral human welfare, and hence, livestock wealth accumulation is a desirable goal.

Other than similarities in lifestyle as causes for the inter-group pastoral conflicts, the interaction of the pastoralist community with government structure is contradictory and occasionally causes conflicts.¹⁵ Whenever the government obliges the pastoralist communities to share pasture, water and other natural resources with other communities through its structure, they negatively react to this imposition. The reason behind this is the fact that, they consider the imposition of this government structures as a threat to their value systems. This inflicts a great spiritual and material stress on pastoralist communities' lifestyle, their thinking in a similar manner fall under the same pressure. Therefore, since government imposition is perceived by the pastoralists as a threat to their value systems, any state or society measures against group values carry the implication that the group strongly resists to maintain it.

Triggering Causes

Cattle Raiding and Homicidal Acts

In the pastoral societies of Afar and Karrayu, cattle rustling are generally considered as acceptable means to acquire assets whether in times of retaliatory

¹⁵ Mohammed Awel , interviewed on 5 February 2010 in his office at *Semera*, Afar.

conflicts or under normal circumstances. One of the Afar *maqabantu*/elders¹⁶ stated the relevance and the reasons behind cattle rustling in this way: “The need for cattle is very important for young men who have no assets, especially when their inheritance is often small because it is divided among many siblings. Moreover, cattle rustling have taken on a commercial character providing income to the youth.”

Thus, to the pastoralists, livestock are more than an economic asset. They are involved in all social interactions and provide a form of social insurance against emergencies and liabilities. Besides the economic function, livestock also serve to fulfill the pastoralist's social, emotional and spiritual needs.

The evolving rationale behind cattle raids is multiple. One is the ritual importance of acquiring enemy livestock as a proof of masculine warrior hood. Another is the human-ecological herd management and redistribution functions of cattle raids (Bollig 1990; cited in Alemmaya, 2008). Hence, cattle raiders are driven by symbolic and pecuniary motives. Raids occur in retaliation to prior attacks in order to (re)acquire stolen stock and to replenish decimated herds or they are simply deployed to intimidate enemy groups. Pastoralists' deep liking for livestock is exemplified by the following Irungu's observation: Pastoralists believe that all livestock on earth including those owned by other people are theirs by right and that there is nothing wrong in going after them and taking them by force. Accordingly, a pastoralist must be prepared to die in pursuit of this belief...which, Soper, (1986) cited in Irungu, (2002) termed as cattle-culture complex.

This practice of taking away the basic source of survival of the pastoralist community leaves them with nothing to do but make conflicts continue, rather than cease it. In a similar vein, one of the Karrayu elders¹⁷ reveals the rationale behind cattle raids as:

¹⁶ Gerekale Hilim is an Afar elder at *Doho* who justified the rationale behind cattle rustling especially among the pastoral youth. He is a Weima Afar aged 49. The interview with this man was conducted on 27 December 2009 at *Doho Kebele*.

¹⁷ Abullo Ushuru is an experienced Karrayu elder who briefly explained why rustling became a common practice among the Karrayu youngsters. I exhaustively interviewed him about the traditions and practical societal sayings concerning cattle raids, looting and robbery and their potential to instigate youth for these acts. The interview was on 15 December 2009 at *Tututi Kebele*.

Demand for more cattle and the subsequent raiding are created when mostly young members of either community are planning to get married but are short of property to show up. In addition, raiding is said to constitute a vehicle for climbing out of herd-poverty and for gaining a culturally endorsed social status.

Therefore, due to both cultural and commercial significances, pastoralists were/are absorbed in the act of cattle rustling. As a result, they sell their assets including domestic animals for the purchasing of fire arms. The expansion of cattle rustling among neighboring communities results in a great degree of economic crisis. This raiding certainly brings about the expansion of “black market” of rustled cattle in neighboring regions. By its very nature, an expanded and well established ‘black market’ encourages the continuation of cattle rustling and illegal circulation of arms. According to Ayalew, such organized cattle raids and counter raids are referred to as *gaddu* by the Karrayu and *gadille* by the Afar, and continued to be the order of the day (Ayalew 2009). Such practice is believed to be one of the biggest factors contributing to livestock raiding among the pastoral communities, which eventually results in the extension of conflict and pervasiveness of lawlessness that, in turn, destabilizes the peace and security of the region.

Looting and Robbery

In the context of Afar and Karrayu pastoralists, looting is carried out at individual level while robbery at an organized group basis. These acts become common among some members of pastoral communities of Afar and Karrayu. However, these cannot be fundamental causes for the eruption of conflicts. They rather help to prolong the conflict. As a result, many of the violent clashes break out due to economic and traditional/cultural importance of robbery made both by the Afar and the Karrayu pastoralists. As the same Karrayu informants¹⁸ reveal:

A group of people go organized in most cases during rainy seasons to rob/loot and they depart sparing nothing behind, like livestock, equines, camels...anything of value including women, they take them home. Those who are victims of robbery and looting go after them into war to restore what has already been taken away from them. This leads into new retaliatory attacks and hence exacerbates conflict. For instance, in the Karrayu tradition, when a young man proposes to a lady for marriage, parents of the lady may lay an established societal precondition in Afaan Oromo saying “Wa Hatatta Wa Hirphatta” which

¹⁸ Abullo Ushuru whom I interviewed on 15 December 2009 at *Tututi Kebele*.

literally means on occasions of food shortage at home, is the would be husband capable to bring any looted food related belongings for his wife?

Therefore, I argue that, such societal expectation and the resultant positive reaction by the pastoral youth to this established social expectation has the potential to instigate the youths for looting either to get married or accumulate wealth. Conflicts become cyclical in the region as every youth is engaged in raiding/rustling either for wealth accumulation or for the purpose of fulfilling the traditional and cultural expectation of their respective community.

Drought and Famine

Drought and famine are almost regular realities in the pastoralist way of life. Constant search for grazing land and water will reach its highest peak during drought and famine that would exacerbate the existing relations that pastoralists have among each other, and at times bloody clashes become a norm in situations like this. This is evidenced in Tadesse and Yonas who asserted that “separately conducted research and field interviews confirm that Issa incursion into Afar territory and Afar herders’ movement into other groups’ territory increases in times of drought, resulting in more frequent violent confrontations in most cases with the Issa”(Tadesse and Yonas 2007). In this regard, the need to accumulate herds after periods of animal losses due to droughts is usually presented as a strong motivation of inter-ethnic raids and violent pastoral conflicts. This convincing and logically consistent way of reasoning would mean that periods after droughts would show an increase in inter-ethnic raids because, many livestock deaths during droughts would lead to a greater motivation to restock through raiding others.

The key argument is built on the common belief that herd accumulation, for whatever cause and reasons, is one of the most important driving forces of conflicts within the two ethnic groups. The increased frequency and intensity of droughts in the past decades and associated heavy losses of livestock is believed to have increased the number of inter-ethnic conflicts and incidents of human killing in recent years as compared to the distant past¹⁹. However, there are clear indications that violent incidences occur much more often in rainy seasons and during relatively good years, as in dry seasons and during drought years. Thus, I argue that, drought and conflict have negative correlation. Therefore, had it been the drought and famine that leads pastoral groups into conflict; they would not have been fighting during rainy seasons.

¹⁹ Mohammed Awel interviewed on 5 February 2010 in his office at *Semera*, Afar.

Spoilers

The major spoilers in the inter-ethnic conflicts of Afar and Karrayu are the *Hawiya* clan of Somali ethnic group who were living together with the *Ittu* and Karrayu Oromo for many years. One of the Karrayu elders²⁰ asserted the destabilizing role of the *Hawiya* clan in the Afar-Karrayu relations in the following way:

Formerly this *Hawiya* clan of the Somali had been extremely hostile neighbors to Afar, and waged frequent armed conflict with them. But now-a-days, they have shifted alliances and started to live with the Afar clans. It is a recent phenomenon that the *Hawiya* at times deliberately spread fabricated lies that cause frequent and ferocious conflicts between the Karrayu Oromo and Afar more than before.

From the above statement one can understand that the involvement of external actors has a negative role in the relationship of the two groups and exacerbates conflicts. Besides the *Hawiya*, within the Karrayu and Afar communities, there are traditional fortune tellers who instigate their respective ethnic group to raid cattle and loot other 'enemy' belongings. Before the rustlers go to the 'enemy' destination, they make prior-agreement with their respective witchcrafts on the sharing of the would-be rustled, raided and stolen property. If a group succeeds following the recommendations of the fortune teller, then the rustlers or raiders share 25% of the looted property or cattle on the basis of prior concession to the witchcrafts. In both Afar and Karrayu societies, the fortune tellers have got acceptance because, they persuade the society that they have magical powers of bullet proofing. Thus, witchcrafts trigger conflicts by persuading the pastoral communities to go to war. For example, they encourage pastoral communities saying that "Now is your time, go and take away your land by chasing away the settlers found there." These fortune tellers are named as *Kalawale* and *Gilen* in Afar and Karrayu society, respectively.

²⁰ Sheik Mussa Waqo aged 48 is an elder and religious leader in the *Ittu* Oromo living in Kobo *Kebele* who recollects his memory on the negative role played by the *Hawiya* clan of Somali in destabilizing the relationship of Afar and Karrayu pastoralist. He is also a 6th grade student in *Lega Banti* Primary School. I interviewed him on 14 February 2010 at his home in kobo *Kebele*.

Security Implications

Afar-Karrayu conflicts have very significant lessons on the human security threats in the region; more so, on the Ethiopian state security and indeed sovereignty. However, no better outcome could be anticipated to deal for peace tolerating behavior of actors that compromises own sovereignty. But there could be as many common grounds as incompatibilities that are to be evaluated, weighed and judged against human and state security interests first and foremost as provided herein below.

First, in the age of international terrorism and cross border proliferation of weapons, perforated borders for human trafficking and of arms constitutes grave danger to national security and human welfare, especially where there is communal conflict in the periphery like Afar. The region can easily be transformed into anti-peace and insurgency dreamland. A container of Kalashnikov and explosives captured in *Wolenchity* and similar arms on thirty-five camels' back on its way to *Semen Showa* were few among many which exhibit the imminent threat transported by outlaws and hence, too expensive an issue to overlook as simple pastoralist war over grass and water (Afar Zone 3 police report, 2006).

Secondly, the presence of unused vast land while every Awusa Afar are forced to migrate more than 300 km to *Shawa Robit* in Amhara Region of Oromia zone, looking for pasture and water often not welcome by Oromo pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, and along the way Amhara farmers are losing their livestock (Afar and Oromia Conflict Assessment document, 2007). Conflicts arising from this are also challenges of Afar- Amhara regional relations. Due to the disputed status of Issa settlements, socio-economic activities are nonexistent. This has caused a lot of suffering to whoever is dwelling there. The question of food security as human security challenges the very existence of inhabitants of the area. Thus, ending up and transforming the conflict is to halt this scenario and domino spillover effect of conflict to other regions.

Thirdly, Afar-Karrayu conflict has long ceased to be only between them; the push effect from faraway places are setting time bomb in the highlander agriculturalists and pastoralists, as well as among pastoralist clans exacerbating challenges of life that many from lowlands choose illegal migration to Djibouti where they fall prey of armed insurgency recruits to fire back at the society they fled away from (Afar and Oromia Conflict Assessment document, 2007). In a nut shell, efforts on security matters in the country and the region have to transform themselves to address stated imminent national challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Afar-Karrayu conflict does constitute pastoralist features but it is not all in all of a pastoralist nature. Behind seemingly resource needs which could have been accommodated by peaceful utilization of resources, there is a much bigger threat lurking behind what appears to many as a product of the less and ungoverned social setting of 'nomads'. However, evidences out in the open attest that the conflict involved even states as agents of chaos to which no state gives second thoughts. The threat in the past was to the ostensible extent, lawlessness but by now it is a touch of statelessness in the south east. The Ethiopian government has been facilitating bilateral traditionally negotiated solutions, sponsoring various peace and reconciliation constellations and stages but did not address the real problem as it desperately resorted to use of force in February 2007 in Gedamayto and Qmbulia, one among many distress mechanisms its predecessors adhered to.

The Ministry of Federal Affairs mandated authority over such matters to Conflict Early Warning Response Network (CEWARN) system in Ethiopia and other conflict centered programs are in lieu of the challenge and mindful of national implications of such threats at the national level. Nonetheless, sluggish decision making processes at the House of Federations and the petitions logged by both regions in 2004 are still in limbo. That has been the case in the past in perpetuating, widening and transforming the nature of the conflict into the current level that calls for far exceeding transformation in national strategy of conflict management and transformation, critical study, exploration of essence of conflicts, and rapid response schemes.

Although rendering the right and just solutions for problems like Afar-Karrayu case may involve undoing deep rooted historical mistakes, however, efforts could be initiated to control aggravating contexts like illegal settlements, contraband, hit-and-run high way crimes and other related issues to build confidence in responsiveness of government. Institutional mechanisms of monitoring and controlling fully committed to Afar-Karrayu agenda at all levels of governmental and societal organization has to be established to render, in cooperation with the Ministry of Federal Affairs, up to date actual development of change and renewal, hopes and frustrations, threats and opportunities. Hence, working directly with the public at grass roots level has to be established as a major direction and approach to avoid misinformed judgments.

At structural level, the lopsided power relationship between Karrayu and Afar - the basic underlying context - unmanaged arms proliferation and illegal settlement at strategic spots have widened power gaps ensuring the continuity of violent conflict. Legal mechanisms have to be established to give final solution. To reduce other destructive forces like agents of the Eritrean government and

jihadists from Somalia the best strategy has to be generated from the amelioration of poverty, livelihood sustainability and confidence building efforts at all levels within the country. This would require rigorous efforts to effect attitudinal transformation at group and individual levels which may take long years to come. Yet, basic claims and fears of both groups such as on the Afar part the restoration of pre-1964 boundary and the return of those who were evicted from their old domicile, and Karrayu claim for resources need can be through successive bilateral binding agreements and impartial legal decisions, implemented without causing further socio-economic and humanitarian crises in the region.

Besides, structurally imbedded stereotypes, enmity and resentments to gradually reduce to manageable level should involve active participation of political, clan, spiritual leaders, women and the youth. Traditional age old practices and norms governing access to and ownership of natural resources has to be as might be necessary adopted and contextualized to current realities and integrated with state legal promulgations that are vital to determine clear cut limits of administration.

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