

**THE ROLE OF SOMALI WOMEN IN CONFLICT: THE CASE OF THE DEGODIA
AND AJURAN CLANS OF WAJIR COUNTY, 1964-1984**

BY:

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DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university

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RECOMMENDATION

The proposal has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University supervisors:

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DEDICATION

To my parents:

Thank you for your support, steadfast belief in my abilities and unfailing love.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAR	- Central African Republic
GOK	- Government of Kenya
IAS	- Institute of African Studies
IDS	- Institute of Developmental Studies
MP	- Member of Parliament
NGO	- Non Governmental Organization
NFD	- Northern Frontier Districts
SCR	- Security Council Resolution
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	- United Nations Children Education Fund
USA	- United States of America

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ABSTRACT

A common assertion is that women are victims during conflict. Although often suggested, women are not always victims. Sometimes they take part in the conflict yet this claim has received little scrutiny. Hence, this study evaluates the roles of Degodia and Ajuran women in conflict using the structural functionalism and actor analysis theories. These approaches hold that armed conflict may generate feelings within members of society and examining whether the feelings generate responses. This is what the study investigated in relation to the role played by women during conflict between the Degodia and Ajuranof wajir county. This approach distinguishes between some of the explanations given in previous literature. The most common school of thought is that is that women are always the victims during conflict. But research has shown that that the victims are also closely associated with conflict whose effects make them more likely to participate in the real conflict .This work examines the main the factors that led to the bloody conflict between Degodia and Ajuran of Wajir County, and has gone into great depths to reveal that women are not always the victims in times of conflict. on the women side who end up taking part in armed conflict. Adapting this approach enables an empirical distinction between some of the explanations proposed in previous literature. These explanations are very diverse; even so, they have not been separated systematically in previous empirical analyses. First, it is hypothesized that women are victims during conflict. But research from elsewhere shows that victims are also associated with conflict whose effects make them more likely to take part in conflict.

This work discusses the main factors responsible for the entrenched conflict between the Ajuran and the Degodia of North Eastern Kenya. The study revealed the adverse effects of the conflict on the people of the region particularly in terms of insecurity that influenced the women to take part in the conflict. It points out that Degodia-Ajuran of Wajir county conflict has undergone fundamental transformation from a cultural practice to modern warfare organised and bankrolled by warlords. The study also points out that the major losers in this environment of insecurity are the small and poor peasants who have been pauperised and turned into destitute.

The study has also shown the multifaceted roles of women during the conflict situations in their Degodia and Ajuran communities in Wajir as mediators, combatants, caregivers and even economic providers for the family. As mediators the women have either individually or collectively preached peace to the youths and men of their communities. They have appealed to both the stake holders and the people of the community to lay down arms to negotiate. In terms of care giving, the process includes not just the usual domestic affair of caring for the family and home but, it also includes tending to the sick and wounded youths engaged in combating, caring both emotionally and physically.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Pastoral communities inhabit over 21 countries on the African continent, ranging from the Sahelian West, the rangelands of Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa, to the nomadic populations of Southern Africa. They are concentrated in some of the most arid regions of the continent, which necessitate semi or wholly nomadic livestock grazing. Many of these communities are affected by armed violence, in East Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel regions featuring sustained levels of inter-pastoral armed violence with associated lawlessness.¹ For instance, Eastern Africa has numerous pastoral groups in a broad geographical band that stretches from the Kenya-Somalia border northwards into Ethiopia and northwest to encompass regions of Uganda, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic (CAR). These regions have suffered large-scale intra-state wars that have supplied pastoral groups with modern weaponry, resulting in protracted conflicts with numerous neighbours. For instance, the Degodia and Ajuran clans of Wajir County of Kenya are, at various times, in conflict with each other.

Wajir County is a severely arid region of 56,600 km, with an average rainfall of less than 200 mm per year. The rainfall is erratic, making the entire district vulnerable to drought. The county is generally flat and featureless, except for a hilly section near the Ethiopian border. The vegetation is in most places scrub bush, dotted with dwarf acacia trees.² No agricultural activity is possible in the county. As a result of these environmental conditions, more than 80 percent of the population are nomadic pastoralists, with herds of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. Because of the scarcity and unreliability of the rainfall, these pastoralists require extensive areas in which to move in search of pasture and water. This necessity for unrestricted movement and the scarcity of resources, including water, pasture, and minerals, naturally leads to conflicts over the

¹Bevan James, *Between a Rock and Hard Place: Armed violence in African Pastoral Communities*, Geneva: UNDP, 2007, p.1-2

² GoK. Ministry of Finance and Planning Wajir District Development Plan, 2002-2008, Government Printers 2002.

control and use of these resources.³ Actors in these resource based conflicts included all members of the communities among them women and children.

The history of the pastoral communities conflict changed when Kenya as other African countries fell under the European colonial conquest and rule from 1895 when it became the East African Protectorate. The European colonial conquest marked the beginning of modern government in Kenya. The British brought together the country's diverse elements under a unified administration. The aim of British colonialism in Kenya was to exploit the resources and secondly to integrate the country into an imperial system and to develop its economic potential, while providing the security to the indigenous population and improving their general well-being, as defined according to the prevailing mentality of colonial authorities. The political, economic, and social changes brought about by the British exacerbated the already existing pastoral violence.

The coming of the European colonialist worsened the situation by introducing ethnic boundaries which denied some communities access to some resources.⁴ The borders helped to intensify ethnic consciousness among different groups by promoting the feeling of exclusiveness and separation.⁵ When Kenya achieved her independence the conflict persisted.⁶ For instance in Wajir County, the members of Degodia and Ajuran clans fought each other for long. The worst of these conflicts ended in the Wagalla massacre of 1984, in which 400 Degodia men, women and youth died of exposure and thirst after being rounded up by the Kenyan military and left in the sun for three days with no food, water, or shelter.⁷

Before the massacre, there were clan feuds in February 1984 between the rival Degodia and Ajuran where some members of the Ajuran were massacred by those from the Degodia. The Kenya Army with the assistance of the Regular and Administration Police rounded up men from

³ Lionel Cliffeand Philip White, “Conflict and Resolution in the Horn of Africa”, in Mwaura Ciru and Sussane Schmeidi (eds), *Early Warning and Conflict Management in the Horn of Africa*, Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 2002, pp. 31-35

⁴ B.A Ogot, *History as Destiny and History as Knowledge-Being Reflections on the Problems of Historicity and Historiography*, Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd, 2005, pp. 267-268.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 282-285.

⁶ Wanjala, S. C., “Land Ownership and use in Kenyan: Past, Present and Future in Smokin, Wanjala, *Essays on land law : The reform Debate in Kenya*. Nairobi: Faculty of Law , University of Nairobi 2000, p.31

⁷ Salah Abdi Sheikh of an advocacy group called the Truth Be Told (TBT) Network “Blood on the Runway; The Wagalla Massacre 1984” has a detailed story of what transpired.

the Degodia clan which was blamed for an earlier attack and herded all of them at the Wagalla airstrip where they were massacred.⁸ Throughout these conflicts women were part of the fighting communities. Among the most crucial questions is: why is it that women have been left out in the literature of these conflicts? What explains the exclusion of women? Did they have an ability to perpetuate the conflict?

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

One of the largest puzzles to emerge from the recent literature on conflict among the Somali is continuous neglect of women's realities during armed conflicts. The role of men and warlords in the Somali inter-clan conflicts has gained increased recognition in the last decade. Today the main question is no longer whether men and different warlords have a role to play in the Somali inter-clan conflicts, but how are women involved, what are the roles of women, what are critical factors and pre-conditions for their involvement in conflict? Despite great interest in gender issues during conflict, there is little systematic analysis of women's potential in the Somali inter-clan conflict. What does exist is a wealth of largely descriptive accounts of how women are victims as well as reflections on the conflict implications of development and humanitarian programs. As discussed below, when it comes to conflict in communities, women have been relegated to lesser roles, yet in reality they are actually at the forefront albeit unnoticed.

For instance, most approaches to conflict among the Somali and in particular inter-clan conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran have either ignored or marginalised issues of gender and women. Women consistently remain a minority of participants in conflict, they receive less attention than men in conflict issues and gender analysis rarely informs conflict strategies. This is despite the rise of feminism approaches which, for more than a decade, have criticised such marginalisation and called for gender issues and women's needs to be given more serious attention in all policies relating to conflict and peace. Armed conflict has traditionally been regarded as an exclusively male activity. Women however, have either been purposefully ignored or only partially acknowledged in conflict situations. As a result, the majority of written and spoken word produced on the topic of conflict focuses solely on the experiences and participation of men while women have been practically rendered invisible. This one-sided

⁸ *Ibid*

representation of conflict is evident in most conflict related literatures. This study hopes to fill this gap. In doing so, this thesis aims to generate an understanding of the ways in which both women and men are involved in and affected by armed conflict, as well as the ways in which gender roles, the relations between men and women are changed during and as a result of conflict.

1.3 Aims of the Study

1. To analyse the conflicts between the Degodia and Ajuran clans.
2. To investigate the roles of the Degodia and Ajuran women in conflict.

1.4 Justification of the study

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive review of the women's experiences and participation in conflict and post-conflict situations. Women have been completely excluded or only mentioned briefly in literature produced on the topic of conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran. This exclusion of one half of the community's population is problematic, as it suggests that the majority of the literature produced on the conflict only allows for a partial analysis of conflict and as such, potentially excludes vital areas of importance relevant to both men and women in conflict situations. The objective of this study is two-fold: First, a comprehensive understanding of the Degodia-Ajuran women in conflict. The motivation for doing such a study lies in the need to both gather knowledge and generate understanding of women's experiences in conflict. The topic of women in this conflict has been receiving little attention. As a result, studies dedicated to researching the role of women in war are few in numbers and only growing in quantity slowly. Most of the existing studies, furthermore, tend to focus on only one or two aspects of women's experience of conflict. A concise study that reviews women's experience in this inter-clan conflict has not yet been compiled. From this point of view, this study will be able to accumulate a great deal of important information into one study. This will be of valuable not only to fellow academics, but also to a broad range of interest groups.

1.5 Scope and limitation of the study

The study on women and conflict among the Degodia and Ajuran clans focuses on the period 1964 to 1984. Somali clans suffered most under the infamous state of emergency declared in Northern Kenya in 1964. The declaration of the state of emergency was followed by various massacres, military operation, gross human rights violations, inter-clan conflicts and bandit attacks. The situation worsened in February 1984 when the rival Degodia and Ajuran clans engaged in a conflict that resulted in massacres forcing the government of Kenya to deploy the military to quell the situation. The Kenya Army rounded and massacred members of the Degodia clan in what is famously known as the Wagalla massacre. The massacre sent shock waves around the globe with the United Nations describing it, as the worst aggression committed by the Kenyan government against its own people. From 1984 there has never been a major conflict in the region again.⁹

Although I come from Wajir County, I still experienced some hardships during data collection. First, the political geography of Wajir County presented an infrastructural hardship making it hard to locate the people for data collection. Secondly the effectiveness of government administrative structures in rural areas far from the centre of power combined with continuous war in Somali resulting in refugee influx made the county to be very insecure. Finally, the social structure of the Somali community sometimes posed a challenge to women interaction with men making it a challenge in terms of data collection. Despite these challenges, I still managed to get sufficient data for this research.

1.6 Literature Review

Men and women both experience and endure war, even though it is traditionally assumed that conflict is primarily a male dominated experience. Symons argues, “The military has always been a male domain. Women’s participation, with notable exceptions, has been carefully controlled”.¹⁰ Therefore, although both men and women experience war, their experiences are essentially different from one another. These differences can be explained by looking at not only

⁹ Salah Abdi Sheikh of an advocacy group called the Truth Be Told (TBT) Network “Blood on the Runway; The Wagalla Massacre 1984”.

¹⁰ Harris, Simon. “Gender, Participation and Post-Conflict Planning in Northern Sri-Lanka,” *Gender and Development* 12.3 (2004):60-69.

the social differences between men and women themselves, but also at the different roles they fulfil in society.¹¹ Symons acknowledges that both men and women experience war but does not bring out women roles and experiences.

Goldstein argues that; “Sometimes war and hunting are the only spheres that exclude women, or the two spheres where that exclusion is most formalised”. He says that war is an experience to which women are exterior and that men have inhabited the world of war in a way that women have not. It has, though, also been an act that women have predominantly not been allowed to participate in and as a result, women are regarded as ‘secondary citizens’ in many societies. However, even though women have conventionally been excluded from the political processes surrounding war, but they have not been excluded from the act of war itself.¹² As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, war affects women very specifically and completely disrupts the traditional gender roles that have served to sustain male dominance throughout the ages.

Tickner, argues that armed conflict has a complex affect on gender roles: On the one hand, gender roles are enforced during times of war and on the other hand, gender roles are in some instances completely reversed during war.¹³ He discusses the affect that war has on gender roles and the ways in which gender roles are necessary for the conduct of war. Specific attention is given to the socialisation of men as soldiers and women as the so-called “other” against which men affirm their masculinity. Ticker maintains that gender characteristics and gender roles are central to understanding war and vice versa and yet we know little on Degodia and Ajuran women in the inter-clan conflicts.

Elshstain explains gender roles during war as follows men fight as avatars of a nation’s sanctioned violence. Women work and weep and sometimes protest within the frame of discursive practices that turn one out, militant mother and pacifist protestor alike, as the collective “other” to the male warrior. These identities are underpinnings for decision and action.¹⁴ This understanding of gender roles in war subsequently assumes an affinity between

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² Goldstein, Joshua, *War and Gender*, Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 2001,p.19

¹³ Tickner, J. Ann, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on National Security*, 1992

¹⁴ Elshtain, Jean B. *Women and War*, New York: Basic Books,1987,p. 3

men and war and women and peace. It is also reinforces a very specific understanding of gender roles which holds men in a higher social regard than women as men offer their lives in service of their countries while women are confined to domestic tasks. The argument by Elshstain is depicting women from a one sided angle of service to men which is not necessarily true with the pastoral women.

According to Sorensen, women have diverse motives towards war which can enforce conflict. Furthermore, Sorensen argues that women's active participation during conflict is thus often their own, free decision. Women actively took part in the hostilities during the Second World War and the Gulf War, in liberation wars, but also in intrastate conflicts, such as in Sri Lanka where one third of the fighting forces consisted of women. The author observed that it is difficult to make the distinction between combatants and non-combatants in contemporary conflicts and that an increasing number of civilians, both women and men, actively participate in war activities and yet the Degodia and Ajuran women story has never been told.¹⁵

According to Kumar, conflict offers windows of opportunities for women's emancipation and for the establishment and flourishing of women groups. It gives women the opportunity to enter the public and political areas, where they were not allowed traditionally. The author argues that women's work during conflict has been identified as a unique opportunity by many women living in conflict situations to become organized at all levels of society, particularly in the non-governmental sector, which in various countries did not even exist before the conflict.¹⁶ The author gives an example of the pre-conflict phase where it is often the threat of conflict that catalyses peace activism among small and dispersed women's groups.¹⁷ This research investigated how the Degodia and Ajuran women were catalysed to take part in the conflict.

According to the government of Kenya, the North Eastern Province experienced more frequent and often violent conflicts in Kenya's history. Since 1963 this area was characterised among others by unpredictable weather conditions leading to periods of hunger, necessitating migration for grazing and water, and periodic droughts which pushed people into more confined areas,

¹⁵ Sorensen, Alice, *Women of World War Two*, Hawaii: Amazon, 1998, p. 10

¹⁶ Kumar, *Security Actors and Systems more gender Sensitive*, New York, 1997

¹⁷ Kvinna, till Kvinna, *Women's War*, Brussels, 2000, p. 18

forcing them to compete for decreasing amounts of fodder and water. Thus, scarce natural resources, worsening environmental conditions and increased populations have resulted in stiffer competition for land, pasture and water.¹⁸ This has precipitated conflicts over access and use of water in the area, frequently degenerating to bloody clashes within and among the neighbouring pastoralists and communities across the border. According to the government, the factors that aggravated the conflict are social and political alienation, economic marginalization and the proliferation of small arms emanating from regional conflicts in the Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia leading to increased banditry and making commercial raids of livestock more viable. In the course of competition for resources, men and women are affected differently yet the story of women in Wajir is lacking in most literature.

Lindsey Charlotte argues that when conflicts occur women are major victims. They lose their family members. Such a loss makes them develop a feeling of revenge. She observes that, women are actively involved in many armed conflicts where they play a part in wars throughout history and that it was the Second World War that highlighted their role. She says women primarily play roles in reserve or support units (including work in munitions factories) in the German and British forces, and, in the case of the Soviet Union, their direct participation in the fighting as members of all services and units. Lindsey further says that, since then, women have assumed a much greater role and join the armed forces more frequently, voluntarily and involuntarily, performing both support and combatant roles.¹⁹ It should thus not be assumed that Degodia and Ajuran women are always part of the innocent civilian population.

Naragh Anderline argues that women in conflict situations have been engaged with ‘informal’ peace activism. Of such women only a few have managed to gain access to formal peace politics, which span the entire process of negotiations which begins in the midst of conflict, and continuous through the various phases of the transition to peace.²⁰ Women are typically left out of the conflict, official peace negotiations and the formal work for the reconstruction of society, and only a limited number of them have managed to participate.²¹ An important question that has

¹⁸ GoK, *The National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management*, Nairobi: Government printers, 2006, p.4

¹⁹ Lindsey Charlotte, *Women facing War*, Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 2005, p.15

²⁰ Naragh Anderline, *Women and Conflict*, Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2000, p. 4

²¹ Kvinna till Kvinna, *Women’s War*, Brussels, 2000, p. 11

to be answered first is why women's roles were left out in conflict history yet they are an important component of society.

According to Heinrich Wolfgang women belong to the most severely afflicted groups of the civilian population and that they also take primary responsibility for the survival of the family once men join the armies.²² Although the book discussed issues of women during conflict, it was biased towards picturing women as peace makers and nothing on roles in conflict. While women roles in peace making should not be dismissed, their roles in Degodia-Ajuran inter-clan conflict have to be acknowledged and understood.

Ayissi Anatole argues in her book that women can be as ferocious as men during war situations.²³ The author argues that in Sierra Leon women such as Queen Cut hands committed worse atrocities against humanity as compared to their male counterpart. According to the author, Queen Cut Hands forced women to accept being raped or risked losing their arms.²⁴ Taking examples from Sierra Leone, the war cannot be understood solely by reference to male members of society, the position of women must also be prompted. This is the main intention of this research which details the story of the Degodia and Ajuran women during conflict.

In their book, *Evaluating Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, the Organization for Economic Cooperation argues that women and men experience, engage or is affected by violent conflict differently.²⁵ The authors went on to discuss how the conflict transforms gender roles in society without mentioning the roles of different genders in conflict. A clear and critical understanding of gender within the particular conflict context is therefore extremely important for both evaluators and programmers and yet nothing is known of the same within the Degodia and Ajuran clans of the Somali people of Wajir.

²² Heinrich Wolfgang, *Building the Peace: experiences and Reflections of Collaborative Peace-building, the case of Somalia*, Geneva: Life Peace Institute, 2006

²³ Ayissi Anatole and Rubin Edward Poulton, *Bound to Cooperate: Conflict, Peace and People of Sierra Leone*, Geneva: UNIDIR, 2006, p. 145

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Evaluating Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, Paris: OECD, 2008, p. 21

1.7 Hypotheses

1. Women are a key component of the society which cannot be neglected during conflict
2. Degodia and Ajuran women played major roles in the conflict
3. Degodia and Ajuran women roles impacted on the conflict and security over the period of study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

To understand better the multifaceted nature of women's realities in conflict situations, this study will employ structural functionalism and actor analysis theories. Structural functional theory was developed by early social philosophers such as Comte and Durkheim. The theory states that society is like the human body. Just as the body is made up of various parts that need to function together and properly for it to be healthy, so is society. Each part needs to be in a state of equilibrium, or balance.²⁶ The structural functionalism framework analytically distinguishes different roles or positions of women before, during and after conflict.

From this theoretical perspective, social structures and relationships, including those manifested during conflict, largely determines what women do or are able to do in reality. This is important to this study which documents the roles of Degodia and Ajuran women during the two communities' inter-clan conflicts. The theory is instrumental in guiding the argument on whether women had any room for choice of their action during conflict. My usage of the words such as roles and positions therefore reflects both the negotiated and dynamic aspects of women's realities in conflict as well as the operation of structural conditions shaping women's situations in conflict. This theory is important in explaining the structural conditions that women face during conflict.

Their inclusion promoted actor analysis approach whereby, multiple actors are confronted with a number of issues and situations where various stakeholders have different goals on the different issues under discussion. The issues which may include structures set by society affect women positions and their response to these structures played a key role in the evolution of the Degodia-

²⁶ William J. Goode, "The Theoretical Importance of Love." In *American Sociological Review*, pp. 38–47.

Ajuran conflict by influencing a number of key evolutionary variables or issues.²⁷ The theory emphasizes taking into account the interests and perspectives of all relevant stakeholders and the interrelationship between them. Essentially, in Degodia-Ajuran societal scenario the theory recognize that the actors such as women may influence, at least to a certain extent, a number of important factors or issues that will shape the future outcome of different situations such as conflict.²⁸

The theory is relevant to this study by acknowledging that women tend to perform certain roles in conflict situations significantly more often than men. It is the intention of this study to investigate these roles among the Degodia and Ajuran women. The theory supports the idea of paradigm of participation where in analyzing any conflict, representatives from all walks of society are to be included. This includes voice from the subordinate and marginalized groups such as women. This will better the understanding of conflict and societies of the Degodia and Ajuran.

1.9 Methodology

Significantly, research for this study was based on two sets of data, primary and secondary. I made use of archival and field research, mainly carried out in Wajir County. Archival sources, in particular District and Handing over Reports, was consulted in the KNA in Nairobi and Wajir district Headquarters which holds a substantial amount of archival documents on colonial Kenya and after independence, District Annual Reports. I used government publications, mainly on the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual Reports, Native and African Affairs Annual Reports and findings of Commissions set to investigate related issues. The field research consisted of oral inquiry based on a prepared questionnaire carried out in Wajir County.

In supplementing archival sources and accounts based on oral traditions, I used published and unpublished works, for example, Kenya government publications, books, articles, dissertations, theses and newspapers. I made use of published and unpublished works mainly on Wajir County

²⁷ Godet, M., *The crisis in forecasting and the emergence of the prospective approach with case studies in energy and air transport*, New York: Pergamon Press, 1979, 50-55

²⁸ Bui, T. X., *Co-oP: A Group Decision Support System for Cooperative Multiple Criteria Group Decision Making*, Springer-Verlag 1987, pp. 23-34.

found in Garissa and Wajir Districts Information and Documentation Center, University of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Library, Institute of African Studies (IAS) and Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Libraries, Institute of Security studies and NGO resource centers. All the information gathered was presented in detailed account of the Somali women in conflict and their coping mechanisms.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF THE DEGODIA AND AJURAN CLANS OF WAJIR COUNTY

2.0 Introduction

Conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran clans stretches from colonial times up to post colonial period. The colonial perception of “tribes” led to an administrative order in which communities were delineated according to “tribal” boundaries which often were thought to be pre-existing but in reality were created in the process. Ethnicity in that process was changed. It acquired a territorial character which it did not have earlier. Ideas of group rights to parcels of the land (the miniature version of the modern territorial nation state) in the mind of policy makers combined with ideas of preservation of the range which, as modern range ecology has found not so recently, were misconceived. These ideas led to policies that restricted the range of movement of pastoral nomads. This chapter discusses the two clans which share a similar history but later became enemies and engaged in various wars. The chapter draws a line from traditional lifestyle of the Degodia and Ajuran to colonial policies and modern politics, in which territorial subdivision of administrative units and the restriction of nomadic movements continued therefore exacerbating conflict between the two communities. A number of reasons for this are explored. These reasons are historically acrimonious relationship between the two clans found to guide the relationship between the Degodia and the Ajuran.

2.1 The Somali People

The Ajuran and the Degodia are part of the larger Somali people who inhabits almost the entire Horn area of Africa. The majority of the Somali people live in the country of Somalia, the Ogaadeen (Ogaden) region of South-eastern Ethiopia, the southern half of the country of Djibouti, and in the North Eastern Province of Kenya. The Somali originally came from the southern highlands of Ethiopia. The Somali peoples were never under any unified political structure apart from the clan arrangements.²⁹

²⁹ Cassanelli, Lee V. *The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600-1900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

The Somali clans have various genealogical ties, or political or military alliances, provided a broad, loose identity. In the colonial era, the various European powers easily established hegemony, then a dominance over various divisions of the Somali peoples. The British, French and Italian Somalilands roughly followed geographical areas of clan alliances or federations and actually helped limit clashes between different clans.³⁰ The clan alliances and federations are divided by language and by clan conflicts. On the Kenyan side the Somalis are most closely related to the Rendille and the Afar, and distantly related to the Oromos, all who are the Eastern Cushitic people. The Somali speak a language which is related. For instance, the Degodia and the Ajuran speak a language which is close to the Boni.³¹ Both the Degodia and Ajuran belong to the Hawiye.³²

2.2 The Ajuran of Wajir

The Ajuran is a clan of Somali people living in the north eastern Kenya, predominantly in Wajir North and Wajir west Districts. According to the 2009 census the Ajuran were estimated to be 170,000 people. The Ajuran community is the majority occupants of the former North Eastern Province of Kenya. They are part of the three big families of the Somali group in Wajir County. The areas occupied by this community are Ademasajida, Kanchara, and Lagboghol, Boji yare, Ganyure, Griftu, Arbajahan, Barwaqo, ade Qalo, hadado south, Lolkuta south (Wara), and Kukale.³³

The Ajuran moved into Kenya from Ethiopia where they had established dynasties. The Ajuran are best known in Somali history for establishing the Gareen dynasty based in Qalaaf in the present day Ethiopia. The Gareen dynasty ruled parts of East Africa from the 16th to the 20th century until when the rest of the Somalis got fed up with their rule of law and governance systems. The disgruntled would then wage the famous Eji-Ajuran civil war which ended the Gareen dynasty. Eji-Ajuran meant a war by entire Somali clans against the Ajuran. The war left

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ Biber, Douglas. "Dramatic Roles in Central Somali Narrative Discourse," *Studies in African Linguistics*. Vol. 15, No. 1, April 1984.

³² Schlee, Günther. *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: Gideon S. Were Press, 1994.

³³ Lewis, I. M. *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy: A General Introduction to the Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions*, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1982.

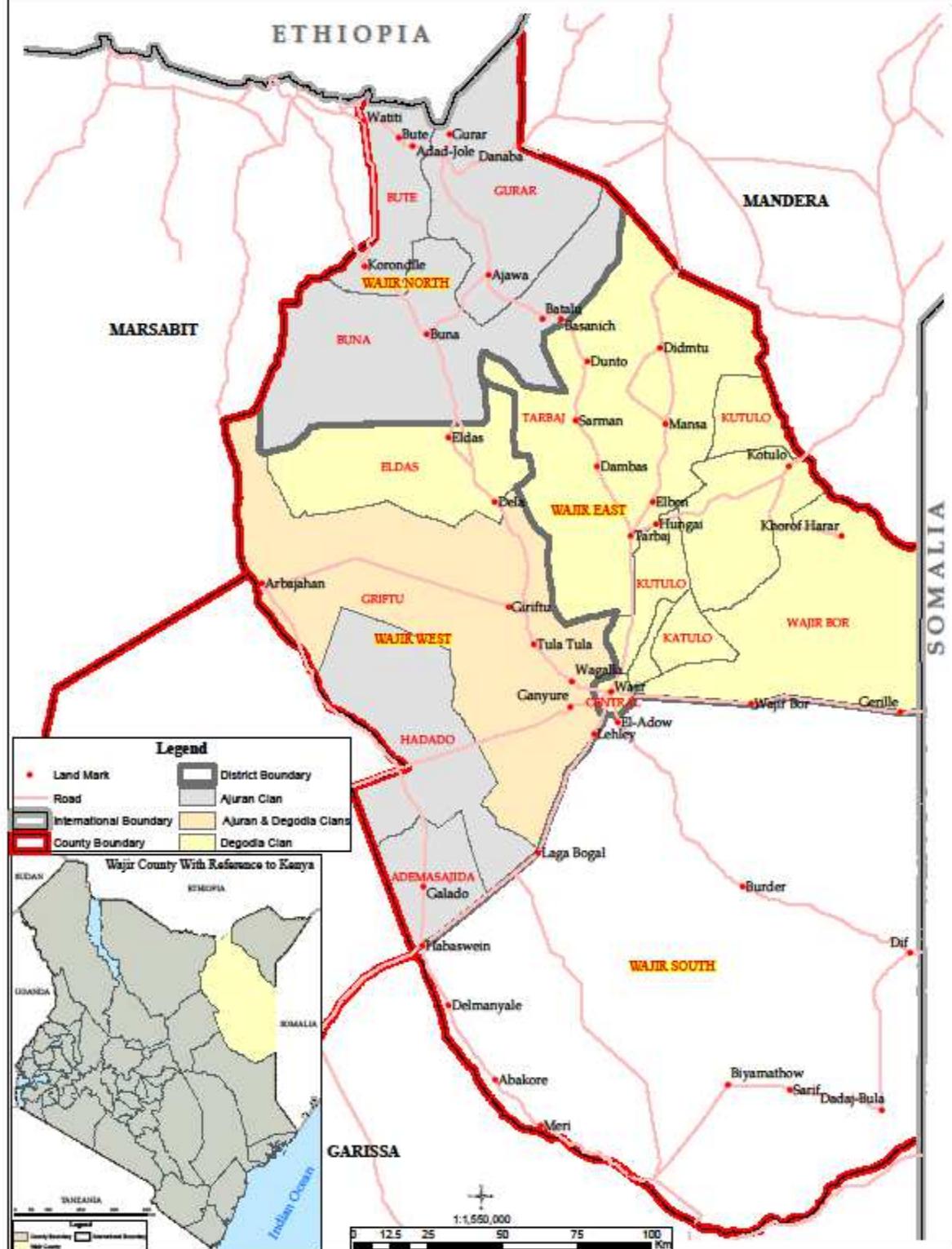
five Ajuran sub-clans displaced. The displaced sub-clans were forced to join other ethnic groups of either Christian or Muslim denominations. For instance, currently the Walmega and Wakhle sub-clans of the Ajuran live in Wajir County of North Eastern region, Kenya, while some live in lower Jubbah in Somalia and Ethiopia. Some of those who settled in present day Kenya eventually adopted the language and customs of their neighbours and hosts, the Borana.³⁴

The Kenyan Ajuran people speak both the Borana and the Somali languages as their first language especially those from Wajir North District in the areas of Kilkiley and Gurar sections as indicated on the map below.³⁵

³⁴ Schlee, Gunther, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

³⁵ It is vital to note that since Somali is the language of wider communication in Northeastern Province, even the Ajuran who speak Borana as their first language learnt the language as they assimilated with Boranas during the great migration.

REGIONS OCCUPIED BY AJURAN & DEGODIA CLANS IN WAJIR COUNTY



The Ajuran, like the rest of other Somali peoples of Northern Kenya have traditionally led a nomadic life. This way of life is dictated by the climate which is semi-arid with seasonal rains. They wander from place to place looking for water and pasture for the animals their cattle, camels, goats, sheep and donkeys. The animals are main source of the Degodia livelihood. Due to the long periods of drought, the sustainability of the livestock farming is always associated with conflicts with their neighbours particularly the Degodia.

2.3 The Degodia Clan

The Degodia are of Cushitic origin. They moved into the northern Kenya in the 20th century after the fall of the Gareen dynasty from Web Shebelli. Before migration they had been converted into Islam particularly when they came into contact with the Hawiyah in the sixteenth century. According to their oral traditions, Degodia was one of the four sons of Soransur son of Matan and Habiba daughter of Tegale. Soransur was a descendant of the legendary second son of Somal or Gardere but the mother was a pure Hawiyah, having descended through Gugundabe, Jibedi and Molkal. The other sons of Soransur were Issa, Massareh and Galjaal.³⁶

Oral traditions say that Degodia was born at Hiran, a place on the Web Shebelli a few miles north of Beledweyn. The family lived around Beledweyn and El Beru for a few generations and then moved to the El Ali region some forty miles south of Beledweyn where they stayed for a further two or three generations. From El Ali the Degodia moved to the Bay area where they stayed for about a hundred and fifty years. It is not easy to assess the exact period because little is documented, but in the oral traditions estimation they first occupied this part of the world about the middle of the eighteenth century. It may well be that only a part of the ethnic group moved into Bay, for tradition on the Somalia side records that the Degodia did not finally quit Ferfer until sometime between 1800 and 1840.

Migrations of this sort seldom took place clan basis, and the probability is that more adventurous families made the first move, to be followed by the remainder of the clans. These migrations

³⁶ Lewis, I. M. *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy: A General Introduction to the Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions*, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1982.

were undertaken spasmodically and in accordance with the dictates of resources such as water and grazing lands while others were dictated by the inter-clan or tribal feuds.³⁷

The Degodia exodus from El Ferfer to Bay was due partly to the Somali's innate desire to be the first into new pastures, and partly due to ethnic pressure in the area of the Web Shebelle. By 1700 the Hawiyah and the Rahanwein had swept the old Oromo occupants to the south and west and had finally destroyed the Ajuran kingdom and a score of ethnic groups either on the move in search of less insecure grazing areas or were busy forming alliances against the invaders from the north. In addition, the powerful Darod clan groups were beginning to expand, and their tentative thrusts down the Web Shebelle and down the great coastal route where they were having an effect as far south as the Dagodia country.³⁸

It is not known with exactitude when these migrations took place and precisely which ethnic groups were pushing the Dagodia out of their home country. It is equally not clear which clans went ahead of the Degodia but, it can safely be said that, at the period of these events, the Borana had already been forced to move out after the break-up of the Ajuran kingdom of Gareen. Further there can be no doubt that the Dagodia move was one of the factors leading to the exodus of the Dabarreh and Iroleh from Qoddo and Liban. Somali traditions say little of the Dagodia during their early days in Bai, presumably, the ethnic group was fully occupied in defending itself from Ogaden encroachment and, just as at present, in laying claims to grazing areas so remote that the ethnic men had scarcely seen them let alone used them. There is no doubt that at least a part of the Degodia group was in contact with those Ajuran sections which had fled to the west with the Borana.³⁹

The next movement of the Dagodia to the west started in the last decade of the 19th century. After the re-conquest of Harar by the Ethiopians, the forces of the Emperor Menelik under the command of Ras Makonnen undertook a number of expeditions against the Somali of the Mudugh and the Ogaden, some of these forays reached as far south as the middle areas of the Juba, and made contact with the scores of Somali and half-Somali clan groups who at that time

³⁷ KNA/DC/WAJ/1/2, Wajir District Political Book, Notes on the Degodia by R.G Turnbull, September, 1955

³⁸ Schlee, Gunther, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

³⁹ Schlee, Gunther, "Some Effects of a District Boundary in Kenya," in *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa: Essays in Honour of Paul Spencer*, edited by Mario I. Aguilar, Trenton, NJ: Africa Research and Publications, 1998.

occupied the country between the Web Shebelle and the Webi Gestro. The pillaging of the countryside by the Ethiopian levies led to a series of clashes with the local clan people, and, rather than endure the spasmodic depredations of Menelik's soldiers, the Yaben sections of the Dagodia once again cast around for fresh grazing areas. They were determined, as they still are, to submit to a minimum of interference.⁴⁰

According to oral traditions, the Yaben split themselves into four groups and dispersed to the north, the west and the south. The first group, which contained representatives not only of all the Yaben Dagodia, but, in addition, a number of Murulleh, is said to have made its way northwards through the Arussi country, and to have settled, in the vicinity of Harar, Jigjigga, and Galbet. The group included members of the Raghai, Idris, Dumal, Midumal, Aden Yero, Ferdano and Fai. The Murulleh elements were led by one Abdi Suban. Their descendants are said to have lived as Dagodia under Haji Abdullahi, but it was more than likely that even if the story was true they were by then shegat (according to the Somali shegat is a person who claims to belong to one of the Somali clans and yet is not or he belongs to a different clan yet he claims belonging to a clan he is living with) to some local Harar ethnic groups.⁴¹

The second group moved up the valley of the Daua until further progress to the west was prevented by the Borana. They then broke south and, moved towards Takabba in the area generally known as the Libin where they encountered elements of the Ajuran. They then formed themselves into a loose alliance and remained together. The whole party the Degodia immigrants and their Ajuran hosts then moved on southward to Wajir where they arrived in about 1904. Here they found Ido Robleh and, noting the strong position into which he had maneuvered himself vis-à-vis the local Doran, straightway placed themselves under his protection. The alliance between the Degodia and the Ajuran was indeed so close until 1916.⁴²

The third group moved south from Bay, they crossed the northern Rahanwein country and drifted westwards to the left bank of the Juba. They slowly followed the river downstream reaching Bardera in about 1896 and Salagleh some three years later. Further progress to the south was

⁴⁰ Shongolo, Abdullahi A. "the Gumi Gaayo Assembly of the Boran: A Traditional Legislative Organ in the Modern World." *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie*, 119 (1994), pp. 26-52.

⁴¹ KNA/DC/WAJ/1/2, Wajir district Political Book, Notes on the Degodia by R.G Turnbull, September, 1955

⁴² Schlee, Gunther, "Some Effects of a District Boundary in Kenya," in *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa: Essays in Honour of Paul Spencer*, edited by Mario I. Aguilar, Trenton, NJ: Africa Research and Publications, 1998.

now barred by the Rahanwein. At this point the Degodia had no alternative but to cross the Juba and to make for the west. This they did, crossing the river at Malka Dakacha and, as favourable seasons allowed, gradually pressing towards Wajir. They crossed the Juba in 1904 and first arrived at Wajir in 1908. Sometime between 1904 and 1908 this party encountered the Ugas Guleid section of the Mohamed Zubeir who were also on their way westwards, bent on seizing the waters of Saddeh, Whumbe, Arbo and Shaleti.⁴³

At the encounter with the Ugas Guleid, the Degodia were quick to realize the value of the old dispute and forthwith claimed themselves to be not Degodia but Ogaden and in consequence, the rightful occupants of all country grazed over by the Ugas Guleid.⁴⁴ The fourth party crossed the Juba in the vicinity of Dolo and then worked their way south to the Dilharra area. Here they came into contact with the Marehan sections where they engaged in war. The Degodia were, at first, victorious in their encounters with the Marehan in about 1892 and succeeded in establishing themselves in the Humbale area. But later the Marehan soon turned the tables on the immigrants and, after engagements at Humbale and Malka managed to recapture the stock they had lost and drove the Degodia out of Jubaland.

This brief war 1892-1894 was finally brought to an end by the intervention of the Gurreh, the leading peace-maker being Shaba Alio Omo of the Banna. Shaba Alio and All Abdi, realizing the threat offered to them by the Marehan, and the value of the Degodia as fighting men, made no attempt to discourage this party's westward movement, and by 1900 a number of the Degodia had established themselves south of the Daua as shegats to the Gurreh.⁴⁵ The majority, however, pressed on and, crossing the Daua near Neboi and moved back into Ethiopia.⁴⁶

After a stay of two or three years in Oddo under the authority of the young Wobur of the Degodia, Wobur Abdi who had been appointed by the clan in 1904, the party again turned to the south and crossed the Daua at Ramu, pushed on to Muddo Erri, Takabba and finally to Wajir where they arrived in about 1908. A small number stayed behind in Oddo with the Lobarreh

⁴³ KNA/DC/WAJ/1/2, Wajir district Political Book, Notes on the Degodia by R.G Turnbull, September, 1955

⁴⁴ Lewis, I. M. *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy: A General Introduction to the Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions*, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1982.

⁴⁵ Shegat is a person who claims to belong to one of the Somali clans and yet he does not or he belongs to a different clan yet he claims belonging to a clan he is living with.

⁴⁶ Schlee, Gunther, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, pp. 18-45.

Degodia in the charge of Wobur Abdi. Those of this party who came to Wajir were mostly Fai. On arrival they quickly split into family groups and attached themselves to the Ajuran.⁴⁷

By 1909 the Somali pressure (Ogaden and Degodia and Degodia “shegats”) was so great that Zaphiro leader of groups living in Wajir realized that there was no hope of his being able to expel these people from Wajir and of driving them back to the east and north. Nor were his forces sufficient to enable him to protect the Boran and Sakuye from molestation and to ensure for them the undisturbed use of the wells in his area. He accordingly moved all the Boran and many of the Ajuran from Wajir and settled them between Buna and the Dela country.

The scheme was wholly unsuccessful because there were no wells in the new areas. The Ajuran, in spite of having offered their protection to the Degodia, fared no better and even their leader Ido Robleh complained of being excluded from his traditional grazing areas by these Somali immigrants.⁴⁸ Although the above history describes a lot of alliances, it must be acknowledged that, equally, there were conflicts between the Degodia and the Ajuran mostly due to resources such as water and pasture. The region had no enough water wells that could serve the human population and their livestock. For instance by 1912 the entire Wajir had only one hundred and twelve wells. The resources played out in explaining the relationships between the Degodia and the Ajuran.

2.4 Ajuran-Degodia Relations

Wajir district is shared by a number of Somali clans, principally the Ajuraan, Degodia, and Ogaden. The Ajuraan believe that they are the original inhabitants of much of the land though in fact they displaced the Boran, who once inhabited the entire county. In any event, the Ajuraan enjoyed protected access to Wajir-West under the British colonial system and since independence faced long-term migratory pressure and changing demographics from westward expanding neighbors, especially the Degodia. The district has historically been almost entirely

⁴⁷ Shongolo, Abdullahi A. “the Gumi Gaayo Assembly of the Boran: A Traditional Legislative Organ in the Modern World.” *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie*, 119 (1994), pp. 26-52

⁴⁸ Schlee, Gunther, “Some Effects of a District Boundary in Kenya,” in *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa: Essays in Honour of Paul Spencer*, edited by Mario I. Aguilar, Trenton, NJ: Africa Research and Publications, 1998.

rural and pastoral.⁴⁹ Migratory pressures on the Wajir rangeland have been exacerbated by the conflicts and changed clan demographics arising from the Somali civil war.⁵⁰

The years between 1920 and 1940 were marked as the period of colonial consolidation. Although the British took over the Northern Frontier District, it remained a neglected British outpost.⁵¹ This region was administered separately by military officials and barred from economic and political integration with the rest of Kenya. The treatment caused in part by the NFDs history of isolation and in part by Somali ethnic consciousness, contributed to the desire of NFD Somalis to secede from Kenya.⁵² During such suppression the Degodia and Ajuran never engaged in serious conflict as the region was under strict military monitoring.

This has led to endemic tensions between the three clans over rights to pasture and wells. Land pressure was worsened in the 1980s when the Degodia were pushed out of Isiolo district and into Wajir by the Borana. Anxiety over land access is clearly a major underlying factor in district conflicts. But the clashes which erupted in 1992 and 1993 between the Degodia, Ajuraan, and Ogaden clans were triggered by the introduction of multi-party politics. The multi-party politics led to competition over control of constituencies between different clans. As noted above, these elections were viewed as clan contests. The Degodia and Ajuran clans were each fearful that victory by rival clans would institutionalize the rival's hold on resources and eventually disenfranchise the losers.⁵³

Pre-Colonial Degodia-Ajuran conflicts were centered on control of resources such as pasture, water and demarcation of territories which were deep sources of conflict in the two community's history. The two communities passed on to their children stories about the raids which involved the confiscation of livestock and battle over control of pasture and water points. Evidence of

⁴⁹ Robert Walker and Hassan G. Omar, "Pastoralists under Pressure: The Politics of Sedentarization and Marginalization in Wajir District, Northeast Kenya," Nairobi: Oxfam-GB, July 2002, pp. 9, 18.

⁵⁰ Schlee, Gunther, "Some Effects of a District Boundary in Kenya," in *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa: Essays in Honour of Paul Spencer*, edited by Mario I. Aguilar, Trenton, NJ: Africa Research and Publications, 1998

⁵¹ Laitan David D. and Said S. Samatar, *Somali: Nation in Search of a State*, London: Westview Press, 1987, pp. 59-62.

⁵² Schlee, Gunther, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, pp. 18-45.

⁵³ Dekha Ibrahim and Janice Jenner, "Wajir Community-based Conflict Management," paper presented to the USAID Conference "Conflict Resolution in the Greater Horn of Africa (June 1997).

conflict was depicted through their oral traditions. The two communities, over the years, cultivated negative feelings towards each other. These feelings included hatred, contempt, suspicion and the desire to retaliate. These feelings led to collective memory which may explain continued rivalry of the groups that has been shown to present times.⁵⁴

Collective memory leads to development of a culture of violence in response to the experiences of physical violence accumulated during intergroup conflicts, and is based on the subsequent evolved collective memory that preserves those experiences and their meanings. This development is almost inevitable in view of the human losses that the society incurs through decades of conflict and the participation of its members in the violent acts. These powerful experiences touch society members emotionally, involve them, and permeate societal products, institutions and channels of communication, which then serve to maintain them as collective memory. With time, a cultural pattern evolves that has identifiable facets such as the formation of societal beliefs that concern intergroup violence and the appearance of rituals and ceremonies that commemorate the slain compatriots.⁵⁵

Similarly, these communities inhabit the areas which are generally arid and semi-arid. This condition made their very nature of life to be pastoral. The very nature of pastoral livelihoods demanded a high degree of mobility guided by the need for access to water and grazing land. Their needs were challenged by prolonged droughts and food shortages resulting to increased movements in search of food, water, and better grazing land. Nomadic pastoralism being the most important ways of life for the Degodia and Ajuran whenever threatened by drought primarily led to increased violent clashes and armed struggles against each other.⁵⁶ Such conflicts and disturbances were common between the Degodia and Ajuran during the pre-colonial period. The situation was even made worse by cattle raiding. Raiding was organised for compensatory purposes after a raid by another community or persistent drought that wiped

⁵⁴ Kuria Anthony, Paper Presented at the ‘*Mijadala on Social Policy, Governance and Development in Kenya*’ sponsored by Development Policy Management Forum on 22 March, 2007 at Nairobi Safari Club

⁵⁵ Daniel Bar-Tal, “Collective Memory of Physical Violence: its Contribution to the Culture of Violence”, in Ed Cairns and Micheal D. Roe, (Ed.) *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

⁵⁶ Oral interview, Omar Sheikh, (60 years) 26/10/2011

communal cattle. They involved rustling of livestock or other forms of theft, terrorizing of communities and imposition of illegal levies on grazing lands.⁵⁷

The relationship between the Ajuran and Degodia remained a conflicting one during the period of the introduction of the colonial rule in 1895. The British did not see the difference between these two clans (Degodia and the Ajuran) and the Oromo hence they categorized them together as war-like. It was after classifying them together that the British realised that the Oromo and the Somali were a different people. The British then introduced a boundary between the Oromo and the Somali. The Somali were restricted to pastures to the east of the line, and the Oromo to the west of it. The Ajuran were given pasture rights on the Oromo side of the dividing line, while the British regarded the Degodia as Somali invaders from outside the colony and tried to contain them east of the dividing line. Later the Ajuran were accepted as Somali. Degodia and Ajuran are culturally indistinguishable at first sight. There are Boran speaking Ajuran, but the remainders of the Ajuran speak a form of Somali as the Degodia.⁵⁸

During the colonial period most conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran was mostly due to encroaching on other community's land mostly caused by need for pasture due to drought. For instance the colonial District report of 1955 indicated that;

"In February, stock began to die off, and rinderpest, untreatable die of drought conditions, took heavy toll in the Ajuran. Trade came to a standstill, and the wells were in use night and day as the Degodia and Ajuran competed. Tribal relations were generally good, though oddly enough they were at their worst in the periods of best grazing. The Degodia were again in trouble, this time with the Ajuran, first at Giriftu in a minor affray, and then in Moyale District. The latter affair was serious and nearly led to a large scale tribal fight. As a result the Degodia chiefs and their sections were both placed under severe bond. This appears not to have worn off yet. There was steady bickering but no serious flare-up between Degodia and the Ajuran along the Lak Katulo. There was tension between the Ajuran and Degodia

⁵⁷ Kuria Anthony, Paper Presented at the '*Mijadala on Social Policy, Governance and Development in Kenya*' sponsored by Development Policy Management Forum on 22 March, 2007 at Nairobi Safari Club

⁵⁸ Gunther Schleea, "Brothers of the Boran Once Again: On the Fading Popularity of Certain Somali Identities in Northern Kenya", in the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t770239509>, Downloaded At: 07:27 9 June 2011

also, which was stopped in time by a patrol".⁵⁹

The increasing tendency of Ajuran to migrate to Degodia land led to pressure in the joint grazing area which at times caused hatred among Ajuran and Ogaden, but nothing came of it. The colonial report further indicated that; "quite the most troublesome tribe in Wajir district were the Degodia as reported by the District Northern Frontier Annual Report that;

The Degodia people have caused more trouble. Their favourite grazing areas are west of the Ramu – Eil Wak road, between the River and a line drawn from Asharbit to Takabba. Although they have respected the restrictions on their movements but have continually demanded the right to move further and further Westwards, claiming an entirely imaginary blood brotherhood with the Ajuran.⁶⁰

During the Second World War little was documented on the conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran as the British concentrated on the trouble caused by the Italians who occupied Moyale, Debel, Korondil, Buna and El Wak. In January 1941 the British mounted local operations resulting in the occupation by the British troops of Buna, Gerille and Dif, and at the end of the month the stage was set for the great advance that followed. Events moved quickly to a climax in February with the fall of Afmadu (11th), Kismayu, (15th) and Moyale (23rd). It was not until April 8th that the headquarters of the administration was able to return to Wajir meaning little on clan fights had been reported. The colonial reports indicated that the war years were comparatively peaceful and there were few disturbances between the Degodia and Ajuran in the District.⁶¹

The conflict between the Degodia and Ajuran intensified during colonial period. Communities that inhabited the current Wajir County coexisted due to their connections stemming from their Islamic faith. These communities accommodated other Somali clans, with whom they shared ancestry and brotherhood in faith, as guests. The Ajuran claim that formally the county of Wajir belonged to them and that they allowed the Degodia to settle in the county. The Degodia numbers snowballed beyond the expectations of the Ajuran causing fracas and mischief. Conflicts were generated and as a way of managing the problem, the colonial government

⁵⁹ KNA/DC/WAJ/1/4, Wajir District Northern Province annual Report, 1956

⁶⁰ KNA/DC/MDA/22, District Northern Frontier Annual Report.

⁶¹ KNA/PC/NFD/1/5/3, Wajir District annual Reports, 1941

demarcated grazing land. The Ajuran community had their ancestral land to themselves once more. Through the demarcated grazing land, the colonial administration protected Ajuran land from intruders especially ever migrating Degodia clan from Ethiopia. The aim of the colonial government was to avert conflict over natural resources with the view of maintaining law and order. However, with the coming of independence in 1963, such demarcations were voided. The Degodia freely moved into Ajuran traditional grazing areas.⁶²

Although to some extend the two communities lived in intermingled settlements and there was no way of telling which was which without asking, their differences would be noticed if you listened to them discussing. An examination of their history reveals how there is deterioration in Degodia Ajuran relations. There had been a steady deterioration in the relationship beyond the usual violence between men over precedence at a well, or occasional raiding. The Degodia and Ajuran had thus become traditional enemies. This is indicated in the alliances that were noticed in the entire Wajir County. The Degodia have strong alliances with the Boran whom they provided guarantee safe passage between Moyale and Isiolo.⁶³

2.5 Status of Women among the Ajuran-Degodia Relations

This section deals with the position of women among the larger Ajuran and Degodia communities in Wajir County which have been affected by the inter-clan conflicts for long. The inter-clan conflicts in pastoral Ajuran and Degodia has resulted to the social transformations. Gaining an understanding of the history of gender relations is a central objective of this section. Starting from the pre-capitalist pastoral Degodia and Ajuran societies were largely subsistence-oriented. The most important factors of production were land water, and livestock (camels, sheep, goats, cows, and donkeys). As in many other stateless, small-scale societies, age and gender were the two major axes that determined relationships in the two clans.⁶⁴ Gender regulated the rights and duties of Somali individuals and groups. As such, it fulfilled four crucial

⁶² Oral interview, Omar sheikh, (60 years) 26/10/2011

⁶³ Lewis, I. M. *The Somali Lineage System and the Total Genealogy: A General Introduction to the Basic Principles of Somali Political Institutions*, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1982.

⁶⁴ Samatar, The State, 22-29. I.M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somalis of the Horn of Africa*, London, 1967.

functions namely the division of labour, the exercise of power and political authority and the basic moral values that shaped gender relations.⁶⁵

Each gender among the Degodia and Ajuran had its own specific labour tasks assigned to it. Both men's and women's work was acknowledged to be crucial to the well-being and survival of society. While in practice there was some flexibility in the division of labour-for example, if no maiden were available, the flocks of sheep and goats might well be herded by women or young children. The smallest children, both male and female, took care of the newly born livestock, usually within the view of the adults.⁶⁶ After marriage, woman continued to be responsible for the flocks of sheep and goats assisted by unmarried daughters or other female relatives. Equally child birth and child care fell into hands of women or domain, as well as the preparation and processing of food, and the manufacture and maintenance of both the collapsible house and the household utensils.⁶⁷ As they grew older, women were increasingly relieved from physical labour, as grown-up children took on much of the physical labour. However, wives always continued to serve and inspire their husbands.

The Degodia and Ajuran oral literature is explicit on the ascribed roles of women. From a young age of between 9to 12 years; women were nurtured and trained to be home-makers and care-givers. The girl-child was therefore equipped with skills such as mat-weaving, butter-making, culinary skills and constructing houses. Sexuality was also of paramount importance in these two clans. From a young age, girls were taught about the value of their sexual organs and the need to preserve virginity until marriage. At puberty, girls would undergo circumcision. This was an outward sign showing that one was ripe for marriage, and thereafter bear children.

After marriage, it was highly expected that a woman should be obedient to her husband and put her economics kills and person in his service, and bears him children. A woman therefore was to invest as much as possible in her children, particularly the sons, for, according to their tradition

⁶⁵ Jane Fishbune Colfier, *Marriage and Inequality in Classless Societies* (Stanford, 1988), 71-141.

⁶⁶ Abdi Gaileh Mirreh, *Die Sozialokonomische Verhältnisse der Nomadischen Bevölkerung im Norden der Demokratischen Republik Somalia* (Berlin, 1978)

⁶⁷ Lidwien Kapteijns (with Mariam Omar Ali), "Women's Voices in a Men's World: The Power of Song in the Recent History of Northern Somali Society," paper presented to the First Conference of the European Association of Somali Studies, London, September 23-25, 1993.

on kinship, only the latter could be counted on to give her economic and emotional support in the future, either within or outside the framework of her marriage.⁶⁸ Women were therefore encouraged to forge strong emotional ties with their sons and teach them what the society expected of them. Part of the teachings was encouraging boys to be courageous and to defend not only their mothers but also their clans.

Women taught their sons to confront difficulties but after getting married a young man would totally detach himself from his mother and fend for himself and his family although women remain an important component of the Ajuran- Degodia relations; their status is not equal to that of men. Like other Somali clans, the Degodia and the Ajuran are a patriarchal society and that gives men the cultural edge over all societal matters, including decisions in conflict and how they relate with enemy communities.

2.6 Conclusion

Several key themes from the Degodia and Ajuran of Wajir are essential for understanding of contemporary conflicts. In the early to mid 19th century, a major southward migration of Somali clans from the semi-arid zones of central Somalia and eastern Ethiopia dramatically reshaped population settlement in Wajir County. Prior to the 1840s, the territory west of the Jubba River was inhabited by Wardey, Orma, Oromo, and Boroma. Somali clans crossed over the Jubba River in the 1800s and quickly pushed westward, displacing or absorbing existing pastoral groups in a migration that produced considerable conflict. By the turn of the century, Somalis reached the Tana River and would have pushed further had British colonial figures not banned Somalis from crossing the Tana river and ending what one 1910 colonial report termed the Darood invasion.

To reduce clashes over wells and pasture, the British demarcated specific zones of grazing by clans'. They also exercised the right to open up access to viable rangeland to outside pastoralists in times of drought as a low-cost form of rangeland management. The result of the fixed colonial rangeland borders was that clans today view contemporary political and administrative boundaries locations as an extension of the colonial era exclusionist zones, and invoke those

⁶⁸ Ahmed Ali Abokor, "Somali Pastoral Worksongs: The Poetic Voice of the Politically Powerless" M.A. thesis, Folklore Institute, Indiana University, 1990

boundaries to oust other clans from rangeland. But most importantly, the boundaries, the colonial policy of seclusion and historical accounts as discussed in this chapter will lead to an understanding of the conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran as will be analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEGODIA-AJURAN CONFLICT, 1964-1984

3.1 Introduction

The Degodia/Ajuran conflict in Wajir existed before the arrival of colonialists. During the period of colonialism and the birth of the new nation state, there was a dramatic transformation in the two communities' relations. More dramatic is the effect of colonial state on pastoralism and conflicts between the two communities'. New forms, fronts, and scales of emerging conflict between the two communities posed new theoretical questions. A shift in emphasis from conventional causes of pastoral conflicts to natural resources, often cited as pasture, water, and land resources was inevitable. While competition over natural resources was an issue of great concern among the Degodia and Ajuran pastoral populations of Wajir County, introduction of colonial boundaries played significant roles in the two clans' conflicts. Struggles for autonomy between these groups added to this complexity. The objectives of this chapter are: to reconstruct the history of conflict between the Degodia and Ajuran communities of Wajir with the aim of understanding the roles of women in conflict perpetuation and resolution; to examine the escalating and de-escalating factors of conflict in the area; to understand the changing forms of conflict in Wajir and to explore the changing women roles in relation to escalating and transforming nature of conflict in Wajir.

3.2 The Degodia-Ajuran conflicts, 1964-1984.

The Kenyan Degodia and Ajuran communities occupy most of the borders areas of Kenya with Somalia and Ethiopia. These areas remain least developed as compared to other parts of Kenya with settled communities. The economic disparity with the rest of the country is striking. Infrastructure is poorly developed or non-existent. In some areas there are no roads, no schools, no telecommunication services and no health facilities. The security situation is equally wanting in that if people are travelling they are forced to move in a convoy of vehicles organised to protect travellers from roadside attacks by armed bandits. The area is characterized by absolute poverty making them often to be forced to rely on external food aid.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Allen, T. (ed), *In search of cool ground: War, flight and homecoming in North-east Africa*. London: James Currey, 1996.

The climatic conditions in Wajir are one of the causes of insecurity in the area. This includes fear of famine, starvation and fear of loss of land to the opposing clans. This has led to both the Degodia and Ajuran to engage in increased armed conflict with each other. Apart from the climatic conditions that influenced clan relations, the colonial legacy also explains the persisted Degodia-Ajuran conflict. The colonial division of Kenya created the frontier, closed district or pastoral zones where permits were required for those intending to travel in or out of these territories. When Kenya got her independence, there were no much changes. The KANU government struggled to achieve their centrist vision which largely neglected peripheral territories. Among these territories were the northern Kenya which was predominantly Somali and Oromo populations.⁷⁰

The Degodia and Ajuran wished to secede from Kenya and join Somalia's in the newly formed Republic of Somalia, to form a Greater Somalia that would include Somalis from Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopian Somali regions. Over the first decade of independence, irredentist Somali with Oromo and Rendille support launched the so-called Shifta war against the Jomo Kenyatta KANU regime. The state managed to crush the shiftas and retained northern Kenya as an integral part of the country, but the residual bitterness of the armed conflict undermined acceptance of the Somali residents as equal citizens. Northern Kenya was virtually abandoned. The clans were left on their own. Throughout the Kenyatta and partly Moi regimes the state left the clans in the region to battle out. The Kenyan state never considered trying to unite the clans in the region.⁷¹ They were treated as hostile subjects. Throughout the seventies and eighties, the Degodia and Ajuran clans engaged in wars of supremacy subjugating their populations to mass looting, burning of villages, rape, and occasional mass killings of innocent.

Another main reason of conflict between the Degodia and Ajuran is the insecurity in the entire North Eastern region. In the eighties and nineties, the governments neglected the security situation in Wajir. The Degodia and the Ajuran became engaged in bitter wars among themselves. Equally other clans in the region also engaged in bitter wars, pitting clan against

⁷⁰ Galaty, J., Aronson, D. & Salzman, P.C. (eds). *The future of pastoral peoples*, Nairobi: IDRC, 1980.

⁷¹ Markakis, J. (ed), *Conflict and the decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, London: Macmillan, 1993.

clan, and tribe against tribe, in battles that resulted in large loss of life and property.⁷² The Kenyan state was merely incapable of doing anything in the face of continued inter pastoral armed conflicts. In the sixties, pastoralists struggled to realise political dreams, in the seventies they struggled to survive prolonged famine and donor assisted development programmes based on paradigms that relegated them to mere observers of their fate. Security of all communities in Wajir becomes the prime pastoral concern for the nineties.⁷³

Three prolonged struggle for survival became the main characteristic of life in Wajir County. The bitter localised conflict over resources, the equally complex national level conflict with state authorities, a voracious local elite, and expanding populations of kinsmen who were migrating from other countries affected by war such as Ethiopia. All these three related conflicts made the life of the Degodia and Ajuran pastoralists a bitter experience. The reasons to why insecurity was the order of the day in Wajir was its proximity with the civil war raged countries of Ethiopia and Somalia.⁷⁴ The civil wars made the weapons to be available to Wajir communities. Use of firearms was a common thing to the communities in Wajir. The use of firearms escalated with the fall of the Siad Barre region in Somalia. Many refugees who crossed over to Kenya were not screened properly hence most of them crossed with firearms and sold them to the Wajir residents.⁷⁵

In explaining insecurity in Wajir, two scholarly explanations have been given. The first explanation is based on the myth that nomadic communities are traditionally warlike and aggressive. Some extreme anthropologists who have studied the role of stock rustling, territorial expansion, ritualised and actual war in pastoral community claim that it is through the war with neighbours that certain clans gain their identity and sense of being. An easily observable characteristic of pastoralist people is the way they casually but proudly carry offensive weapons around. It is easy to assume that the unusual cultural phenomenon of pastoral communities is

⁷² Kräli, S./Swift, J. *Understanding and managing pastoral conflict in Kenya: a literature review*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2001.

⁷³ Oral interview, Aden Ahmed, Wajir Town, 24/03/2012

⁷⁴ Galaty, J., Aronson, D. & Salzman, P.C. (eds), *The future of pastoral peoples*, Nairobi: IDRC, 1980.

⁷⁵ Salih, Mohamed A. 1992. Agro-Pastoralism: An underestimated regional food production system, *Eastern Africa Social Science Review* (EASSR) Vol. IX, No. 1, 23-37.

warrior clans systems, age grade systems, pride of war and traditional raiding.⁷⁶ Scholars who hold on this view believe that, this is the main reason for the wars, banditry, and breakdown of state law and order in pastoral areas such as Wajir.

The second group of scholars' view of insecurity sees the insecurity to be but a symptom of underlying deeper problems, which need to be solved if the insecurity is to go away. This group of scholars draw a popular image of the pastoral areas as permanently ravaged by strife and racked by hunger. Analysing a report by Dabar Maalim, in his contribution, "Insecurity and underdevelopment in north east Kenya" to the Symposium for the Sustainable Development of North Eastern Kenya (held in 1994), laments that "Insecurity has became the greatest hindrance to development in northern Kenya. Loss of life, loss of property, fear and general stress caused by insecurity has become the unfortunate characteristics of the region." According to Dabar, the roots of the strife are deep: "Insecurity in northern Kenya is but an underlying symptom of a deeper malaise: historical, economic and sociological realities are perpetuating the bloodshed in the pastoral areas of northern Kenya."⁷⁷

Competition for the exploitation of natural resources is thus a group issue. Alliances and agreed leadership systems to the clan level guide internal competition within local grazing groups. Major conflicts happen between large groups that identify themselves in the ethnic patterns of language, blood, and which claim or contest assumed rights of occupancy to grazing land over which there is no agreement over occupancy or use, or for which no alliance exists. Clans make a military type treaty alliances that unite several clans or even tribes who speak different languages. The Boran-Degodia alliance of 1989 held until early 1997, binding together more than half a million people across the Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia border. The astonishing spread of information in the pastoral areas ensures that such alliances are observed diligently despite their ephemeral nature. Competition for grazing and more critically for watering for livestock especially in the limiting dry period is entered in by all the alliances. These

⁷⁶ Mazrui, A. (ed), *The warrior tradition in modern Africa*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977.

⁷⁷ Almagor, U. Raiders and elders: a confrontation of generations among the Dessaetch, In Fukui, K./Turton, D. (eds.), *Warfare among East African herders*, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1979, pp. 119-143.

competitions often turn into conflicts, which have the potential of involving all members of rival alliances.⁷⁸

In conclusion it should be noted that, the weakening of state control over north-western Kenya has resulted in the emergence of cattle warlords with armed militia to protect their interests. Consequently violence, chaos and insecurity have become the dominant feature in the region. Cattle warlordism is a new phenomenon which has emerged among the Degodia and Ajuran since the 1980s. The warlords mobilised warriors to the tune of a group of about 500 youths by promising them security and livestock. Most of the youth were recruited from the nearby trading centres where they were idle. After undergoing the training the warriors were sent on raiding missions against enemy clans. This has led to rise of influential and wealthy people who promise the people good tidings, security and prosperity. Due to the people's disillusionment and anger over the government's mistreatment in the past, the warlords have managed to win strong support from the people for their own personal gains.⁷⁹ The warlords have created strong and heavily armed private armies which, apart from providing local security, also go on cattle raids, near and far. The warlords therefore have very many retainers whom they can send on raids, while they maintain and supervise the raiding party. The warlords have become the final authority on cattle relations, overriding the traditional powers of the elders.

Poor leadership is another major contributory factor to the conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran. The local political leaders have tended to encourage their people to continue with the age-old cultural practice of cattle rustling. Women and children seem to bear the brunt in these forms of violence. Contrary to traditional norms, they are not spared. Violations of the fundamental rights of women and girls are widespread in times of war and civil strife, including atrocious crimes as well as rape, torture, murder, maltreatment and neglect. The targeting of non-combatants, especially women and children, seems to be a symptom of the breakdown of the entire social order.

⁷⁸ Abdulahi, M. *The changing nature of pastoral conflicts in south-eastern Ethiopia: the case of the Borana and Degodia pastoralists*, Nairobi: Africa Peace Forum et al, 2005.

⁷⁹ Hutchful, E. & Bathily, A. (eds) *The military and militarism in Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998.

3.3 Conflict during Independence Period, 1963-1984

In 1960s the Ajuran basked in the glory of their numbers and hence were more powerful than the Degodia. They (Ajuran) would take advantage of their enormous population and deny the degodia access to the precious water and pasture for their animals. It is worth noting that the two clans did not have modern weapons, hence the more the number of warriors , the more success in the war. This is what made the Ajuran to suppress the Degodia. Although Kenya got her independence in 1963, the Ajuran and Degodia communities were later subjected to the infamous state of emergency declared in Northern Kenya in 1964. The concentration camps (Kijiji) were created in the region to monitor the behaviour of the two communities and also of other members of the Somali community. The security forces under the guise of military operation maintained order hence little conflicts were witnessed. The main conflict at this time was between the military and the members of the Somali clans. For instance in 1966 the army massacred 32 persons at Buna watering point. The 32 persons were going about their normal duties but suddenly they were encircled and murdered in cold blood and their bodies dumped in the wells. The main reason for the action was attributed to the blowing up of a military truck by land mine planted by bandits that the army was battling to uproot.⁸⁰

The situation was further changed by the introduction of guns into the Degodia community. Small arms are a normal part of life throughout Wajir County. Small arms are used for a number of legitimate uses as well as some illegitimate uses. For example, small arms are used by pastoralists to protect their livestock from thieves or by merchants who must travel long distances over roads full of bandits. In addition, the Somali culture provides an incentive for acquiring small arms. For example, the number of livestock owned by a man is a determining factor in the quality of woman he can marry. The more livestock a man owns the better bride he can obtain. This strong incentive to acquire livestock prompts some men to steal cattle from one another leading to conflict. Furthermore, a man who owns many livestock and a gun can obtain a better bride yet.⁸¹

⁸⁰ A yet to be published book by Salah Abdi Sheikh of an advocacy group called the Truth Be Told (TBT) Network “Blood on the Runway; The Wagalla Massacre 1984” has a detailed story of what transpired.

⁸¹ Gebre-Wold, Kiflemariam and Isabelle Masson (Eds.), *Small Arms in the Horn of Africa: Challenges, Issues, and Perspectives* (Brief 22, March 2002), Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002

During the Cold war, both the US and the USSR used arms deals as a diplomatic tool. Haile Selassie was a very close ally with the US and Western leaders and received supplies of arms as a reward for his loyalties. Later, the Derg, espousing Marxist ideologies, turned to the USSR for support. The USSR returned the favour and showered Ethiopia with small arms and artillery. The US has contributed its share of arms to the Ethiopian military by dumping large amounts surplus weaponry onto the international arms market.⁸² Porous border controls between Kenya and Ethiopia provided a route for small arms trafficking into the Degodia and Ajuran hands. The guns acquired from Ethiopia were used by the two communities to terrorize each other with the Ajuran being on the receiving end. From 1978, Degodia had added violence to their strategies of dislodging Ajuran from the then Wajir West area. They sourced out-laws of Somali-Ethiopia war (Somali Abo war) to push out Ajuran. They hired goons who were used to dislodge the Ajuran.⁸³

As a result, Ajuran clan members were forcefully evicted from their traditional grazing areas. As time went by, the stakes were upped and indiscriminate and sometimes sordid killings were carried out. While all this was happening the Kenya government officers did not take any step to stop the killing. They were busy engaging in empty talks as life continued to be lost. The Ajuran community could not fight back as they were outgunned and outnumbered by then by the Degodia. They lacked adequate resources. Similarly, the Ajuran community had no links with Somalia and Ethiopia or any power from which to source help unlike the Degodia community. They had no political voices as the sitting MP was from Degodia clan.⁸⁴

For instance, in 1980 all the Ajuran chiefs in Griftu, Eldas, Arbajahan, Wagalla and Hadado locations were made to swap station with Degodia chiefs. During this period, the Degodia chief facilitated issuance of identity cards to their clansmen from the heartlands of Ajuran territory. The chiefs used their power to orchestrate expansionist programme to establish themselves in areas hitherto under the ownership of the Ajuran. They used their enhanced numbers to control

⁸² Deen, Thalif, Disarmament: U.S. a Key Supplier of Surplus Weapons, Says Report, *IPS-Inter Press Service*, 2001.

⁸³ Oral interview, Bishar ismail Ibrahim,(78 years), 24/10/2011

⁸⁴ Oral interview, Councilor, Dugow, Wajir, 24/10/2011

politics in Ajuran original areas of Wajir West. Eventually they dominated grazing land, water resources and settlements. This frustrated and pained the members of Ajuran community.⁸⁵

After securing administrative government positions the Degodia committed frequent attacks against the Ajuran. For instance, the Degodia community migrated into Wajir district in general and former Wajir West constituency in particular from *Odo* in Ethiopia. These areas were original homes of the Ajuran. The provincial administration officials further betrayed their trust by issuing national identity cards to illegal immigrants, favouring them over bona fide citizens.⁸⁶ There was a series of clashes and evictions with the worst culminating into the Wagalla massacre.

Before the massacre, the Degodia murdered a total of 118 members from the Ajuran community in their efforts to forcefully displace them from their grazing areas. Equally, six members of Yussuf Osman's family an Ajuran living among the Degodia were killed; their women were taken on a six hour trek into wilderness and murdered. An infant and a toddler were left by the bodies of their mothers to die or be eaten by wild animals. Barely six days later, on February 9th 1984 had six more people killed. This time, the bodies were burnt beyond recognition. It was in the light of such reality that the government mounted strong campaign to end the conflict. The government ordered every clan through the PC North Eastern to stop violence or face dire consequences. While the Ajuran duly complied, Degodia leaders failed to control their militia men. The government set in motion disarmament of the two warring clans but the Degodia, led by the then sitting MPs (1984) late Hon. Khalif and Abdi Mohamed Sheikh of Wajir West and Wajir East respectively claimed that the Degodia militia could outnumber the government forces and had very sophisticated weaponry and thus could not be combated or controlled. Subsequently, on 10th February 1984, a string of events culminating in the Wagalla massacre take off.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Oral interview, Shindes Mohamed, (68 years), Wajir, 25/10/2011

⁸⁶ Abdullahi Jamaa, "The Search for Justice for the Infamous 1984 Wagalla Massacre", in *Reject: a Bimonthly Centre on-line Newspaper* by Media Diversity centre, a Project of African Women and Child feature Service, Issue 017, May, 16-31, 2010, www.mediadiversityafrica.org.

⁸⁷ Abdullahi Jamaa, "The Search for Justice for the Infamous 1984 Wagalla Massacre", in *Reject: a Bimonthly Centre on-line Newspaper* by Media Diversity centre, a Project of African Women and Child feature Service, Issue 017, May, 16-31, 2010, www.mediadiversityafrica.org.

The operation left a trail of killings; seven persons were killed by the military between Ademasajida and Merti area. In north, a combined contingent of Kenyan and Ethiopian forces settled in Danaba. Residents who lived around those areas namely Danaba, Qudama, Balowle and Gulani Saul some massacred as thousands of herds of camel, cattle, goats and sheep were driven away and given to Ethiopian forces as an appreciation for the helping hand. For the Ajuran victims, livelihoods were lost as the community was pushed into poverty.⁸⁸

3.4 The Wagalla Massacre

After the reckless killings that characterized the relationship between the Ajuran and the Degodia, the Kenya government embarked on a mission to end any further atrocities. In February 1984 the Kenyan military carried out a massacre attributed to feuds between the rival Degodia and Ajuran clans. The Kenya Army with the assistance of the internal security apparatus rounded up men from the Degodia clan which was blamed for an earlier attack and herded them at the Wagalla airstrip. The men were held there, behind a chain-link fence, for days and many died of thirst or hunger in the semi-desert conditions. Others were clubbed, shot or burnt to death. After five days, those who had survived attempted to escape but the security forces opened fire at them. The dead and near dead were ferried in army Lorries and dumped in the bush where they were left for hyenas to devour. It was a month later that the incident went public when an MP raised it in Parliament. The government eventually admitted that “57 people” were killed in a security operation to disarm the Degodia, but the toll was widely disputed, with residents insisting hundreds had died.⁸⁹

The military operation that took place on February 10, 1984, was massive by all standards, and was orchestrated by the belief that the local Degodia clan had started a wave of armed attacks against other communities in Wajir West with aim of destabilizing the district, to enable some elements take over and advance an alleged secession theory.⁹⁰ They were alleged to harbour theories or beliefs that the region should secede from Kenya to Somalia. In order to suppress the

⁸⁸ Oral interview, Mzee Manur, (77 years), 26/10/2011

⁸⁹ A yet to be published book by Salah Abdi Sheikh of an advocacy group called the Truth Be Told (TBT) Network “Blood on the Runway; The Wagalla Massacre 1984” has a detailed story of what transpired.

⁹⁰ Abdullahi Jamaa, “The Search for Justice for the Infamous 1984 Wagalla Massacre”, in *Reject: a Bimonthly Centre on-line Newspaper* by Media Diversity centre, a Project of African Women and Child feature Service, Issue 017, May, 16-31, 2010, www.mediadiversityafrica.org.

secession the Kenyan army is said to have attacked people who were assembled at the airstrip. It is claimed they also raped young girls and women in the villages and at a separate field designed for vetting young girls and women. Women were maimed during the Wagalla massacre and scores were left widowed, disabled, paralysed and in trauma. The soldiers rounded up women among other residents from various remote villages and assembled them at one point for vetting. Those residents with identity documents showing they hailed from Wajir West were forced into a vehicle and transferred to Wagalla Airstrip. The security personnel separated men from women and took the young women and girls to a separate location for vetting. The separate vetting was mired by claims of rape.⁹¹ It was against this background that the Degodia and Ajuran women decided to act either to stop the conflict or exacerbate it.

The question of the Wagalla Massacre aroused both national and international outcry. The public through the MPs demanded to know who killed the Degodia men and raped their women. Questions were raised in parliament by the former Member of Parliament for Wajir West, the late Ahmed Khalif Mohamed, on 21 March 1984. During a debate on then President Moi's speech at the opening of that parliamentary session, Khalif accused the security forces of killing hundreds in Wajir District. The government forces, he said, had placed more than 4000 people in a concentration camp, over 300 had been immediately executed, and over 600 were confirmed missing. Khalif directly accused the PC for North Eastern Province, Benson Kaaria, and the Somalia government of collusion in the murder. According to Khalif, Kaaria had earlier claimed in 1980 that he would eliminate all Somali-speaking people in the country unless they exposed the Shifta who had killed a District Officer, as reported by the Standard on November 9, 1980, that.⁹² The report noted;

“The MP for Wajir West, Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Khalif laid before the house a list of 300 Names and photographs of people allegedly massacred by security forces in Wajir District in 1984 The MP also read a cutting from the Standard of November, 9, 1980, in which Mr. Kaaria claimed he would eliminate all the Somali speaking peoples in the country,

⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁹² Irungu Ndirangu, Lucy Oriang⁹³ and Chris Musyoka, “MP Tables List of Massacre Victims”, *Daily Nation*, Wednesday, March 28, 1984, p. 5.

Shifters who had killed a DO were not exposed".⁹³

Khalif's accusations were met with utmost hostility by the entire parliament. Mwai Kibaki, Kenneth Matiba, A. Y. Boru and Samuel Ng'eny demanded substantiation. Charles Muthura accused Khalif of irrelevance in his contribution to the presidential speech while Parmenas Munyasia jestingly demanded to know the names of those who threatened to wipe out the Somalis. Khalif was forced into dropping the Somalia claim but stood his ground on the mass killings of Somalis in Wajir. In a bid to substantiate his claim the late MP tabled the lists of massacre victims and their photographs in parliament on 28 March 1984; many on the list were civil servants, including Noor Haji, the former Senator from Wajir, who had been killed in the military operation.⁹⁴

The question of just what happened at Wagalla Airstrip between 10 and 14 February 1984 was partially answered by the late Justus Ole Tipis in a ministerial statement about the military operation, read on the floor of parliament on the night of 12 April 1984, and reported in the Nation of April 13 1985. Ole Tipis noted that;

Only 57 people were killed by security forces in Wajir District. He said if anyone wanted the skeletons of the dead people, they were available."⁹⁵

Ole Tipis revealed that the security situation in Wajir was politically motivated, and that leaders were involved in divisive strategies planned along ethnic considerations. He claimed that the government decided to carry out its operations against the Degodia community in order to provide security to a neighbouring Ajuran clan.

Although it has been exactly a quarter of a century since the Wagalla Massacre, the victims have refused to stay quiet and continue calling for investigation into the massacre as reported by the Standard Reporter in February 26, 2005, that;

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Abdi Sheikh, "The blood in the Run-Way: The Wagalla Massacre",

⁹⁵ Irungu Ndirangu, Lucy Oriang' and Chris Musyoka, "Tipis' Statement on Killings is Criticised", in *Daily Nation*, Thursday, March 29, 1984, p. 6.

Many Kenyans of Somali origin, who claimed that their relatives were massacred at wagalla in 1984, jammed the high court seeking compensation and justice from the state. A suit was filed by lobby group, Truth Be Told Network, in its suit, the lobby group claims it has names and identification of those who were massacred, totaling to 400 men. It therefore wants the perpetrators of the heinous crime brought to book⁹⁶

3.5 Impact of Conflict in Wajir County

The conflict in Wajir County has had major impact on the people living in the region. Firstly, the conflict has led to growing insecurity in the county. This is manifested in frequent cattle rustling. Cattle-raiding is an age-old tradition of pastoralist communities. Traditionally and culturally, communities routinely stole cattle from each other for a variety of reasons ranging from restocking to dowry payment to pride and as a show of bravado by young men. Cattle- raiding was largely a harmless, inter-communal affair. However, this has since changed. Over the last decade, cattle-raiding has been transformed from a harmless traditional practice to a deadly commercial undertaking which has led to destruction of life and property.⁹⁷

Another impact is that of conflict in Wajir is that of steady proliferation and use of illegal small arms and light weapons. As the Degodia and Ajuran clans engaged in conflict, the end result is that of escalated arms race. This has developed amongst the two communities in and others that live in the Wajir County. This arms race amongst the Degodia and the Ajuran and their pastoral neighbours is motive for bonding and raiding in the belief there is security in numbers.⁹⁸ Cattle rustlers are so well armed and operate in large numbers. The small arms problem amongst the communities living in Wajir is so severe that, almost everyone is armed with an illegal weapon.⁹⁹ Whereas communities initially acquired illegal arms for purposes of securing their property particularly livestock, the scenario has dramatically changed in recent years. Acquisition of

⁹⁶ Abdi sheikh, "The blood in the Run-Way: The Wagalla Massacre

⁹⁷ J. Bevan Blowback: Kenya's Illicit Ammunition Problem in Turkana North District. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2008 pp.65- 67.

⁹⁸ K. Mkutu, *Pastoralist and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, London: Africa Peace Forum/ Safer world/University of Bradford. P.5.

⁹⁹ Kamenju *Terrorized Citizens* Nairobi: SRIC, 2001, pp. 50-52

firearms is now not only a matter of social honour, but it has also been commercialized, such that there are known dealers in and suppliers of illegal firearms.¹⁰⁰

Kamenju, Wairagu and Mwachofi noted in their study on small arms and light weapons that majority of male adult population in pastoral areas are armed. They further assert that the easy access to small arms and light weapons catalyses conflict in the region and exacerbate inter-clan conflict in areas such as Wajir. Thus, small arms and light weapons are both a cause and consequence of conflict. They are a cause in the sense that they exacerbate conflict. On the other hand, they are a consequence of conflict in the sense that communities are arming themselves in an effort to protect themselves and their properties.¹⁰¹ Proliferation of small arms has contributed to growing insecurity in the county and not only increased ethnic tension but also conflict. The gun culture and its attendant insecurity has contributed to suspicions and unbridled conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran. Conflict has heightened banditry along highways particularly along the Garissa-Wajir highway. Busses and other commercial vehicles only travel with armed police escort aboard, or in security convoys.¹⁰²

In addition, conflict has led to worsening sexual violence in Wajir County, leading to a steady rise in the spreading incidences of HIV / AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STDs).¹⁰³ Pastoral communities in Wajir have come to be associated with ceaseless conflict. Conflict generates several avenues for vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. It also accounts for a reasonable percentage of rural- urban migration and associated exposure to HIV/AIDS. This occurs as displaced persons, deprived of any livelihood resources (livestock) become vulnerable to exploitation including sexual contact with high-risk persons. Conflict is also associated with rape, impoverishment and a breakdown of social order, which contribute directly to the spread of HIV/AIDS.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ A. Ame “Cross-border Livestock Trade and Small Arms and Conflict in Pastoral Areas of the Horn of Africa: Case Study from Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya” A paper to IASCP’s Eleventh Biennial Conference 2006-04-19.

¹⁰¹ Kamenju *Terrorized Citizens* Nairobi: SRIC, 2001, pp. 50-52

¹⁰² Saferworld *Developing a strategy to respond to the government of Kenya’s disarmament programme*, Nairobi: Saferworld 2006 p.7

¹⁰³ Intermediate Technology Development Group- Eastern Africa, *Impact of HIV/AIDS among Pastoral Communities in Kenya: Study Findings and Recommendations*, Nairobi: ITDG-EA., 2005

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

Conflict in Wajir has several social economic attributes that compromise the two communities' resilience. There is widespread poverty, lack of respect for human rights for women, disempowerment, conflict and cultural impediments that predispose the community to risk. Women are facing additional burdens and risks occasioned by changing distribution of labour within the household, which does not take cognisance of their central role in the production and reproductive roles in a pastoral set-up.¹⁰⁵ HIV/AIDS awareness levels in the county are low, compounded by the fact that the community and households have not fully accepted the presence and threat associated with the pandemic.

There is a striking absence of reliable and consistent information on HIV/AIDS for the two communities. The prevalent risky perception that HIV/AIDS is a disease of 'other' people is widespread and commonly held. Awareness on non-sexual transmission paths is also very low. The community is experiencing increasing morbidity, some of which is attributable to HIV/AIDS. There is rapid increase in child and female-headed households in the recent past as HIV/AIDS and conflict lead to deaths.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, the conflict between the Degodia and the Ajuran has greatly contributed to the widening negative perception of the county by people from outside. The county is famous only known for its deadly conflict between different clans and even extended to non-resident business people. Such perception has made people from outside the county to fear to venture into the county in terms of development. The fear makes the county to lack behind in terms of development as no new ideas are introduced in the area. The county is therefore known for the conflict induced negative tag instead of investments.¹⁰⁷ No investor wants to live in Wajir because of the increasing insecurity which ensured that only the strong-willed, or the very desperate, are willing to settle in the county and even then, they are concentrated in the Wajir town leaving the rural areas in poverty.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ Oral interview, Mzee Manur, (77 years), 26/10/2011

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*

3.6 Conclusion

The chapter concludes by looking at the Wagalla Massacre of 1984. The chapter has attempted to provide an analysis of the conflict between the Ajuran and the Degodia of North Eastern Kenya. It is the contention of the chapter to reveal the adverse effects of the conflict on the people of the region particularly in terms of insecurity. It points out that Degodia-Ajuran conflict has undergone fundamental transformation from a cultural practice to modern warfare organised and bankrolled by warlords. The study also points out that the major losers in this environment of insecurity are the small and poor peasants who have been pauperised and turned into destitute. The chapter has also shown that there is a significant connection between environmental conflict and the insecurity created by cattle rustling and banditry in Wajir.

The chapter has also indicated that the state has tended to ignore and neglect the welfare of the pastoralists in terms of development and the distribution of political and economic resources. The institutionalisation of violence and the resultant insecurity have contributed to widespread poverty, hunger and destitution, which is unprecedented in the region's history. For most of the people the material base of their existence has been eroded. The chapter concludes by an argument that the apparent militarisation of the pastoral culture and the apparent collapse of the traditional mechanisms of socio-economic reproduction have caused the gun to become the tool of opportunity for both the warlords and the youth. Thus the bandits and the cattle rustlers cannot be militarily contained through the use of conventional war tactics, since they adopt a form of guerrilla tactics against the security forces. The government's reaction to its frustration and inability to control acts of lawlessness has mainly been sending in the security forces who mostly unleash terror on the civilian population particularly women through the use of extra-judicial methods of torture and rape, instead of facing the enemy. Such inhuman acts tend to make women to join the conflict in their defence. The chapter lays the precedent of understanding the roles that women have played in the two communities' conflict. This is the main concern of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEGODIA AND AJURAN WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND PEACE INITIATIVES, 1964-1984

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we assess the role of the Degodia and Ajuran women in conflict and peace initiatives. Although in most cases women in the pastoral societies were never involved in combat experience, their attachment to warring clans exposes them to different roles in the conflict. Men and women had similar conflict experiences; however, men more often are discussed as having participated in combat while women are left out by most scholarly works. This chapter fully documents examination of the role Degodia and Ajuran women played in the clan conflicts in Wajir. It examines the personal sacrifices they made and how their conflict experiences have influenced their lives in the aftermath of the conflict. It also examines the long historical and mythological tradition of the woman position in the two clans as a way to understand the participation of women in the inter-clan conflict.

4.2 Push factors that Forced Women into Conflict

This section builds and examines the role of women in the conflict among the Degodia and Ajuran communities. Since many of my interlocutors and informants in Wajir survive under the most difficult life circumstances they helped me understand the experiences of women in the conflict. Conflict is a process that is deeply embedded in the individual's interdependence with her environment, and therefore relational concepts of mind's ecological psychology of affordance are relevant. The suffering that women went through during conflict made their emotions relevant to their taking place in violence. This is because emotions stressed them hence when replacing such emotions they became very violent and aggressive.

This chapter conceptualizes that conflict causes trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder that has at its core the understanding of stress and the consequences of stress. Stress was necessarily negative and it also led a stimulating challenge to women to act in a manner that promoted

conflict.¹⁰⁹ Stress, conflict and peacemaking are issues that led women over to become aggression. There are many theories in social psychology that address aggression: aggression as hostile instinct or death instinct; aggression as a ‘steam boiler;’ frustration and aggression; aggression as learned behaviour. Variables that mediate aggression are described as arousal, norms, and the social construction of aggression. Psychologists see aggression as a form of behaviour which is acquired through individual experience. That when the women in Wajir felt they were threatened by life they opted to become violent. Frustrations of the threats evoke aggression and generated in the individual a state of emotional arousal, namely anger. This aroused anger generates an inner readiness for aggressive behaviour that pushed women to actively support conflict.

Abo Akademi in Finland, internationally renowned for his research on aggression, looks at aggression and mobbing behaviour and finds interesting differences between women and men. He points out that women choose different techniques for violence than men. Both for understanding aggression and conflict, social categorisation and social identity play important roles. The social identity theorist emphasise the group’s influence on the individual. Accordingly every individual women included divides themselves into distinct classes or social categories. Within this system of social categorisation, individuals locate themselves and others. The sum total of where they are located with respect to each category and classification constitutes their social identity which leads them to engage in violence in order to safeguard the identity. One’s social identity consists of how one defines oneself in each social category which its defence caused violence and conflict and equally, is intimately connected with prejudice and stigmatisation.

Although the traditional military is commonly regarded as the paradigmatic model of masculine organisation, the behavioural codes, activities and objectives of military organisation have assumed masculinity as a basic value. It is an old ideology and institution which was/is created, propagated and held high by men, mostly between the ages of 20-30. Some feminists argue that women take part in conflict if not to combat discrimination and exclusion, then to profit

¹⁰⁹ Lavik, N. J., Laake, P., Hauff, E., & Solberg, O., The Use of Self-Reports in Psychiatric Studies of Traumatized Refugees: Validation and Analysis of HSCL-25. In *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry*, 53 (1), 1999, pp. 17-20.

economically from this mighty machine. The explanation above explains why Degodia and Ajuran women took active roles in conflict.

4.3 Women promoting conflict

The Degodia and Ajuran women have and are engaged in the inter-clan conflict in different ways. There is little doubt that the availability of automatic rifles lowers both the strength and training required in fighting and therefore extends the range of potential fighters to include very young boys and, at least in principle, women and girls. There are cases in which, the warriors being engaged elsewhere, women used automatic rifles to drive back a party of raiders from enemy community. Direct involvement of women as fighters however appears to be a relatively rare phenomenon but it must be acknowledged that they played significant roles particularly in protection of their children and livestock from raiders.¹¹⁰ This assertion of women as combatants is true given that women engaged in war at market places particularly with their counterpart from enemy community.

Apart from the role of fighting to protect their children and livestock, the women play other roles such as supporting and sustaining the conflict. This they do by following their husbands, sons or partners to their camps which are often times in hidden and secret places. While there, they provide care for the men in way of food, companionship and tending to the sick. The Degodia and Ajuran women were always part of the civilian population, playing caring and nurturing roles. They actively supported their men in conflict not always by taking up arms but by providing them with the moral and physical support needed to wage violence, and in some cases inciting them to violence. Civilians and fighters belong to one family group, hence once the men are fighting; their women are always doing things such as cooking, treating them, and offering any other necessary support duties. Women are therefore collaborators with the fighters. As the warrior engaged in fighting the women were searching for food hence playing a significant role.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Belshaw D. and Malinga M, *The Kalashnikov Economies of the Eastern Sahel: Cumulative or Cyclical Differentiation between Nomadic Pastoralists?* Paper presented at the first Workshop of the Study Group on Conflict and Security of the Development Studies Association, South Bank University, March 1999.

¹¹¹ Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

Equally, the Degodia and Ajuran women play roles of sheltering and protecting their children who engage in conflict with government security officers who wanted to arrest the perpetrators of conflict. They are barriers to justice which is supposedly required to stop conflict. Sheltering is done through spying whereby they carry information about their opponents and security personnel making it hard for the government to stop the conflict. A Degodia woman from Wajir noted that, “It was terrible, because if you didn’t give information to the men, they got mad, so you had to collaborate with them”.¹¹² Another woman from the Ajuran said: “Everybody was a fighter at some point. Fighters cannot survive alone, without logistics. Even women became fighters at a certain point. They were at least part of the conflict. They cooked, gave whatever they could and had. They sheltered the fighters when the government security personnel wanted to arrest them”.¹¹³

Oral literature plays a very important role in the Degodia and Ajuran culture and has done so for thousands of years. In these communities there was no written script for long and even if any, the writing has not had much effect on the two communities than oral traditions. The Degodia and Ajuran are largely nomadic pastoralists who still remain illiterate. Even a literate populace has little relevance to most of the people. Poetry, proverbs, riddles, and other genres are used as acts of communication and as a form of education from elders to the young. They play a significant role in traditional courts and in tribal and political affairs. In times of conflict, women adopt the position of spokespersons. Women from different sides of the conflict pass information orally to their children at fire assemblies and traditional courts.¹¹⁴ These poetic compositions are also passed to different settlements and communities by word of mouth through the professional memorizers and reciters. Proverbs are used in everyday verbal exchanges in both rural and urban societies. Riddles are more commonly used by nomads, who continue to test each other’s knowledge and intelligence by presenting complicated oral puzzles to one another.¹¹⁵ Poetry by women concerning matters of political interest of their clans is common within the two clans. They cover issues such as the armed struggle against each other hence playing an inciting role. Traditionally, women have used work poetry to express social, political and conflict matters.

¹¹² Oral interview, Deka Iman, (63 years) Wajir, 29/10/2011

¹¹³ Oral interview, Hasna Yusuf, (71 years) Wajir 28/10/2011

¹¹⁴ Zainab Mohamed Jama, “Silent Voices: The Role of Somali Women’s Poetry in Social and Political Life”, in *Oral Tradition* 9/1 (1994): 185-202

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*

Mastery of oral traditions placed the Degodia and Ajuran women in the capacity of educators. In this capacity they influenced conflict between the two clans. Education entailed not only the teaching of human and cultural values, but also as mothers and educators, women led their sons and daughters on the road to a good life. Genuine education involved the shaping of character through the examples from past heroes most of who were fighters. The stories included ethnic and clan feuds and wars hence, women acted as a subtle form of participation which encouraged future generations to fight.¹¹⁶

Similarly, women played significant roles in the religious activities like offering prayers for their families in particular and their communities in general. Traditional healing was a profession of both men and women and it was more often the women practitioners who handled children's and other medical needs. Degodia and Ajuran women frequently offered morning prayers which were to protect their children some of who were fighters.¹¹⁷ Woman prayed for protection and safe return of their warriors. Like all similar prayers, it was a one sided prayer, favouring one side depending on the community that she came from. She would say, "Let them be saved with those who went with them. Let them stand firm with them. Let them return from the battle with others". In this way the women participated in fighting spiritually on the side of their husbands and children. The husbands and children would certainly feel encouraged to get this form of spiritual support from their wives and mothers.¹¹⁸

This form of spiritual support went hand in hand with inciting men to involve in conflict. The interests, the views and needs of Degodia and Ajuran women were presented to their male partners. For instance, women in need of livestock products like milk and meat influenced their men to get involved in conflict activities in order to meet such needs. Because the consequences of war weighed so heavily on the lives of women, they naturally supported strong leadership which could produce warriors. They ridiculed those men who supported peace as cowards. For example, singing praises to the male leadership and warriors' made diligence of women as leaders of conditions that support continuing of conflict.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Oral interview, Adan Ganyun, (74 years) Wajir) 25/10/2011

¹¹⁷ Oral interview, Aden Edo, (69 years) Wajir 24/10/2011

¹¹⁸ Oral interview, Mohamed Aden, (75 years) 23/10/2011

¹¹⁹ Oral interview, Habon Mohamed, (50 years) Wajir, 25/10/2011

In the direct support of conflict, the Degodia and Ajuran women participated in smuggling significant proportions of weapons which were used by combatants. Capitalizing on their innocence, the women from the two communities were used by their male counterpart to transport weapons from Ethiopia and Somalia. The Somali culture does not allow close contact between women and men who are not their husbands. This made it easy for the women to pass security checks without inspection making it easy for them to carry weapons across the international boarder without any hardships.¹²⁰

The widespread availability and misuse of small arms in North Eastern province of Kenya threatens safety, security and development prospects of communities in the region. The clan clashes, banditry, cross-border raids and cattle rustling are fought with these easily available small arms and light weapon, sourced from various arms market along the vast Kenya/Somalia border. They are also widely used in the commission of crime and other violent activities, whilst undermining effects at conflict prevention and resolution. This climate of insecurity serves to undermine economic development through restricting freedom of movement and access to services and opportunities for income generation. The problem of small arms in N.E.P conflict is much highlighted and pointed as the major factors that exacerbate killings, maiming of innocent people in the province.¹²¹

The Degodia and Ajuran communities procure their arms from the two main arms markets namely Burhache and Dobley. The acquisition of arms has fuelled community arms race in northern Kenya and the exercise is kept secret that government agencies will not understand its location and when it's procured. The arms dealers have used their arms supply to various clans in winning the community protection and assurance of safe passage when they traffic and transport the cache of arms to various destinations. The clans in northern Kenya have witnessed large transfer and transportation of large cache of arms using, camel, donkey and human beings through various villages where they get water and tea before moving to their end point. The donkeys and camels move some distance from each other sometimes driven by women. Guns are

¹²⁰ Oral interview, Abdia Aden, (59 years) Wajir, 25/10/2011

¹²¹ IANSA, *Pastoralist Women Small Arms Campaign (Campaigns)*, New York: International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), 2010

piled up into sacks while other donkey's carries jerricans as if they are going to draw water and yet the jerricans are filled with bullets.¹²²

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the multifaceted roles of women during the conflict situations in their Degodia and Ajuran communities in Wajir as mediators, combatants, caregivers and even economic providers for the family. As actors in conflict the women have either individually or collectively supported conflict in their communities. Some appealed to both the stake holders and the people of the community to protect them even if it was by use of force and arms to negotiate. Women as caregivers often have to bear the burden of providing food for their children, especially in situations of scarcity of food due to conflict, and these situations, a woman would do anything to put food on the table for her children, for example engaging in prostitution or being involved in combat. In terms of care giving, the process includes not just the usual domestic affair of caring for the family and home but, it also includes tending to the sick and wounded youths engaged in combating, caring both emotionally and physically. In situations whereby the men are engaged in combat or not available due to the migration of the women and children, the women from both communities agree that they have to take charge and become economic providers. That is the main discussion in the chapter that follows.

¹²² *Ibid*

CHAPTER FIVE

DEGODIA AND AJURAN WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates gendered thinking in peace building, and discusses how peacebuilding as commonly defined lacks a gender perspective among the Degodia and the Ajuran. I argue that women contributed to a more comprehensive meaning of peacebuilding among the Degodia and Ajuran. I start by describing women's peacebuilding initiatives. This feminist approach provides important directions for women's peacebuilding.

5.2 Origins of Women in Peace building

Gendered thinking, which considers the perspectives and behaviours of both men and women, has not characterized peace building. Peace among the Degodia and Ajuran in the past, been sufficiently conscious of gender biases, biases derived from the predominance of men's thinking and perspectives. Therefore the discipline of peace has patriarchal or male-biased, assumptions and perspectives which needed to be challenged through incorporation of feminist perspectives and thinking. Gendered thinking illuminates similarities and also substantial differences between male and female perspectives.

While all this was happening or most people, both men and women, follow patriarchal thought by identifying combat soldiers who are mostly men, the majority of victims are women and children and yet they had been assumed as having taken part in peacebuilding.¹²³ Equally the society when thinking about who are peacemakers and peacebuilders during and after conflicts. Many people have images from popular media of high profile political male figures, who have been instrumental in peace negotiations. Far fewer know of instrumental women peacemakers and peacebuilders has been outlined. Nor do people often imagine the multiple venues in

¹²³ Bulhan, Hussein Abdilahi, *Somaliland in Ruin and Renewal: The Story of Somaliland. Conflict Analysis Regional Report, Center for Creative Solutions*. September, 2004.

communities in which women act to build sustainable peace. Women have long been integrally involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes.¹²⁴

Women activities at community and regional levels are extensive and often within the aegis of NGOs and grassroots (local) women's organizations. Such women are strong supporters of the feminism ideology. Feminism is an ideology that purports men and women are of equal value and their equality should be recognized by all societies.¹²⁵ This point of view recognizes that women throughout the world suffer from sex-based discrimination or sexism. Feminism seeks to challenge the dynamic of domination at all levels, from the home to the peace building table, and to demand a world based more on cooperation than on conquest. Feminist peace theorists incorporate gender perspectives in her definitions of positive and negative peace. Thus authentic peace and security require *positive peace*, a society in which there is no indirect or structural violence such as gender inequality.¹²⁶

Feminist analysis looks at the world by gathering and interpreting information through the eyes and experiences of women as subjects. It separates itself from a patriarchal world view and the constraints of male-dominated theoretical analyses by, seeking to explain the importance of women's oppression in terms of their unequal status in society at large. In terms of women's peacebuilding, feminist analysis identifies women's specific concerns about peacebuilding, approaches peacebuilding from women's perspectives, welcomes pluralistic voices and diverse methods.¹²⁷ Using feminist analysis, critical questions are asked about peacebuilding such as: what does building peace mean to the Degodia and Ajuran women. Who are these women talking about peacebuilding? Do their perspectives and practices about peacebuilding coincide with peacebuilding?

¹²⁴ Bennett, Bexley, & Warnock, 1995; Cock, 1993; El-Bushra & Mukarubuga, 1995; Enloe, 1993; Sharoni, 1994; U.N., 1996a; Utting, 1994

¹²⁵ De Waal, Alex, "Class and Power in a Stateless Somalia," *SSRC Crisis in the Horn of African Web Forum*. February: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/dewaal/index.html>

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

¹²⁷ Bulhan, Hussein Abdilahi, Somaliland in Ruin and Renewal: The Story of Somaliland, Conflict Analysis Regional Report, Center for Creative Solutions. September, 2004.

This research found out that to build peace requires visioning the components of peace and security across cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, and between men and women. There is no unitary construct called peacebuilding to which everyone subscribes. Governmental, U.N., NGO, and grassroots organizations often have widely differing notions of peacebuilding. One of the most commonly referenced definitions of peacebuilding is that of former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali whose *An Agenda for Peace* (U.N., 1992) has become a pivotal document to describe U.N. meanings of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. In it, peacebuilding is defined as occurring in post-conflict societies: rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of communities torn by conflict and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among members of affected communities which for this research are the Degodia and the Ajuran.¹²⁸

Peacebuilding within Degodia and Ajuran women's grassroots groups emphasized relational behaviours, reconciliation and healing of psychological wounds.¹²⁹ The part that follows describes Degodia and Ajuran women's peacebuilding approaches within grassroots groups and NGOs. The section stresses women's meanings of peacebuilding and peacebuilding work they do. It emphasizes some distinct approaches of women, especially at grassroots levels. Importantly, to avoid imposing foreign ideas on the Wajir women thinking about what constitutes peacebuilding, I stress recognizing culturally-specific views and methods of peacebuilding within and between various women's groups in Wajir.

5.3 Degodia and Ajuran Women's Grassroots Peacebuilding

The real work of peacebuilding requires that local people seek solutions in their communities, regions, and nations rather than outsiders imposing their approaches. Degodia and Ajuran grassroots women's peace groups tended to centre peacebuilding actions upon nonviolence; recognition of, and respect for, human rights; promotion of intercultural tolerance and understanding; and women's empowerment in economic, social, cultural and political spheres. Women's full participation was stressed in all these processes. Grassroots women's groups were involved themselves in peacemaking and peacebuilding because of concerns for their families'

¹²⁸ U.N., 1992, p. 8

¹²⁹ Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

survival and knowledge that women and children are the primary casualties of indirect and direct violence during armed conflict.

Women at grassroots emphasized the centrality of psychosocial (psychological responses situated within the context of community) and basic human needs, such as food, shelter and safety, far more than governmental organizations and NGOs.¹³⁰ This was for many grassroots women's groups, peacebuilding means securing food for the family and a future for children. Issues of structural violence such as the economics of poverty and the degradation of the environment are of primary concern for many grassroots women. Degodia and Ajuran women's grassroots peacebuilding was frequently personal, interpersonal, creative and political. They used imaginative activities to protest violence and advocate peace such as the wearing of cloths which symbolised to protest violence, employing theatre, holding demonstrations, vigils, peace camps, and peace walks. In some instances where the most creative approaches were employed, conditions were very dangerous.¹³¹

Women from the two communities also demanded accountability and an end to violence, protesting when no other groups dared. Grassroots women's group often worked through networks and coalitions whereby women met to strategize, gain energy, and push for peace at both local and regional levels. Above all, grassroots peacebuilding was practical. It meant stopping the fighting, and women's groups organized towards this aim. The Wajir Children for Peace is the Degodia and Ajuran women's Voice for Peace. This group is made up of women from the warring factions in the county, seeking solutions to women's and men's violence.¹³²

The rationale for grass root women's organizing was often based on beliefs that women are by nature often noble and because they are mothers more caring, peaceful, and nonviolent.¹³³ This research found out that there is nothing inherently (biologically) more peaceful about women than men although women may be socially conditioned to exhibit more peaceful qualities. Patriarchy works through various races, ethnic, and class lines, religions, and nationalism to

¹³⁰ Mohamed A.M., "The Role of Somali Women in the Search for Peace", in UNESCO, *War and Peace in Africa*, Paris: UNESCO Workshops, 2003, pp. 75-110.

¹³¹ *Ibid*

¹³² Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

¹³³ Agosin,
1993; Ruddick, 1982, 1990

encourage and involve women in violence. The research has shown that, although women are often essential to the perpetration of violence, and they have acted to support and encourage it, they have also greatly contributed in ending the conflict.¹³⁴

5.4 The Role of Degodia and Ajuran Women in peace restoration and reconciliation.

Both secular and religious women's groups work for peace at the grassroots level. The role of churches and Mosques in Wajir County in preventing and ameliorating the effects of destructive conflict is significant because the two religious groups are frequently well placed to mediate conflict and advocate for peace. Churches and Mosques are close to local communities and understand the human costs of conflicts. They may have more resources than NGOs. Also, their personal contacts are important for example, newsletters, religious sermons and visits, and often they are a public site of gathering and strength for women.¹³⁵ Because spiritual beliefs of women's religious peacebuilding groups are a foundation for their actions, activities to promote forgiveness and reconciliation are often emphasized. Despite this, in their peacebuilding work, women's religious groups frequently critique patriarchal behaviours fostered by religion, such as the domination of women by men within the religious hierarchy. Similarly, secular women's peacebuilding groups in Wajir critiqued patriarchal practices perpetuating the war system.¹³⁶

Grassroots women's organizations, whether religious or secular, often emphasized reconciliation although their foci may differ. Spiritual reconciliation, a change of heart, emphasizes atonement and forgiveness. In contrast, secular reconciliation more often emphasizes justice, a key issue for women who seek gender justice through the prosecution of perpetrators and the acknowledgment of governments' wrongdoing because of rapes, sexual slavery, and other forms of violence against women. For instance, grassroots groups have worked for gender justice in the aftermath of conflict perpetuated against women in Wajir such as massive rapes by security agents during the Wagalla massacre in 1984.¹³⁷ The women have for long sought redress and apology from the government for the sexual abuse against the Somali women.

¹³⁴ Afkhami, 1995; African Rights, 1995

¹³⁵ Oral interview, Habiba Ali, (50 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

¹³⁶ *Ibid*

¹³⁷ Salah Abdi Sheikh of an advocacy group called the Truth Be Told (TBT) Network "Blood on the Runway; The Wagalla Massacre 1984" has a detailed story of what transpired.

Reconciliation includes bringing together former enemies to make peace, learning to coexist in peace, and defusing enemy imaging. Women's grassroots' groups often play instrumental roles. In Wajir Women's Movement for Securing Peace organized meetings of government officers and high-level politicians.¹³⁸ The eventual result was always peace agreements to stop the war between the two communities. Women worked to humanize the face of the conflict by emphasizing the situation of victims. They also served as mediators. More recently, women have sought to diffuse tensions between various ethnic groups, in particular, encouraging local women to take proactive roles in conflict prevention.

A major objective has been making women's concerns a priority at the local and national level and increasing women's numbers within the community's management organs. Through such an approach, women search for common ground and common understanding of the problems that affect the two communities. At market places, women's peace groups meet weekly, to reduce ethnic conflict, encourage reconciliation, and establish a cadre of women trainers in conflict resolution methods.¹³⁹ Degodia and Ajuran women have met frequently to work on common goals, and the groups have served as a resource on gender issues. It has organized round tables to promote coordination and collaboration among various women's groups. Additionally, support has been provided for local women's groups and women in displaced camps.

Within grassroots women's peace organizations, a persistent theme is the issue of militarism and its effects. Militarism refers to processes through which individuals, groups, and social, economic, and political systems increasingly become reliant upon, or dominated by the military like activities.¹⁴⁰ Grassroots women have organized to ameliorate the effects of militarism such as domestic violence, violence against women, sex trafficking, and degradation of the environment. Further they act to bring attention to concerns such as the proliferation of light arms, militarization of children, difficulties in reintegrating ex-combatants into their societies.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ S. Kratli and Jeremy Swift, "Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya: A Literature Review", Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK.1999

¹³⁹ Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

¹⁴⁰ Enloe,1993

¹⁴¹ IFOR, 1998

An effort to combat militarism and promote peace occurred with the gathering of a Christian and Muslim Wajir women in which they raised concerns on escalation of violence in their societies, particularly in the form of militarism. Together they discussed methods based on past and future work about how to best move towards cultures of peace. Other examples are women's peace groups which have asked for the voluntary surrender of arms to government authority. The groups have held ceremonial burnings, have buried these destructive weapons, and have worked to help children reject games of torture and violence.¹⁴² Women in the Wajir have challenged militaries' practice. Organized as a Committee of Militias' Mothers, they have hidden, lied about, and physically resisted the militia activities of their sons in Wajir. They also have pressured the Kenyan government for a nonviolent solution to the conflict, challenged the elders from the two communities and demanded radical reform of the way security in the county is handled.

5.5 Ajuran and Degodia Women's Participation in Decision-making

Another focus of some grass root women's peace groups has been to increase women's numbers and strengthen their effective participation in decision making bodies. These efforts are deemed critical to enhancing women's peacebuilding initiatives and capacities for achieving a just peace. The simple presence of Degodia and Ajuran women in local decision-making bodies is not, however, likely to have an impact without recognition of causes and processes of women's disempowerment and ways in which diverse women are oppressed. This knowledge must be followed by actions that facilitate women's empowerment. For example, the Degodia and Ajuran female students in Wajir have aired their views to promote women's voices in politics, increase the recognition and practice of women's human rights, and prompt women's voices in building peace and democracy.¹⁴³

Wajir based grassroots woman-led organization, Children of Wajir, works to empower local people toward achieving and sustaining peace through nonviolent forms of conflict resolution and violence prevention in their families' communities. Although the women are not characterized by open warfare, structural and direct violence especially violence, the women chose not to sit aside as their own homes and societies perpetuate violence. They opted to

¹⁴² Oral interview, Habiba Ali, (50 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

¹⁴³ Oral interview, Habiba Ali, (50 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

actively engage in peacebuilding.¹⁴⁴ They liaised with nongovernmental organizations in order to achieve their objectives. Nongovernmental groups often work in conjunction with local grassroots movements or they may involve themselves at multiple levels from international to local. NGOs, because of their linkages to both grassroots groups, governmental, and international bodies, they have important potential for influencing peacebuilding, particularly through the formation of coalitions. NGOs at local levels have grassroots knowledge of the psychological dimensions of conflicts, and they possess know how for local conflict resolution.¹⁴⁵ NGOs were therefore used by women as pivotal agents facilitating the capacities of locals to build peace, and these are often women.

One of the ways women and NGOs use as a weapon of effective peacebuilding is through building coalitions, thus linking resources of States and civil society.¹⁴⁶ Peace researchers such as Elise Boulding observed that in order for peacebuilding to be viable it must have roots in local peace concerns and the often invisible peace culture of family, neighbourhood, and community. Thus, peacebuilding should not be a process only supporting those in power but must empower ordinary people. Further, although governments can speed up peace processes, they do not invent them; local people do.¹⁴⁷ In coalition building, the process of building peace is emphasized more than are specific outcomes. Peacebuilding is thus approached as a dynamic and complex process made up of roles, function, and activities and involving interactions of many actors with varying skills.¹⁴⁸

Women's NGO peacebuilding develop programmatic focus on how they can facilitate women's peacebuilding. An important challenge to NGOs engaged in peacebuilding is to more thoroughly integrate gendered thinking into their work and recognize the critical importance of psychosocial processes, such as healing from trauma and relationship building, as integral to effective peacebuilding initiatives. Other women NGOs have always focused upon women and peace. They address issues of peace with women's oppression, inequality, and empowerment. They advocated for women's fuller participation in all stages of peace processes and negotiations. In

¹⁴⁴ Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁶ Kunugi, Boulding, & Oberg, 1996

¹⁴⁷ Boulding, 1993

¹⁴⁸ Lederach, 1995a; Lederach, 1995b

addition to fostering activism and coalition building, women NGOs have had an influential role in supporting research, policy development and capacity building.¹⁴⁹

Research on and for peacebuilding can play a catalytic role in facilitating processes of dialogue, consensus and coalition building, and policy development; it supports local specific projects. Some run the peacebuilding and reconstruction program initiatives. Such initiatives focus on developmental challenges of post-conflict societies. Emphasizing that gender is integral, all funded research must consider the differential impact change will have on the lives of both men and women. Also, gender mainstreaming, that is thinking gender about every program and project, is supported in all of their programs. Women NGO that fosters action research in peacebuilding touches on all aspects of life.¹⁵⁰

This approach views the central process of both conflict transformation and peacebuilding as empowering people within societies affected by conflict so they become owners of the peace process. It asserts that peace must be grown from inside if it is to be sustainable. Its extensive peacebuilding work in Somalia had as one emphasis the empowerment of women, within a broader aim of enabling women and men to work together for a new and peaceful Somali society in Wajir.¹⁵¹ Although women in Somalia do not have prominent decision making and public affairs roles or equal access to education, health services, and economic resources, they do play crucial roles in managing conflict and building peace.

An aim of such NGOs was to support women in these new and often difficult roles for example as mediators between clans and in re-establishing communication between hostile groups. They stressed capacity building for women, such as giving support to women members of local administrative councils and sponsoring workshops that focused upon topics such as conflict transformation, peace and justice, human rights issues, leadership roles, and democracy. Degodia and Ajuran women who work for peace at the grassroots level are organized around several major areas: human rights education and advocacy, peace education, dialogue groups of men and women, youth and young women making peace, and the engagement of women political leaders

¹⁴⁹ IDRC

¹⁵⁰ Oral interview, Habiba Ali, (50 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

¹⁵¹ Mohamed A.M., The Role of Somali Women in the Search for Peace”, in UNESCO, *War and Peace in Africa*, Paris: UNESCO Workshops, 2003, pp. 75-110.

on both sides. Most forums on the advocacy for peacebuilding are held jointly with the women from both clans in attendance.¹⁵²

Many sections of women in peacebuilding address issues of central importance to peace psychologists violence against women, women and the environment, women and the media, and human rights of women, to name a few. There is substantial interest to feminist peace psychologists because of its identified strategies that can be used by men and women throughout the world to improve the status of the world's women. The places emphasis on ending direct violence and also on seeking to ameliorate structural (indirect) violence so that societies are transformed to more equitable and peaceful ones. A section on women and armed conflict and women's initiatives to build more peaceful societies emphasizes nonviolence, equality between women and men, gender justice, recognition and honouring of women's human rights, reduction in militia expenditures and proliferation of weapons, women's contributions as peace educators and in fostering a culture of peace, cooperative approaches to peace and security with women's participation in power structures, and women's involvement in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts.

The Degodia and Ajuran conflict brought various changes in the women lifestyle. While certain women bravely took part in the conflict their experiences, had implications not only for our understanding of our history but also for current attempts to heal society. Earlier on, before the conflict, women were not seriously in conflict issues but after conflict women began thinking about the gender issues arising from conflict. Soon after frequent conflicts, women began engaging in discussion and reflection on early indications of exclusion or negative representation. Following this there was increased women's participation in the Degodia and Ajuran affairs. Women equally began to speak about themselves and also taking part in women's organisations and the media to discuss ways of bringing more women into the process. The conflict created the space for women to speak about sexual and biological violations that might otherwise have been difficult for woman in Somalia communities to discuss.

¹⁵² *Ibid*

An important finding from the field study revealed that Degodia and Ajuran traditional societies assigned to women the role of child caring. In this process, the women educated children on not only social life but on all issues that affected the society. Thus the most general implication was the understanding that peace was not born but made and that the culture of peace in traditional Degodia and Ajuran societies was implanted in a child through responsible upbringing and socialization undertaken and supervised by mothers. Indeed the central message was that peace building was taken seriously and established, little by little, in young minds and moulded the behaviour and personality of the young through the agency of their mothers.¹⁵³

From early childhood, children were exposed to a variety of songs, stories, proverbs and sayings directed by the mother or the aunt and conveyed at the fireplace or after the evening meals, which aimed at reducing conflict. The songs, stories, proverbs and sayings contained simple but clear messages and moral teachings. Certain myths given to children in those days were meant to emphasize the fact that to avoid war can sometimes be an act of good leadership. Some stories also underscore the negative aspects of conflict and hostilities such that these become a deterrent.¹⁵⁴

In order to strengthen peace, Somali customary law encourages people to uphold some principles and values, which constitute the basic pillars underpinning the culture of peace.¹⁵⁵ These values include, patience, tolerance, honesty, respect for elders, communality and mutuality, compassion, regard for due discretion, gentleness, modesty, self-control, moderation, flexibility, and open-mindedness. Women were at the core of passing these values that contributed to peace to their children.

The principles in question include tolerance, respect, and consideration for neighbours and inviolability, respect for human rights and equality. Indeed the importance given to the last two values is the Somali saying that, “everyone has a father.” In addition to the above values are the three traditional Somali customary principles, which state that the women and children cannot be killed and according to the Somali saying, “Whoever commits this sin is considered to be a

¹⁵³ UNESCO, *Women and Peace in Africa: Case Studies on traditional conflict resolutions practices*. Paris: UNESCO Workshops, 2003.

¹⁵⁴ Mohamed A.M., The Role of Somali Women in the Search for Peace”, in UNESCO, *War and Peace in Africa*, Paris: UNESCO Workshops, 2003, pp. 75-110.

¹⁵⁵ Oral interview, Habiba Ali, (50 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

coward and is ostracized. Killing women and children breed perpetual conflicts.” Equally, children are taught that refugees, the elderly and the sick cannot be killed. The culture of peace underlying Somali customary law also covers non-combatants and civilians.¹⁵⁶

A fundamental fact of traditional Somali society which the Degodia and Ajuran fall was the sacred character of the respect given to the elderly in general and to elderly women in particular. The elderly woman was respected by all, and played a key role in crisis management and conflict resolution. Thus, when a conflict degenerated into armed violence, an appeal would usually be made to a third party of mature years to calm the tension and reconcile the combatants. Such an appeal for mediation was usually made to a woman who enjoyed the consideration and respect of all who knew her. If war broke out sometimes the oldest women of the clan would go to meet opposing clan, and to interpose themselves between the fighters in order to make them see reason. When words proved fruitless, the women would threaten to expose their nakedness or to go down on their knees. In either case, the gesture signified a curse for those who bore the responsibility for such grave acts. Because of the respect that the enemy soldiers had for the women, they would usually put down their weapons before the fateful acts were accomplished.¹⁵⁷

When Somali clans fight and there is death, steps are taken to organize the collection and payment of blood money. A marriage or marriages involving the two parties immediately follow this. This kind of marriage occurs between a man who lost a brother or close relative and a girl from the opposing side. The main objective of the marriage is to heal the wounds and to cement the agreement/settlement reached by the two parties. In the support of the above practice, the Somalis say: ‘Where blood is shed, it must be soaked with birth fluids’. And the point is that the married woman will give birth to sons who will fill the void created by the men who perished in the battle. In addition, the marriage is designed to bond the two groups, and thus to minimize the possibility of another conflict erupting between them.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ UNESCO, *Women and Peace in Africa: Case Studies on traditional conflict resolutions practices*. Paris: UNESCO Workshops, 2003.

¹⁵⁷ Mohamed A.M., The Role of Somali Women in the Search for Peace”, in UNESCO, *War and Peace in Africa*, Paris: UNESCO Workshops, 2003, pp. 75-110.

¹⁵⁸ Oral interview, Alasey Yunis, (78 years) Wajir 22/10/2011

Equally, among the Degodia and the Ajuran, older women who could no longer conceive were used as peace envoys. Because women belong to both those considered to be inviolate and to the three whose heads are protected, they are shielded from war-related violations. In times of war women were the only one who could move across the zones of conflict freely and without much danger. It was women who studied the situation, assessed the prospects for peace, and facilitated contact and communication between the two warring parties.¹⁵⁹ For instance, the Frontier Indigenous Women Network organized and held small arms and light weapon campaign dubbed, “Pastoralist Women Small arms Campaign” in Wajir District of northern Kenya. The campaign started with development regional master plan on small and a peaceful procession that culminated with presentation of petition to government officials for action and collaboration on small arms. For instance on April 8, 2010 the Frontier Indigenous Women Network received a grant from MAYPOLE FUND towards campaign on small and light weapons. Women peace builders agreed that it was important and imperative for government to join forces with local communities and various organizations that works on community peace buildings, eradication of small arms and light weapons and cross border peace initiative in sealing small arms route, apprehending the arms players and couriers, sealing smuggling points and offer joint public /government partnership in addressing proliferation of small arms.¹⁶⁰

Women peace builders agreed that the government should mark recovered and surrendered small arms and light weapons and share the inventory of the same with various organizations and the communities so that suspicion of the same arms ending in wrong hand and fuelling conflict will stop. Women peace builders captured various conditions, factors, reasons, players behind the proliferation of small arms and light weapon in Wajir District .They also took part in the development the regional master plan that contains the wish and aspiration of general populace of Wajir District on importance of government adopting open door policy and forge partnership with local civil society and members of the public.¹⁶¹

The regional master plan that was drawn by pastoralist women contains details of two arms markets - Dhobley and Darusalam - located in Kenya/Somalia. The conduits and routes used to

¹⁵⁹ Oral interview, Habiba Ali, (50 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

¹⁶⁰IANSA, *Pastoralist Women Small Arms Campaign (Campaigns)*, New York: International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), 2010

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*

smuggle arms are through villages located in Kenya/Somalia border. Ten routes that are used in smuggling were listed. The players/couriers in the arms dealing in northern Kenya were mentioned and their operating bases in the border towns were mentioned. Thirty known arms dealers/actors were mentioned. Community driven small arms control was reflected in the master plan and the government was challenged to work with the local communities in addressing the arms routes, and players/couriers, amongst others. Small arm marking was another key issue in the master plan where the government was asked to mark recovered or surrendered arms in their possession/store so that they cannot end up in the hands of combatants in the conflict zones. Also the government was urged to open details of its inventory and store, and share with organizations and public the number of small arms they have.

5.6 Degodia and Ajuran Women in Post-conflict peacebuilding

The Degodia and Ajuran women worked hard to convince the elders in Wajir of the importance of putting an end to the violence. Each of these women began to talk to their people convincing them of the need to end violence. After these consultations, the women managed to organise the first meeting with the elders. Most of the men were prejudiced against what the women could achieve but soon managed to convince their men to peace talks. Although some elders were known warlords, the women managed to convince them to show or express a desire for peace. The women then used this elder as their entry point in their dealing with men on peace issues. It was a breakthrough in a society where women had no voice on issues of war.¹⁶²

The women then expanded their operational base to the youths particularly the male youths who were key players in perpetrating the violence. Through women influence the youth converged and discussed their role in the conflicts and its impact on the lives. They made decisions aimed to pursue peace. They accepted to contribute to a sustainable peace by helping in stopping the violence and to engage in development projects to rebuild the economic base of the communities. The youth later assisted to convince their fellow youth to surrender their guns and cease the violence. They paid visits to areas hardest hit by the violence, in anticipation of

¹⁶² Oral interview, Saney Gedow, (70 years) Wajir 23/10/2011

positive responses from them. By use of the youth the women managed to influence peace decisions among the Degodia and Ajuran clans.¹⁶³

Wives to fighters played important roles in post-conflict phase. They assisted to transform their husbands' ways of lives. Women contacted the spouses of militia members and urged them to help convert their husbands to peace building. When wives of gangsters were invited to join the women peace group, without condemnation, they joined and advised their husbands to leave their gangster activities. Some of them surrendered to the security personnel before being arrested. They were pardoned and surrendered the guns that they used in the fighting. Since the main explanation why they involved in mercenary activity was simply to earn a livelihood, the women encouraged peace workers to engage such persons in earning activities to sustain decent lives.¹⁶⁴

Even if women among the Degodia and the Ajuran suffered humiliation during the inter-clan conflict, there remained a great deal of human values that was only transmitted by women in the process of rebuilding the damaged Degodia and Ajuran societies. In this process, they remained agents of a genuine peace development. The foundation of women's role in the two clans as life giver and peacekeeper justified women, as agents, that sow the seeds of the peace which nourished the lives they gave. Because they give life, they were more concerned about what threatens life as well. The Degodia and Ajuran women, in their roles as mothers, spouses and educators transmitted the values that kept and promoted life. In conclusion the role of the Ajuran and Degodia women in the context of violence was to restore peace. The survival of the two clans depended basically on women as noted through their function as life giver and peacekeeper.¹⁶⁵

Just as Degodia and Ajuran women took up transportation and smuggling of arms, they were also at the forefront of activities for peace, ranging from spontaneous demonstrations by women who did not want their husbands, sons, fathers and brothers to take part in conflict. Women protested in front of government offices calling for strengthening of security in the county. This was an indication that they were against violent conflicts that characterised the county. Among the

¹⁶³ Oral interview, Ali Mohamed Abkula, (78 years) Wajir 25/10/2011

¹⁶⁴ Oral interview, Abdallah Kajaja, (59 years) Wajir, 25/10/2011

¹⁶⁵ Oral interview, Councilor, Dek Ali, (68 years) Wajir, 23/10/2011

Degodia and the Ajuran clans, that descent from the larger Somalia community, the traditional role played by women in peace and reconciliation was as peace delegates. Women, especially those past the age of fertility, were used as peace delegates. When peace had been concluded between two previously warring lineages, and their mutual claims for compensation had been satisfactorily settled, they exchanged virginal maidens in a gesture aimed at reinforcing the reconciliation just achieved.¹⁶⁶

One of the main concerns voiced in this section is the possible effects of business Degodia and Ajuran women in peace building. Conflict to these women was detrimental for two reasons: one, it decreased the incentive to promote positive economic development, as business men and women closed down their business activity; and two, it removed an important mechanism by which citizens can demand accountability from the government. This is because the conflict led to suspicion. With this in mind, one of the most remarkable impacts of conflict is the degree to which it causes isolation hence increased the political influence of the local business community women included. In the absence of governmental efforts to restore peace local people developed their own.¹⁶⁷

It is not difficult to see why the influence of the Somali business women community has been characterized in this way. They have provided nearly all financing for the series of local peace meetings. These meetings consisted both the Degodia and the Ajuran and helped settle local disputes and lay the groundwork for larger peace in Wajir. This influence manifested in variety of ways, some readily visible, some less so. The Degodia and Ajuran women business community also played an active role in demobilizing by providing rations to demobilize militia members and to aid the security agencies.¹⁶⁸

Concerned with the commercial consequences of the fighting in Wajir, women subsequently played an important role in restoring stability by funding peace meetings, providing resources for demobilization and the new security services. There was a synergy between the peace in Wajir and the local peacemaking processes, which succeeded in containing violence while crafting a

¹⁶⁶ Oral interview, Alasey Yunis, (78 years) Wajir 22/10/2011

¹⁶⁷ Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

¹⁶⁸ Zainab Mohamed Jama, "Silent Voices: The Role of Somali Women's Poetry in Social and Political Life", in *Oral Tradition* 9/1 (1994): 185-202

consensus and resource-sharing agreements that provided the foundations for new peace. Commercial interest played a large role in motivating local elders to address civil issues. As a result of the pastoral nature of the region's economy, cooperation and stability are viewed among the people of Wajir as prerequisites for economic prosperity.¹⁶⁹ This view is embodied "by the Somali saying *nabad iyo caano* (peace and milk or `peace and prosperity).

Access to pasture and water is assured through peaceful cooperation. Access to land and its usage was an underlying issue in the two clans' conflict in Wajir and a driving force behind peace there. In order for people to survive and resume their business way of life there was a need to re-establish cooperative relations over pastoral resources and trade. More recently, the women private sector has also emerged as a key player in the provision of public goods in Wajir. Business women in Wajir contribute to social services more directly by giving *zakaat* (alms), which aid people affected by any problem.¹⁷⁰ This reduces the conflict in any Muslim society which might originate from lacking essential needs.

5.7 Conclusion

Examples have been presented depicting women and peace building and some distinct approaches they may use. Women's peacebuilding may be informed by views of their natural peacefulness, religious beliefs, a mother's sense of responsibility to protect her family, or analyses which connect militarism with violence. Information about women's best practices of peacebuilding is not yet well known. This is because learning about women's peacebuilding has not been viewed with much interest by governmental and nongovernmental organizations or researchers. Also, because local women often work without recognition and use indigenous methods, they have been marginalized. Their actions converge on some issues, such as increasing women's presence in decision making bodies.

Degodia and Ajuran women's peace building initiatives are so divergent, reflecting particular cultural, historical and material contexts. Importantly, through their peace building practices, women are pushing acceptable gendered practices and spaces, and often they bring women

¹⁶⁹ Oral interview, Deka Iman, (63 years) Wajir, 29/10/2011

¹⁷⁰ Oral interview, Maymuna Aden, (72 years) Wajir 27/10/2011

together from diverse backgrounds and classes to work to end violence and build peace. Women's peace building practices can be of particular interest to peace psychologists because women emphasize processes such as relationship building, reconciliation, cooperation, and networking and other intrapersonal and interpersonal processes. A challenge for peace psychologists for the twenty-first century is to incorporate gendered thinking into scholarship and practice. This will require evaluating patriarchal biases with respect to the acquisition and use of psychological knowledge but will substantially enrich peace scholar's knowledge base and practice.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are insights flowing from a number of innovative approaches that explain women position in conflict or war scenarios; one is the point just mentioned which is that, as a woman, There are lay assumptions concerning the importance of women in conflict in terms of causes of war and pertaining to the notion of humiliation. The next innovation, a creative challenge for both the reader and the researcher, is the broad interdisciplinary approach envisaged here for understanding the issue of women in conflict, branching out from a secure base to aggressors.

The topic of gender and conflict requires an interdisciplinary analysis. Men alone cannot make its full contribution except in this broader context that recognises the concept of inter-gender participation in all processes within specific types of social hierarchy and a broader context of socio-political structures with distinctive patterns of historical development. I believe that this text, though thoroughly rooted in social sciences, will be relevant also for a wide range of other academic fields, including political science, sociology, conflict resolution studies and peace studies. Several implications make such gender relations in conflict work challenging. For example, cultural comments while carrying out research has to be kept as neutral as possible in the face of gender identities that all have their own rules, ideologies, and initiation rites regarding gender roles. Use of gender equality was avoided so as not to raise suspicions among the Somali community

As the title of the project indicates, two groups had to be interviewed, namely men and women from both the Degodia and Ajuran clans of the Somali who live in Wajir County which are the main conflicting parties. These two groups stand in a set of conflicting relationships, although there are more than two opponents, as is the case in most conflicts affecting Somali clans, the pattern, obviously, has more than two parties. As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the research on women in the Degodia and Ajuran conflict presented in this project draws not only on fieldwork in Wajir county, but furthermore on my experience as an Ajuran woman and medical worker who came in contact with women issues that came up as a result of conflict.

As has been explained above, studies in conflict most of which are based on classical initially favoured the assumption that man is aggressive by nature but this research does not maintain this assumption. Is man aggressive by nature? The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was taken by the idea of the ‘noble savage’ not that he denied violence between people, but in his eyes it was not man, but society who was evil. If thus society is evil then women are part of that society. As discussed earlier, actor analysis theorists see the world as being guided by actions which involve actions of war. Equally, proponents of International Relations theory although not used in this project teaches that in human society context the security dilemma is unavoidable. Men and women, amass weapons, to scare their enemies. To the Ajuran if the Degodia amass weapons, the Ajuran get more scared and equally the same for the opposite and thus an arms race and finally war can be triggered. In such a situation Thomas Hobbes’ social contract is often considered to be the only way to enable humankind to tame evil.

Reminiscent of Rousseau, William Ury argues that human beings are inclined to avoid violence. He points out that the archaeological record of organised violence and warfare is almost completely restricted to the last ten thousand years, and that this period is only a tiny proportion of all human existence. It, indeed, represents just one percent of the two and a half million years during which human societies have been evolving on earth. As discussed earlier in this work the security dilemma seems to be a cruel dilemma, a dilemma that makes human beings appear evil, independent of any debate about human nature (or the role of benevolent leaders). Hobbes argues that a ‘social contract’ for the creation and maintenance of super-ordinate structures can tame the evil of anarchic violence. But if the state fails then men and women tend to develop their own mechanisms that in most cases make them actors in the conflict.

It may be hoped that the current trend of globalisation its push towards growing interdependence and its potential for the framing one single humankind as the inhabitants of one single global village and the accompanying unfolding knowledge revolution has influenced changes in roles including bringing women on board as actors in both conflict and peacebuilding. With such changes, it seems very likely that global society will become more violent (atrocities, massacres, genocide, ethnic cleansing, terrorism) in the medium term. This is because of the dynamics already described by which degradations that were normal and accepted in ‘honourable’ societies

become unforgivable violations in societies whose members have been ‘dignified’ by the acquisition of human rights. And unforgivable humiliations trigger unforgiving responses. A related prediction is that only insofar as the global information society develops more egalitarian structures will the tendency towards atrocities be reversed, producing the peaceful society envisaged by theorists such as William Ury. Degodia and Ajuran women perceived their role as responding to the challenge of honour humiliation. By contrast, some took part in peacebuilding as healing the wounds inflicted by the conflict.

In view of the danger that the conflict would present, the two communities are fortunate that the influence and prestige of women are so great. Women filled three of the roles that Ury identifies for *Homo Negotiator*. Women are bridge-builders helping to prevent further violent conflict, healers binding the wounds of humiliation, and witness to the suffering of conflict victims in Wajir County. The fact that Degodia and Ajuran women are involved as peace mediators adds to their stature as peacemakers. However, women were not just trying to prevent violence within the existing structures. They also tried to change those structures. That was why women repeatedly proclaimed the need for a great increase in educational provision. It was a theme to which they repeatedly referred to. It was a deeply radical demand that women were never ready to compromise. They acknowledged that the knowledge revolution may be a core driver of the needed societal revolution towards peace. It would continue to break down coercive social and political hierarchies and empower an increasingly educated and peace workforce.

Empowerment means the disappearance of barriers to the free availability of information and ideas. However, empowerment may be accompanied by an increase in anger, namely the anger of the oppressed who discover that their subjection is an immoral attack upon their peaceful life, and the anger of ex-underlings who find that the current breakdown of oppressive hierarchies that sidelined women something which feeds their hopes for more equality and human rights actually coincides with a disappointment of these hopes through rising inequality and thus an increase in their humiliation. If the Degodia and the Ajuran wish to convert the healing, bridge-building spirit of women into lasting peace they seem to be well advised to begin by taking seriously the anger of newly empowered citizens throughout their communities.

The Wajir County communities may have to respond more constructively to the needs of the women if there has to be realised development in trade, investment, infrastructure, training, health services and so on. The Wajir people may have to adopt on a communal scale the strategy women have attempted in their peacebuilding efforts to produce an actual reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice. This will do much to answer the charge that the Wajir people are war like who do not embrace peace. When this begins to happen, then the investors who might assist in developing the county may begin to respond more positively to the people of Wajir's demand that they respect peace and development. If none of these things happen, then the pain and anger caused by unhealed humiliation caused by war could bring much torment.

In fact, the pattern of humiliation, flawed communication, disappointment and cynicism is not restricted to international relations. As discussed before, it also affects gender relations, human relations within the society, business organisations, and national politics. All these spheres of life provide illustrations that neglect of gender relations brings greater interdependence, society's vulnerability to conflict increases. This study has argued that the task of keeping conflict non-violent is made much more difficult by the deep wounds inflicted by humiliation. As has been discussed in this project the current dismantling of gender biased hierarchical societal structures is crucial for the understanding of conflict and its possible peaceful transformations.

Between 1964 and 1984 Degodia and Ajuran women mainly from Wajir experienced frequent conflicts as the two clans battled out. Some became internally displaced while others decided to be active participants in various ways either as promoters of conflict or worked to towards ending the conflict. This study therefore specialised on their roles in armed conflict. The main communities of focus are the Ajuran and the Degodia. The roles of women were generally well evaluated, from both oral and in written sources. The study set out with two principal objectives in mind; to demonstrate that women are a key component of society and cannot be neglected during conflict and to investigate and present a comprehensive picture of the roles of the Degodia and Ajuran women in conflict. The study identified the roles of the Degodia and Ajuran women in conflict. In order to assess the degree to which they participated, the study drew up an overall picture of the Degodia and Ajuran history. This study deliberately talked of the two

communities' history to enable the reader to understand the type of people the study is talking about.

This project explores the experiences of women in the two clan battles. It covers their social relationship in their communities upon which they relied on at different stages of their life. This forms an integral part of this account. My prime data sources were secondary and interviews conducted with Degodia and Ajuran women, men, government officials and NGO workers who lived and worked in the area. I also draw from firsthand accounts from other sources, including the testimony of victims of conflict. Their narratives consistently reveal the women roles, risks and uncertainties faced, and losses suffered. They also illustrate how the responses by the governments of Kenya impacted upon their safety.

There are a number of reasons for undertaking this research. I believed that the stories and events covered in this project are an important part of recent history and should be documented. Further, while there is a growing body of literature focused on roles of women in conflict, there has been very little research here or Kenyan Somali women in conflict, particularly of Degodia and Ajuran origin. The interplay between women and male roles is another understudied topic. Finally few studies centre the women voice one of the central intentions of this project. In each of these respects, I hope to make a contribution to the literature.

In the medical field Women who are affected by conflicts are given mental care to help them heal and cope in the new situation. Some of the clients were victims of conflict hence by the time I started my study, I had met, worked with, advocated for and befriended many women participants in conflict. A significant number originated from the former North Eastern Province of Kenya. Being an Ajuran I knew their stories well, and was concerned by the misinformation and lack of understanding in the wider community, fuelling hostility towards this predominantly Muslim group.

Structural functional and actor analysis theories are particularly well-suited to studies into social phenomena where there is little or no related research. In accordance with its method, I invited study participants to tell the story in whatever way they chose. This provided them with the

opportunity to talk about what they regarded as important and significant. As is seen in the main part of this project, women took considerable risks in the hope of eventually finding safety. In fact, themes around fear and insecurity resonated strongly through all their narratives as the reason to why they decided to take part in conflict. Less obvious but always present was the sense of loss and the pain of conflict.

The use of actor analysis theory in this study highlighted a secondary but major theme that ran through participants' accounts. Various organisations affected their lives and fortunes during conflict forcing them to be active participants. While women were not completely powerless, the relationships between them and their communities forced them to take sides. The women's narratives revealed the degree to which they were affected by the conflict and actions of the attackers. In their different ways, women like other members of these clans were concerned with security. In order to gain insight into this I drew on two main bodies of societal concern with risk and security. These theories do not suggest that life today is more or less hazardous or risky than in previous centuries; rather, it is that the notion of risk plays a more central role in our lives that forced them either to pick weapons and fight or build peace.

Women pointed out that the security factors had unexpected and unwelcome consequences, creating hitherto unknown risks. The research argues that steps taken by women to manage those risks exacerbated the situation, creating further risks, also unforeseen. The main body of this thesis relies on a combination of narrative and documentary evidence. The two bodies of theory mentioned above assisted me by providing a base from which to interpret and analyse, not only the events themselves but also the historical developments that led to their occurrence. These theories are not intended as tools for critiquing policy, rather they are used to understand why and how women's act as they do by placing their actions in context. This was the intent in the early stages of the project but as it progressed.

Women in wartime show tremendous courage and resilience as survivors and as heads of households a role for which many of them have had little or no preparation for and which is made more difficult by the social constraints often imposed on them. It is important to note that in focusing specifically on the roles of women and not those of men; the study in no way intends

to negate the particular roles of men in conflict. Neither this study nor the argument mentioned women as all victims. To provide a comprehensive response to the roles of women in armed conflict, the aim of both is to reinforce this response through a better understanding of the roles of women. Maintaining the all victims approach would have given incorrect picture of women. Women and men have different roles and responsibilities in society which are socially and culturally determined, and consequently they also experience armed conflict in gendered ways. It is important to recognize these differences and to adapt responses and activities accordingly.

Although women were sometimes victims or vulnerable individuals and recognizing their traditional role as well as the fact that this role is changing in nature owing to armed conflict, conflict whether international or non-international causes enormous suffering for those caught up in it. The study demonstrated that women experience conflict in a multitude of ways from taking an active part as combatants to being targeted as members of the civilian population or because they are women. Women's experience of conflict is multifaceted it means separation, the loss of family members and livelihood, an increased risk of sexual violence, wounding, deprivation and death. Conflict forces women into unfamiliar roles and necessitates the strengthening of existing coping skills and the development of new ones.

The results of the study presented women as an intricately complex concept that requires research for better understanding and differentiation. Conflict means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour or dignity. The conflict leads people to do things against their will and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what women feel they should expect. Conflict entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down or holding to the ground. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of conflict as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless. However, the role of the victim is not necessarily always unambiguous a victim may feel humiliated in the absence of any deliberately humiliating act as a result of misunderstandings, or as a result of personal and cultural differences concerning norms about what respectful treatment ought to entail or the 'victim' may

even invent a story of humiliation in order to manoeuvre another party into the role of a loathsome perpetrator.

Women react in different ways to being treated in conflict humiliation ways: some just become depressed, others get openly angry, and others again hide their anger and plan revenge. The person who plans for revenge may become the leader of a movement. A perpetrator might want to commit humiliation but not succeed, a ‘benefactor’ might humiliate while trying to do good, a third party might observe ‘victims’ who do not see themselves as such (or fail to see victims in cases where they do exist), or humiliation is sought instead of despised. The above reported observations by the study concerning the significance of processes of humiliation that triggered the research were confirmed by the fieldwork. Being exposed to acts of humiliation has in many cases significant consequences to the roles played by women. Children who are systematically humiliated may not be able to develop the full range of human capacities and become so severely damaged that they show signs of ‘affective blindness’ and lack of empathy. This affects their mothers hence becomes instrumental to their roles in conflict. Adults who are exposed to acts of humiliation may become obsessed with and caught within cycles of humiliation and counter humiliation that entail a whole range of conditions including depression, anger, and violent behaviour.

The Somali Degodia and Ajuran egalitarianism hierarchical structures, and recent egalitarian human rights ideals, though coexistent today, may be mapped onto human history, which, according to this research’s view, leads to both interesting and stimulating perspectives on history that are new and innovative in their comprehensive modelling of conflict. Conflict may be taken as a term that describes the core transformation of the human condition from peaceful people to aggressive ones. This notion of conflict describes the application of a universal idea, namely that something may be ‘put down,’ or ‘turned into a tool.’ This ‘downward push’ may be applied to explain why Degodia and Ajuran women become instrumental in conflict.

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