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Department of History
Master of Arts in Armed Conflict and Peace Studies

Project Title:

**Natural Resources Conflict in Kenya:
The Case of Meru and Borana in Isiolo County, 2008-2019**

BY

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DECLARATION

This is my own work, and neither a university nor any other institution has received a submission for a degree award.

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C50/79345/2015

I have given my clearance as the university supervisor for this project to be turned in for an exam.

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Date: 20/07/2022

Dr. H. MISIGO AMATSIMBI

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved mother, Lena Gacheri Ngaruthi, and my Father Sebastian Limiri Anampiu

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I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Almighty God for being my guide through my school work. I would also like to appreciate the University of Nairobi in particular the Department of History and Archeology for affording me a chance to undertake and complete my studies. Exceptional gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. H. Misigo Amatsimbi for his guidance and correction. Without him, I couldn't have completed my project. His constant mentoring, correcting and encouragement has seen me through academic process.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined natural resource conflict using the case of the Meru and the Borana communities in Isiolo County between 2008 and 2019. The project paper set out to establish the main causes of the violent conflict, the relationship between the conflict and natural resources in the county, and the impact of the conflict on the two communities. The research was guided by three hypotheses: the first hypothesis was that lack of equity in access to management of resources was the cause of conflict; the second one was that scarcity of land, water and pasture was another source of the inter-communal conflict; and the last one was that deaths, displacement and destruction of livelihoods were the major impact of the conflict. The study was framed within the environmental scarcity framework of Thomas Homer-Dixon. Research data was derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary respondents, mainly drawn from the affected communities in Isiolo County, were interviewed orally using a question guide. The secondary data was sourced from books and journals obtained from both online databases and physical library facilities. The data was synthesized and analyzed to generate this thesis. The study established that Isiolo County is characterized by ethno-linguistic and religious fissures, social fragmentation and the politicization of ethnicity. The results of these underlying tensions are manifested in discrimination and marginalization of some ethnicities in employment, wealth creation opportunities and access to developmental programs. Another source of conflict is the longstanding struggle over demarcation of the boundary between the Isiolo and Meru Counties, worsened by the migration of the Meru people into Isiolo County. Drought frequently reduces available pasture for animals resulting in violent conflict between the pastoralists (Borana) and the crop farmers (Meru). The outcomes of this conflict include displacement of people from their homes, loss of livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure, loss of lives, reduced investment in the county as well as the destruction and disintegration of social services. This conflict has also created a fertile ground for terrorism, which is inflamed by religious extremism.

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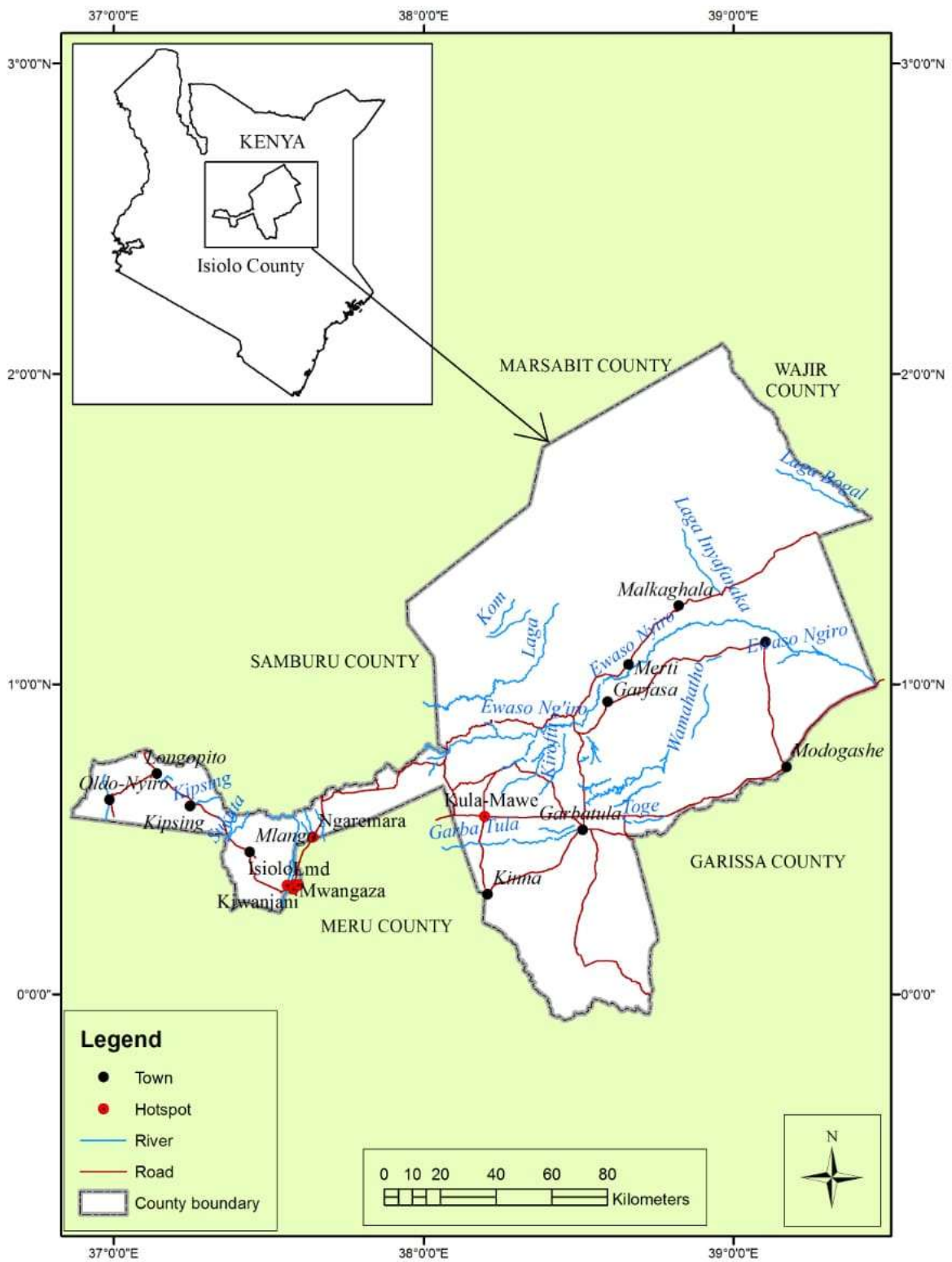
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MAP OF THE STUDY AREA



OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Natural Resource: Resources such as pasture, water, sand, land and animals that exist within the confines of the natural environment and are developed without the intervention of humans.

Resource Endowment: Refers to how many resources a polity has at its disposal to be utilized for development.

Resource Conflicts: Disagreements and conflicts over access to, control over and usage of, natural resources.

Global South: Broadly denotes the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It is one of a family of terms that includes “Less Developed Countries”, “Developing Countries”, “Third World” and “Periphery” and which denotes regions outside Europe and North America most of whom are low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized globally.

Resource Scarcity: The limited availability of a resource in comparison to the wants in a given polity and/or geographical locality.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHADI	Non-Governmental Organization for Eradicating Jiggers.
ASALs	Arid and Semi-arid lands
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCMF	Climate Change Mainstreaming Framework
CDF	Community Development Fund
CIDP	Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth Development Office
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
JKML	Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library
KAA	Kenya Airport Authority
KNA	Kenya National Archives
KPR	Kenya Police Reserve
LAPSSET	Lamu Port South Sudan -Ethiopia Transport
LMD	Livestock Market Department
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACOSTI	National Commission of Science Technology and Innovations
NDMA	National Drought Management Authority
NEP	North Eastern Province
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NFDLF	Northern Frontier District Liberation Front
PCCRP	Pastoralist Communities Climate Resilience Program
PREG	Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth
SALWs	Small Arms and Light Weapons
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of the study

Conflicts amongst ethno-linguistic groups have been a key problem in the developing countries, especially in Africa south of the Sahara, where some of the most vicious intra state clashes have been witnessed. These clashes have led to monumental losses of lives, forcible demographic displacement of hundreds of thousands either as refugees or Internally Displaced People (IDPs), as well as the significant destruction of property and infrastructure. Conflict systems, especially when demarcated regionally, tend to be ideologically influenced by the political systems or/and the belief of the actors involved. In most cases, the conflicts within the system have common sources and causes, and the fighting aims to achieve similar results. Conflict system, the conflicts, both present and past, are about inter alia national liberation, especially internal self-determination.¹

While conflicts are a perennial phenomenon across Africa, none is as salient as conflicts over resources. These conflicts generally occur over pastureland, livestock, water supply and cultivated land between villages. Its nature is that Africa is primarily an agricultural economy and therefore the probability of such war. While several historians contend that these disagreements date back to the pre-colonial era, in some circumstances. However, there are significant changes in the economy of the nations, such as land modifications that often violate customary rules, seizure of huge areas of land for farming and big-scale agriculture and population growth.²

The increase of the rural disparities between rich and poor / landless farmers, rich farmers and poor livestock owners is also a major observation across this conflict area. These changes have led to substantial rivalry for the few resources of the area where land is normally grown and/or feasible for grazing, and where there is water. In addition, the deterioration of the environment in land productivity and water shortages has added to competitiveness intensity. The grazing systems involving the transportation of huge livestock herds to places with water and the pursuit of pastures, particularly among pastoral communities, have produced a

¹ Makumi M. (2006). *Conflicts in Africa: Theory, Processes and Institutions of Management*, centre for conflict research

² Bujra, A. (2002). *African Conflicts: Their Causes and Their Political and Social Environment*. Addis Ababa: Development Policy Management Forum, p. 11.

significant problem. Private land ownership has limited these pastoral migrations by fencing their lands and the impact on pastoral communities has become devastating.³

Moreover, the severity and frequency of confrontations between herders and farmers are increased by recent phenomenon. Bandits have also part of the conflict, the attack both the herders and farmers and steal the livestock to sell for meat. In consequence, the pastoralists had to obtain weapons for their defense. Another occurrence is that highly coordinated and extensive livestock robbery from one pastoral group typically led by external animals, frequently using automatic guns. That is because the high demand for meat in urban areas and especially for exports has given livestock substantial value. This applies especially to the Horn of Africa and East Africa. The conflicts between Somalis, Oromos, Karamojong, Pokot, and Maasais are several examples of such conflicts in the Horn of Africa: However, large-scale disputes over cultivable land with ethnic groupings are not as common as pastoralist ones. Nonetheless, similar confrontations occur in locations like Kenya, Kikuyu's and Kalenjins vast rivet valley, Nigeria's Ife and Modakeke groups as well as Yoruba, Hema and Lendu Democratic Republic of Congo and Ituri as well as Ghana.⁴

This is true in many counties in Northern Kenya where a mixture of ethnicity and conflict over resources produces a potent brew of incessant resource conflicts. Ethnicity is partly to blame in the conflict in the Northern Region of Kenya. Different ethnic societies have different degrees of potential in conflict. At the foundation of conflict potential are ethnic sentiments, anchored in historical recollections of complaints. Ethnicity, as Donald Horowitz says, is an emotional aspect that can be easily stimulated by the group's concerns and which leads to ethnicity, ethnic intolerance, rivalry and eventual violence. Sudden structural changes (like communism collapsing in Bosnia and decolonization in Rwanda and Sri Lanka) are disturbing past political and institutional systems.⁵

³ Bujra, A. (2002). *African Conflicts*. p.12.

⁴ Ibid .p. 12.

⁵ Blagojevic, B. (2009). Causes of Ethnic Conflict: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Global Change and Governance*, Vol. 3, No. 1 , pp.1-25.

When these institutional processes cease to exist, countries confront a time of political and economic transitions during which the old is not functioning until the new works and the societal costs increase. In this setting, the political, social and economic future of the communities is instable and unpredictable - which Rothchild dubbed the communal anxieties of the future. Such a condition makes it easier for ethnic groups to express emotional antagonisms. In their search for power, political entrepreneurs use the rhetorical weapons of blame, fear and hatred to mobilize the ethnic electorates by creating inter-ethnic animosities. This leads to inter-ethnic competition on resources and rights, which accompanies the rebuilding, ethnicization and ethnic intolerance of the social classes of inclusion and exclusion.⁶

1.2 Background to the study

The northern area of Kenya has long been underdeveloped. The majority of Kenyans living in this area are practically excluded from livelihood improvement initiatives taking in the rest of the country. This has exposed the communities in this region to explore alternative ways of survival. The perennial competition for common resources – principally pastoral land and water – is also partly driven by the cultural practices underpinning animal raids as well as the desire for vengeance.⁷

In addition, the inter-communal war has been driven by the discovery of economically valuable resources, including oil, coal, gypsum, metals, sand, stone, timber, and water. The administration of these regions varies from community to community and leads to inherent inconsistencies, favouritism allegations and exploitation and discrimination against other communities. Access to water for animals and livestock, ownership of small irrigation projects and agricultural land, and political conflict are the main causes of conflict in Kenya's northern area.⁸

The most important economic activity of the communities in the northern area of Kenya is nomadic pastoralism. The majority of the nomadic population is primarily found in arid and/or semi-arid regions, where they rely on animals for sustenance. For their own existence, these animals also rely on having access to grass and water. These resources are scarce and

⁶ Blagojevic, B. (2009). Causes of Ethnic Conflict.p.4

⁷Ndiku, K. (2014). *Conflict in Kenya*. Retrieved May 29, 2014, from Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation, retrieved from <http://www.transconflict.com/gcct/gcct-members/africa/eastern-africa/kenya/conflict-in-kenya/>

⁸ The Kenya Red Cross Society. (2014). *Responding To The Moyale Inter-Clan Conflicts In Kenya*. Retrieved May 29, 2014, from www.disasterriskreduction.net/.../cross_border_peacebuilding_report.pdf; pp. 2.

under a lot of strain from nearby communities. There are widespread and growing concerns about conflicts among pastoralists in relation to the competition for resources, livestock rustling and the ready availability of small weapons.⁹

Competition for use, access, and control of increasingly scarce natural resources like pasture and water is frequently the root of conflict between pastoral communities, especially during the dry season when they drive their livestock and concentrate them in small areas with scarce pasture and water.¹⁰

There are some similarities in how young men from the Borana and Meru are socialized. For example, young men from both communities are supposed to take care of the livestock, although the Meru did this on a smaller scale compared to the Borana. Similarly, due to the frequency of cattle raids by the Turkana and Pokot communities in the region, the young men among the Borana became key players in securing their communities' livestock, water resources and pasturelands.¹¹

Isiolo County is strategic in that it occupies a geographically central location in Kenya and has great potential to grow. It is already serving as the focal point for infrastructure development that seeks to link Kenya with Ethiopia and South Sudan. The problem for the Borana and Meru in Isiolo County as these regional and national economic integration projects continue is how these advancements and transitions would coexist with resource-related disputes and violence in the region. The notable changes in the County's fortunes are affected by conflict and violence. These confrontations have put enormous social, economic and political strain on the area, curtailing development projects, leading to loss of human lives and the destruction of property.¹²

Natural resources are all non-artificial products that exist freely in nature and are situated either beneath the soil or on the surface of the earth: these can be harvested or extracted and used to generate income to enhance livelihood. Zimmermann argues that, neither the environment nor part of it can be considered to be part of resources unless they are capable of

⁹ Pkalya, R., Adan, M., & Masinde, I. (2003). *Conflict in Northern Kenya: A Focus on the Internally Displaced Conflict Victims in Northern Kenya*. ITDG; p. 2.

¹⁰ Ardajila.com (2014). Moyale Conflicts: The Actors, the Contests and the Interests. Retrieved on 7th July, 2014 from www.ardajila.com/p=2625

¹¹ Sharamo, R. (2014). The politics of pastoral violence: A case study of Isiolo County, Northern Kenya. *Future Agriculture Consortium Working Paper*, 95.p.2. Retrieved on 30th May 2020 from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a089c4ed915d3cfd000408/FAC_Working_Paper_095.pdf

¹² Sharamo, R. (2014). The politics of pastoral violence.p.3.

sustaining and satisfying human needs.¹³ The natural resources include land, forests (vegetation), water, water resources such as oceans, lakes and streams; solid minerals such as gold, silver, diamond; oil and petroleum gas; sunlight, air and animal stock. Wind provides wind energy; coal generates electricity; forests provide firewood, timber and paper; water for drinking and hydroelectric energy which are categorized as renewable and non-renewable resources.¹⁴

Renewable resources include water, plants and animals: their renewal depends on either human activity or natural processes. Non-renewable resources are minerals, oil and land. The cultural context of resource determination is an important dimension on how culture determines what resource is important and useful to them, what is important in one society may under a different cultural setting be of no economic benefit and significance. This cultural context of how some resources may be important to one society and not necessarily important to another explains why conflicts over natural resources emerge and the extent to which the violence grows.¹⁵

When two or more actors have discordant objectives concerning a given issue, they are said to be in a conflict situation. This may happen because the parties have different perceptions, goals and thoughts over the situation.¹⁶ The incompatibility of goals normally characterizes the conflicts, whether they are political, economic, competition over natural resources, labor oriented, organizational and communal /clan or international in nature. There must be a clear difference in opinions of values, relations, interests and aims. Conflicts over natural resources are normally among communities within the state; between groups across national borders; between communities and multinational corporations; between groups and the government; and one governments versus another government.

In this case, the study focuses on the resource-based conflicts between the Meru and Borana communities in Isiolo County. The study examines whether the conflict between the two communities emanates from the hierarchy, poor working conditions and remuneration, competition over resources, weak governance and constitutionalism within the country, territorial disputes, historical injustices, presence of militias and rebel groups, land

¹³ Erich Z, (1933). *World's Resources and Industries*, Newyork: Harper and Brothers. p. 3.

¹⁴ Judith R, (1994). *Natural Resources: Allocation, Economics and Policy*, London Routledge. p. 14.

¹⁵ Abiodun A, (2007). *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa*, University of Rochester Press.

¹⁶ Makumi M, (2006). *Conflicts in Africa: Theory, Processes and Institutions of Management*, centre for conflict research, p. 3.

ownerships, access to grazing lands for livestock¹⁷ or the inability of the state to manage the natural resources and prevent conflicts.¹⁸

This research presents an insight into the causes of the resource-based conflicts and the impact that the conflicts have on the livelihoods of the communities living in Isiolo County. The study mainly focuses on the linkages between resource availability, competition over the resources and ethnic conflicts. The changes in climate observed over a period of time in the region have increased the risks and threatened the well-being of the Borana, in particular. The high climatic variation has a direct effect on natural resources, like the availability of water that have direct link to the bulk of families that depend on plant yields and animal products as a source of livelihoods. Where there is a prolonged dry spell, there is a likelihood of conflicts as well as in areas where foraging resources are shared by more than one ethnic group. As individuals and groups in these communities compete to make the most of the givens of nature, their struggle inexorably heralds skirmishes. This, research, therefore, investigates and analyses resource-based conflicts between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County. The study seeks to assess the nexus between resource-based conflicts over foraging land, water, landownership and boundaries, stealing of livestock or cattle rustling, land grabbing, on the one hand, and how these conflicts have impacted the communities, on the other hand.

1.2.1 Isiolo County

The study is focused on Isiolo County, which was formerly a part of the north-eastern province and is home to the Isiolo North and Isiolo South constituencies. The counties of Samburu (West), Garissa (East), Tana River (South East), Kitui and Meru (South), Laikipia (South West), Marsabit (North West), and Wajir are neighbors, and it is located around 285 kilometres north of Nairobi (North East). The County is home to three national parks: Bisanadi, Buffalo Springs, and Shaba.¹⁹

Isiolo County is cosmopolitan, although its population largely consists of the Borana and Meru, with some minor presence of the Turkana, Samburu, Gabra, Sakuye, and Somali. The

¹⁷Makumi M,(2006). p. 20.

¹⁸ Abiodun A,(2007) .p. 15.

¹⁹ Otuoma, J. M. (2005). *Effects of Wildlife-livestock-human Interactions on habitat in the Meru National Park and Bisanadi National Reserve* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi). p. iv. accessed on 02/07/2020 from <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/26565>

Borana live South of the main 'Oromia' land in Ethiopia and straddle the borders between the two countries. Their geographical spaces stretches from Marsabit County into Isiolo County.

The Borana are an appendage of the larger Oromo-speaking people of the Horn of Africa, and they are one of the most populous ethno-linguistic groups in Africa.²⁰ During the devastation and partition of Africa by the European colonial powers, during the Berlin Conference agreement of 1884 to 1885, the Borana people were divided between the British East African protectorate (current-day Kenya) and the Abyssinian Empire (now Ethiopia).

The Meru are a Bantu community that lives on the north eastern slope of Mt. Kenya.²¹ With population strains in the two Meru dominated counties, Tharaka and Meru, the Meru have had to move out in search of livelihood in neighboring counties. According to Conte, this pressure influences the conflict between the two communities over resources.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

An endless cycle of strife and violence has existed in Kenya's northern region, once known as the Northern Frontier Districts. The war has spread and gotten more brutal in recent years. The push and pull factors related to this ongoing battle have attracted scientific interest.

Recent economic, political, demographic and environmental factors have necessitated the need for a nuanced and holistic approach to the conflict in Isiolo County. Although scholars have studied conflicts in other areas, not much has been covered regarding the Meru and Borana conflict in Isiolo County. Moreover, a number of issues have been left glaring. These include issues relating to the kind of resources available in the region; the impact of the inter-communal conflict; and the mechanisms in place to mediate peace between the two communities. This study has examined the central role played by natural resources in exacerbating this inter-ethnic conflict between the Borana and Meru in Isiolo County, as well as the inability of various interventions by government and civil society organisations to establish lasting peace.

²⁰ Legesse, A.(2000). *Oromo Democracy, An Indigenous African Political System*. Asmara: The Red Sea Press, Inc.

²¹ Fadiman, J A. (1973) 'Early History of the Meru of Mt Kenya'. *The Journal of African History* Vol. 14, No. 1 pp. 9-27.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the causes of violent conflict between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County?
- ii. How is the conflict linked to resources in Isiolo County?
- iii. What has been the impact of the conflict?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

- i. To examine the causes of violent conflict between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County.
- ii. To assess the link between resource-scarcity and conflict in Isiolo County.
- iii. To examine the impact of resource conflicts between the communities in Isiolo

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study is noteworthy in a variety of ways. It advances understanding of resource conflict and ethnic conflict. This is because there hasn't been a thorough investigation into the relationship between ethnic groups and fighting over resources in the northern area of Kenya, particularly Isiolo.

Additionally, the dynamics of the interethnic conflict have changed dramatically, with new trends and dynamics resulting in the practice's commercialization. Additionally, a fresh kind of predatory exploitation has emerged in the shape of banditry and cattle theft.

Lastly, the inception of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 saw the devolution of politics and the attendant haggling over devolution of resources. In ethnically diverse counties such as Isiolo, new anxieties emerged over the sharing of political power and devolved resources among the communities. This study, further, investigates the link between devolution and the inter-ethnic conflict in Isiolo County.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study was undertaken in Isiolo County and it covered the resource-based conflict between the Borana and Meru communities from 2008 to 2019. The year 2008 was selected because it resonates with Kenya's Vision 2030 development plan, which was launched by

president Kibaki in 2007. Under the *Kenya Vision 2030*²² blueprint, Isiolo was earmarked as one of the key areas to transform the country into a middle-income state. Isiolo County was chosen to host a major resort city, an international airport and a railway hub linking Lamu to Lokichogio and Ethiopia. This study argues that this selection of Isiolo County as a strategic economic hub heightened both the competition for ethno-centric resource acquisition and conflict between communities. The study ends in 2019, the year the country carried out its national population census, which also covered the living standards and way of life of the entire country. The study has also taken a keen interest in the status of the population before the census of 2009. Between 2009 and 2019, the communities in this part of the country had resource-based conflicts that led to deaths and displacement, which is part of the impact examined in this study. The areas to be covered in this study are Wabera, Tulu Roba, Odha, Gambela, Kiwanjani, Ngaremara, BulaPesa, Kula Mawe and town center. These areas are not only inhabited by the Borana and the Meru communities in large numbers but also experience perennial inter-ethnic conflict.

The researcher experienced a number of challenges including language barrier and suspicion among the respondents due to security issues associated with the region that led the government to install various police and military checkpoints on several routes in the county. To overcome the language barrier, the researcher sought the services of a translator (from the Borana community) who also helped to build confidence with the interviewees. It was a challenge to get the difference between the Borana, Rendile, Gabra and Burji who speak the language and share similar names and way of life. To overcome this challenge, the researcher employed the services of a research assistant to help in getting the right respondents for the study. Lastly, areas like Bulapesa and Kula Mawe are largely inaccessible due to poor roads. However, this challenge was alleviated by hiring a motorbike that moved us within the sampled area, which is mainly dominated by the Borana. In Bulapesa, the researcher hired a Borana speaking motorbike rider who also helped to build trust with the interviewees.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The study has employed the environmental scarcity of Thomas Homer-Dixon and the framework for violent conflict. This conceptual frame claims that renewable and non-renewable resources lack conflicts relationships. The dense population in a region causes

²²Ministry of Planning. (2007). *Kenya Vision 2030: A Globally Competitive and Prosperous Kenya*. Government Printer.

demand-driven shortages, degradation of resources, therefore, unequal resource distribution, and a structural shortage.²³ Matters are not helped in those instances where the imbalance is rooted in the institutions, class and ethnic relations such as those inherited from the colonial periods which caused poverty, which when combined with natural disasters and environmental problems, lead to political instability.

The author further argues that the dynamics of endowment and scarcities including crop, land, livestock, pasture land, freshwater, forests and vegetation, would directly contribute to violence. Similarly, the situation affects trade and economic relations leading to migrations of people from one region to another as refugees, thus generating serious humanitarian disasters that force the host countries to divert resources to humanitarian aid, which in turn leads to conflicts.

The import of this framework to the study is hinged on the utility of the study in helping us to understand the role of resource endowment, resource scarcity and resource abundance in inter-communal conflicts. Moreover, the theory is critical in assessing the kind of resources in Isiolo County, their exploitation, competition over their access, as well as the threat of conflict. The theory also helps the researcher to follow up the impact of the conflict on the affected communities. Additionally, the study examines how the colonial boundaries influence demographic patterns of resource access, use and conflict over resources in this region. Finally, the study analyzes the emerging dynamics of the conflict brought about by the selection of Isiolo as an economic hub under the Vision 2030 economic blue print and the role of devolution as catalysts.

However, Marielle Canter and Stephen Ndegwa assert that not all emerging nations experience violent conflict as a result of environmental deprivation. They reject the claim that fresh water is the most volatile renewable resource. Holding out the example of Lake Victoria, they note that its basin exhibits the conditions that would produce conflict. Using their research findings of 2000, they assert that “while environmental degradation is evident in the magnitude expected to trigger conflict, [such] violent conflict has not occurred.”²⁴

²³ Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1999). *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. P.360.

²⁴ Canter, M J and Ndegwa N. S. (2002) “Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: A Contrary Case From Lake Victoria.” *Global Environmental Politics*. Vol. 2 No.3. pp. 40–62, from <https://doi.org/10.1162/152638002320310527>.

Homer-idea Dixon's of environmental scarcity and conflict is also disputed by Indra de Soysa. Soysa bases his claim on contemporary development studies and political science research. He contends that relative plenty of natural resources leads to widespread socio-economic and political issues, while in other instances, it directly inspires "loot-seeking" rebellion and widespread armed conflict. Instead of being scarce, renewable resources are abundant, which not only prevents violence but also promotes greater economic, social, and institutional development. The findings cast considerable doubt on the notion of "Eco violence" as it has been theorized thus far. Rich resources encourage bad leadership, injustice, poverty, deterioration of the environment, and violence. Therefore, the obstacle to peace continues to be human greed and foolishness rather than mother nature. Unfortunately, given the challenges in influencing human nature, mother nature will continue to suffer.²⁵

The preceding contending views notwithstanding, this study adopts the Homer-Dixon framework since it accounts for the unique context in Isiolo County: it covers both the arid and semi-arid ecological zones, which are generally associated with resource scarcity and potential conflict. So, according to Homer-Dixon, scarcity reduces the state's capacity to meet demands while increasing those demands on institutions. When the sources of scarcity intersect, two patterns occur: "resource capture," in which resource depletion and population increase result in unequal resource access; and "ecological marginalization," in which unequal resource access and population growth result in resource degradation and depletion.²⁶ In other words, "scarcity of renewable resources - or what I call environmental scarcity - can contribute to civil violence, including insurgencies and ethnic clashes"²⁷. Homer-Dixon is appropriately circumspect when making these assertions. He is quick to point out that environmental scarcity is neither a necessary nor sufficient cause of such conflict; it has a minimal direct impact on many civil conflicts, and even when it does, its influence is generally mediated by social, political, and economic variables.²⁸ This study, which aims to analyze the patterns of resource/environmental scarcity that occur in Isiolo County and their role in the conflict dynamics between the Meru and Borana groups, benefits from this cautious approach.

²⁵Soysa, I. (2002). "Ecoviolence: Shrinking Pie, or Honey Pot?" *Global Environmental Politics* .No .2 Vol. 4, pp. 1-34, from <https://doi.org/10.1162/152638002320980605>

²⁶Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1994). "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases." *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 5-40.

²⁷ Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1999). p. 177.

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 23

1.9 Literature Review

In this broad section, the study explores and identifies the gap in the available research data on the causes of the resource-based conflict in Kenya. It also looks at the shortcomings of other peace-building initiatives, like security operations and talks for peace between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo. Therefore, this study takes advantage of the aforementioned limitations to add to the body of knowledge on resource-based conflict with an emphasis on Isiolo County.

1.9.1 Gap in Research

This sub-section reviews some of the key literature about resource-based conflict in the world, Africa, East Africa and Kenya in particular. Collier and Bannon argue that resource-based conflict is linked to three major issues. Firstly, is the challenge of rebels controlling areas with natural resources; secondly, is local resources being managed by international organizations; and lastly, agitation for secession by people who are inhabit areas with resources.²⁹ This study is relevant to this instant research as it points out the urge that drives people to engage in resource conflict. However, since there are no known rebels in Isiolo, this study focuses on ethnicity and resource-based conflict.

Opiyo *et al*, asserts that, it is the dynamics associated with socio-cultural, economic and political factors that causes scarcity of natural resources and hence conflict. This is simply because they increase competition, weaken institutions are as a result open loopholes where there exist political incitements, unclear property rights and illicit trade of fire arms, heightened.³⁰ To the writers the scarcity of resources alone does not cause conflict but the weak institutions do. This study raises a key question on how resources can cause conflict, however, the aspect of ethnicity is left out which the proposed study focuses on.

Hailegiorgis *et al*, posits that limited rainfall and droughts is the leading cause of the challenges that face pastoral groups both to their resilience and adaptive response mechanisms of their daily lives and hence conflicts witnessed in the region.³¹ The journal explains why the pastoralist fight among themselves over resources. The study provokes the

²⁹ Bannon, I. and Collier, p. (2003). Natural resources and violent conflict; options and actions.p.5.

³⁰ Opiyo E.O. F, et al (2012). Resource based conflict in drought prone north western Kenya: the drivers and mitigation mechanisms. *Wudpecker Journal of Agricultural Research* Vol. 1 No.11. pp. 442 - 453.

³¹Heilegiorgies B. A *et al* (2010). An agent-based model of climate change and conflict among pastoralists in east Africa. *International Environmental Modelling and Software Society*. p.7. Retrieved from, <http://www.iemss.org/iemss2010/index.php?n=Main.Proceedings> on 25 January 2020.

need to understand how scarcity of natural resources among pastoral communities causes conflicts. However, the proposed study focusses on the pastoral versus the agriculturist communities in Isiolo hence the significance of the research.

Ashton argue that for conflict over water in Africa to be avoided there was need for governments to come up with formulas on how to share and appreciate the true value of water. To do that more effort should be needed so that important approaches to water management and utilization on regional and continental scales are developed where all water apportionment and sharing precedence in the country are brought into line with national and regional development intentions.³² This article gives way how cooperation over resources by use of laws both within the country and regional bodies to save on water bodies. The question is ethnic aspect incorporated? As I asses the resource generated conflict in Isiolo, I intend to bring forth how ethnicity is linked to resources and how that can be used to bring peace.

Kagwanja, argues that regional bodies such as the East Africa community since 1999, have had frameworks to strengthen and sustain the usage of water from the Nile through the creation of the Nile Basin Initiative and Nile Basin River Commission.³³ His study focuses on state-to-state relations over resources while this research aims at examining the violent relations between the Borana and the Meru people over resources in Isiolo County, which is within the jurisdiction of Kenya.

Le Billon, posits that an alternative framework for resources would be a lasting solution to resources-based conflicts. To achieve that, he argues, there is need to avoid policy biasness which emanate from oversimplified reading of resource wars.³⁴ To the writer, there are three ways under which one could avoid biasness and therefore link the whole certain conflict to resources; understanding that some regions are in the periphery and hence uneven development, some conflicts are related to resources due to the narratives created by people for different reasons and lastly, is the interaction of resource accretion tactics and contestations in the peripheries. Therefore, to critically examine how certain conflicts are related to resources there is need to understand the relationship between spaces of production,

³²Asthon J. P. (2002). Avoiding conflicts over Africa's water resources. Royal Swedish academy of sciences. pp. 236-242. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4215243> on 21st January 2020.

³³ Kagwanja, P. (2007). Calming the waters: the east African community and conflict over the Nile resources. *Journal of eastern African studies*. Vol 1 No.3. pp.321-337. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531050701625565> on January 22 2020.

³⁴ Le Billion, P. (2008). Diamond wars? Conflict and geographies of resource wars. *Annals of the association of American geographies*, Vol 98. No 2. pp.345-372. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045600801922422> on 18th January 2020.

consumption and governance. The article raises important issues about how to relate conflict and resources. The writer argues ways under which that can be done; however, the aspect of ethnicity is left out which is the most important variable in the proposed research.

Salim Bilali³⁵ explores the nature of conflicts between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County. His research explores the origins of the disputes, their nature, their impacts on the communities, and offers suggestions for how to settle them. The conflict theory, rational choice theory, and social exchange theory were all applied in Bilali's research. He targeted the seven estates in Isiolo town, namely Wabera, Tulu Roba, Odha, Gambela, Kiwanjani, Bula Pesa, and Kula Mawe, with a focus on the central section of Isiolo. When using both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques, the target population included both adults and children who resided in the estates. His research demonstrated that the Borana and Meru disputes had either a theological or border (geographical) basis. My study, however, goes beyond Bilali's geographical scope and thematic interest. My theoretical focus is also restricted to one framework, unlike Bilali's approach.

In another study, Le billon, argues that revenues from natural resources such as timber, oil and gems have been used to finance conflicts. Similarly, they have been used to motivate conflicts and indeed, shape strategies of power depending on the commercialization and territorializing around those specific minerals. In essence, it is the vulnerability emanating from over dependence on natural resources by countries, communities and companies that result in conflict rather than scarcity or abundance.³⁶ The study shows the link between conflict, resources and how over dependence rather than scarcity nor abundance of resources causes conflict. It will be interesting, first of all to examine the kind of resources that are in Isiolo and whether they are scarce or plenty, and also if they are overused, hence, the conflict.

Alao, posits that ways through which natural resources are owned, managed, and controlled are what has caused resources- based conflicts in Africa, of course, with various underlining issues. To him, therefore, provided there are well established natural resource governance mechanisms in Africa, which encompasses local and international then conflict over resources can be avoided.³⁷ Although, the scholar does not view ethnic dimension as part of the key issue, more specifically, constructivist ethnicity as related to natural resource conflict,

³⁵Bilali, S. (2013). "The Nature of Conflicts between the Borana and Meru Communities in Isiolo County of Kenya." Retrieved from <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/60427> on 23rd September, 2021.

³⁶Le billon. P. (2001). 'The political ecology of war: Natural resources and armed conflicts.' *Political geography*. Vol. 20. pp.561-584. Retrieved from www.politicalgeography.com on 10th January 2019.

³⁷Alao, A. (2007).p.3.

the study is relevant as it raises the whole issue of the mechanisms whether at the county level or at national or even regional and international management efforts in Isiolo to help curb the whole challenge of resources-based conflict.

Elbadawi and Sambanis argue that African conflicts are not in any way linked to ethnicity, but rather high poverty level, failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources. They allege that this was based on the 161 civil wars that were experienced between 1960-1999.³⁸ From the authors perspective, it is evident that they did a disservice to the specialist of ethnicity, from the primordial (born within a specific ethnic group and therefore do what they do by imitation, tradition or culture), constructivist (acquired through conquest, colonialism or immigration) and lastly to the instrumentalism ethnicity (used to achieve certain goals, whether political, socially or economically).

Hendrix and Saehan, explains that variability in rainfall patterns impact both to large- and small-scale political conflict. To them, wetter period's experiences much conflict than dry time and therefore, there is a correlation between environmental change and conflict.³⁹ The paper raises key challenges expected whenever there is unpredictable environment that leads to unrest among the people. Although they do not touch on ethnicity, it will be exciting for this study to analyses the relationship between the Borana and Meru in Isiolo over resources with the changing climate. Does the change in climate heighten the conflict or reduce the conflict and what do people in Isiolo regard change of climate, is it when it has more rain or little?

Bernauer *et al* argue that there is no direct link of environmental change to conflict, rather than the changes witnessed through how the economies are performing and migration to conflict.⁴⁰ It will be interesting for the proposed study to examine how resources are linked to conflict and ethnicity in Isiolo putting in mind how politics and economic issues play out.

Nandelenga, examining how Turkwel dam introduced a dynamic in the Turkana and Pokot conflict, argues that water exacerbated the violent conflict between the two communities.⁴¹ This study is relevant as it shows how resources such as water are key to human life and

³⁸ Elbadawi, I. and Sambanis, N. (2000). 'Why Are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict?' *Journal of African economies*.p.1.

³⁹ Hendrix S. C and Salehyan. I. (2012). Climate change, rainfall, and social conflict in Africa. *Journal of peace research*. Retrieved from <https://jpr.sagepub.com> on 6th 12,2018.

⁴⁰ Bernauer T., bohmelt,. T and Kaubi V (2011). Environmental changes and violent conflict. *Environmental research letters*. Retrieved from <https://stacks.jop.org/ERL/7/015601> on 6th June 2017.

⁴¹ Nandelenga, A. (2018). *Water resource conflict in Kenya: the case of Turkwel dam and Pokot -Turkana relations, 1984-2015*. MA thesis. University of Nairobi. p.70.

ecosystem. The study highlights how the resource pulled people to this part of the region and led to competition and conflict that was not imagined. The study also shows how the upstream dynamics in Pokot territory over a historical River Turkwel heightened conflict with the downstream -Turkana. Although this study examines the conflict related to resources, it does so with focus to a number of resources, from land, jobs, water, grazing areas, business and not on the upstream versus the downstream discourse.

Kipkemoi *et al*, argue that natural resource-based conflicts have various causes which can be categorized as immediate, intermediate and structural. Similarly, these conflicts have got various actors ranging from pastoralists, farmers, fishermen, leaders, administrators, CSOs, NGOs, women, children and government.⁴² Despite the fact that the study talks of resource conflict without a link to a certain ethnic group, the study is relevant to the proposed research as it helps assess what triggered the conflict between the Meru and Borana in Isiolo and who are the players involved.

Elsewhere, in a study carried out in Laikipia by Bond, the findings showed that conflict emanated from trust issues, communications, security, governance, marginalization and violence.⁴³ Do the Borana and Meru people trust each other, is there some times that there is lack of communication, is Isiolo secure, is the government presence felt there? Those are some of the questions that the above study provokes for the proposed study.

Percival and Homer-Dixon notes that environmental scarcity conflict is so complex due to its link to other issues such as politics, social, economic and ecological dynamics. To the writer's scarcity appear in three ways; supply induced where there is degradation and depletion of natural resource, demand induced emanating from population growth and lastly structural scarcity that is due to unequal social distribution where majority of it is in the hands of a few.⁴⁴ Although the writers seem to examine the entire South Africa, this current research focuses on the conflict between two ethnic groups, Borana and Meru, in Isiolo. The research seeks answers to these questions: Does the conflict between the Meru and Borana

⁴² Kipkemoi, S., S Nyamasyo, G. M, and Musingi, J. (2017). 'Natural resource-based conflicts in Tana river County, Kenya.' *International academic journal of social sciences and education*, Vol 1. No. 5. pp.47-57. Retrieved from <http://www.iajournals.org/articles/iajssev1i54757.pdf> , on January 6th 2018.

⁴³ Bond, J. (2014). 'A holistic approach to natural resources conflict. The case of Laikipia county, Kenya.' *Journal of rural studies*. Vol 34. pp.117-127. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/jrurtud on 22 June 2019.

⁴⁴Percival ,V. and Homer-Dixon, T.(1998). 'Environmental scarcity and violent conflict: the case of South Africa.' *Journal of peace research*. vol. 35. No 3. pp.279-298. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/424937> , on 10th July 2018.

emanate from any of the two scarcities? How does it end up triggering an ethnic dimension? Are other communities involved and how?

Watson posits that search for energy power (oil) in the globe has led to conflict. However, he continues, it should not be fully blamed to the sole act of searching for power alone, but rather a combination of institutional limitation and unintended consequences of contemporary strategies.⁴⁵ The study enlists some of the key linkages between resource-based conflict and lack of institutional framework to address the gaps. The proposed study deviates to how resource-based conflict is either propagated by ethnicity or reduced in Isiolo between the Meru and Borana people.

Walter Oyugi, for example, posits that Kenya's experience particularly since the end of colonialism in 1963, shows that the country has been subjected to most of the types of intra-state upheavals. Citing the manipulation of ethno-linguistic nationalism for political subsistence in the advent of multi-partyism as experienced in the Rift Valley province just before the 1992 general plebiscite and the Mombasa skirmishes on the eve of the 1997 elections, Oyugi argues that Kenya's ethnic conflicts are cyclic in nature and they usually take the shape of electoral cycles.⁴⁶ While this research by Oyugi is concerned with the periodic politically instigated inter-ethnic violence in the Rift Valley and Coast regions of Kenya, the instant study examines the political angle to the Borana and Meru conflicts.

A study by Ndiku holds that the most common type of civil strife in Kenya among pastoral groups has been chiefly driven by access to shared common natural resources. This has been the case skirmishes between the Turkana and Pokot, the Karamajong and Turkana, and Turkana and communities to the east in Moyale (such as Rendille and Borana). He adds that these skirmishes are also fuelled by the cultural practice of livestock pilferage from rival communities and the concomitant yearning for retribution.⁴⁷ The analysis of the key factors causing and catalysing resource-based conflicts by Ndiku significantly informs this research, which then further to focus on the particular the resource-based conflict between the Borana and Meru. Moreover, a Kenya Red Cross report has pointed out that the presence of resources such as oil, gold, diamonds, gypsum, metals, coal, sand, stone, wood and water continues to drive conflict in the hinterland of pastoral communities. It also claims that official

⁴⁵Watson, D.C. (2010). 'Does the Pursuit of Energy Security Drive Resource Wars in Africa? The Niger Delta in the Energy Security Nexus.' *POLIS Journal*. University of Leeds. vol. 4. p.1.

⁴⁶ Oyugi, W. (2000). *Politicised Ethnic Conflict in Kenya: A Periodic Phenomena*. Addis Ababa.

⁴⁷Ndiku, K. (2014). *Conflict in Kenya*. Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation: from <http://www.transconflict.com/gcct/gcct-members/africa/eastern-africa/kenya/conflict-in-kenya/>

governance institutions in these conflict areas are frequently accused of mistreatment, selective preference and discrimination, creating fertile conditions drive conflict in the northern circuit.⁴⁸ The general findings of this report offer insights into the possible causes of conflict in Isiolo; hence, this study seeks to narrow the investigation into the resource-based conflict between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County.

Pkalya *et al* aver that the predominant economic predisposition of the Borana community is nomadic pastoralism, which relies on access to natural pastures and watering points for sustenance. Such resources are threatened and beleaguered by swelling demographic pressures. This often results in armed rustling conflicts involving herders, a phenomenon that is additionally compounded by the widespread availability of small arms.⁴⁹ In this current study, the researcher builds on the identified triggers of violent conflict and explores how they are manifested in the struggle between the Borana and Meru in Isiolo. Finally, Menkhaus refers to the northern region of Kenya as a ‘bandit’s kingdom,’ which evokes metaphors of poor infrastructure, belligerent people, weapons, enervating deprivations, and famished children. He holds that the marginalization of this area easily makes it Kenya’s “other frontier.”⁵⁰ In this research, the researcher examines marginality as part of the causes of the conflict between the Borana and Meru in Isiolo County.

1.9.2 The Gap in Peace Initiatives

To quell the violent conflict between the Borana and Meru people, a number of activities have been taken out, broadly categorized as security interventions and peace dialogues. The government has responded by deploying security personnel, detaining local businesspeople and officials who are allegedly fueling and financing the violence, and threatening disarmament efforts. Despite being frequently deployed after hours, the region is typically calmed by the strong physical presence of security forces.⁵¹ In addition to the threats of disarmament, there have been occasional police operations to disarm the warring communities but these efforts have not been successful since the security apparatuses do not establish a lasting presence. Allegations of human rights violations, asymmetrical

⁴⁸The Kenya Red Cross Society. (2014). *Responding To The Moyale Inter-Clan Conflicts In Kenya*. Retrieved May 29, 2014, from www.disasterriskreduction.net/.../cross_border_peacebuilding_report.pdf

⁴⁹Pkalya, R., Adan, M., & Masinde, I. (2003). *Conflict in Northern Kenya: A Focus on the Internally Displaced Conflict Victims in Northern Kenya*. ITDG.

⁵⁰ Menkhaus, K.(2008) "The Rise of a Mediated State in Northern Kenya: The Wajir Story and its Implications for State-Building." *Afrika Focus* Vol.21 .No.2 .pp. 23-38.

⁵¹Sharamo, R. (2014). “The Politics of Pastoral Violence: A Case Study of Isiolo County, Northern Kenya.” *Future Agricultures*.

disarmament, and the simultaneous disarmament of both the unlawfully armed community members and police reservists tarnished several disarmament initiatives in Isiolo County during the past few years. This effort has left some communities with firearms while others are disarmed, creating anxiety, tension and vulnerability, resulting in renewed armed race.⁵²

Additionally, state and non-state actors, particularly the National Steering Committee on Peace building and Conflict Management, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, the National Drought Management Authority, and civil society actors, have started softer approaches of community level peace dialogues. Different degrees of success have been seen for each of these therapies. In 2012 and 2013, the Isiolo Inter-Agency Forum, which consists of both state and non-governmental organizations, attempted to resolve the conflict. However, there was limited success reported for a number of reasons. Because of Isiolo's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and intricate political economy, it was particularly challenging to come to accords and pacts.⁵³

In Isiolo, the warring groups signed a communal Accord, and in meetings backed by the international non-governmental organization Safer world in mid-December 2012, their political aspirants reaffirmed their commitment to peace.

The agreement failed to garner unquestioning compliance from all of the warring communities and lacked control and enforcement by the security personnel, which caused it to fall apart before the ink could dry.

The other initiative was the creation of the peace committee between the Meru-Borana to resolve the border conflict but the recommendations of this committee have not been implemented. The government and non-Governmental organizations have also facilitated several peace building meetings between the elders, religious leaders and community members drawn from the Borana and Meru over the sharing of natural resources⁵⁴. The primary participants in the peace-building processes in this county are the national government, the national police service, the county government, the county security

⁵² Makau, R. M. (2018). "The Role of Devolution in the Resolution of Inter-communal Conflicts in Kenya: The Case of Meru – Borana Conflict in Isiolo County, 2012 – 2017." M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.

⁵³Sharamo, R. (2014). p.33.

⁵⁴ Makau, R M. (2018). p.5.

committee, community members, civil society, faith-based organizations, and the community policing committees.⁵⁵

The Nanyuki Accord, signed on December 20, 2013, by elected and local officials from Isiolo and Meru, helped to reduce tensions along the Meru-Isiolo border. The Ministry of the Interior and National Government Coordination oversaw this effort. The 9-month-long negotiations for the Accord focused on the value of peace and interdependence between the two communities. The Accord entailed boundary dispute resolution, review of military installations encroachment on private land, and a moratorium on establishment of projects on the disputed areas. A bi-partisan commission established by this Accord has since been barred by a court order from proceeding on account of absence of independence. Since then, there have been no new developments, and intermittent violence has persisted.⁵⁶

In Isiolo County, a trial project for alternative dispute settlement was also started in 2013. It revolved around a registered council of elders charged with mediating and arbitrating disputes in order to clear up the court's backlog and increase societal access to justice. This conflict resolution process was billed as apt at reducing court cases. Its other benefit was timeliness, acceptability and legitimacy among local communities. Additionally, it was seen as rehabilitative, paving the way for better relationships through reconciliation. However, political issues and criminal offences overloaded this system.⁵⁷

The County Government of Isiolo has tried to use its Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) to promote financial inclusivity across all the communities, constituencies and sectors. However, the CIDPs' efforts for gender inclusion frequently rely on unreliable outside donors and civil society. The county has also urged people to apply for assistance from the Uwezo Fund and the Enterprise Development Fund of the federal government. The lack of use of these funds by women and young people in Isiolo may be due to the interest charged—a practice that is thought to be against Islam—as well as time-consuming administrative and trust problems. Isiolo South, which has a significantly smaller population, distributed 5.5 million among 55 groups by June 2016, but Isiolo North Constituency had distributed its

⁵⁵ Mkutu K and Abdullahi B. K. (2019) “Rapid Assessment of the Institutional Architecture for Conflict Mitigation: Isiolo County, Kenya.” World Bank Group, March 2019. pp. 24

⁵⁶ Ibid pp. 25

⁵⁷ Ibid pp. 26

whole allotment among 200 groups. Both groups had a poor track record of loan payback, which restricted the fund's ability to grow new groups.⁵⁸

These multi-faceted efforts at building peace in Isiolo County have not succeeded. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the causes of this persistent conflict, the drivers, the impact and opportunities for creating durable peace between the two communities.

1.10 Hypotheses

- i. Lack of equitable access to resources and inequitable resource management are the causes of conflict between the Borana and the Meru communities in Isiolo County.
- ii. Scarcity of land, water and pasture is the major source of violent inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County.
- iii. Deaths, displacement and destruction of livelihoods are the major Impact of conflict in Isiolo County.

1.11 Methodology of the Study

The study has used both secondary and primary sources of data. Secondary sources include books such as that of Alao, who has written about resource conflict in Africa and the history of the people who are in this region.⁵⁹ From such books, the study obtains background information about the kinds of natural resources, movement and settlement of the Borana and Meru people in Isiolo, and how these factors impact the current conflict in the region. Journal articles explaining the lives of the Meru and Borana people are significant to this research. Articles and books that explain the region of Isiolo in terms of climate, resources and how the government has been involved in division of such natural resources, are helpful in drawing a link between resources and the conflict. Such books and journals articles have been retrieved from online data bases such as jstor and google scholar. Other sources of these materials were the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library (JKML) at the University of Nairobi (Africana section-4th floor) and the United Nations Library at Gigiri. These sources have been critical in the literature review that helped in building the history of the conflict among the Borana and Meru communities. The United Nations library has been important as many agencies have worked in the Isiolo region either for development purposes or conflict management. Such agencies include the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP) and the United Nations Childrens' Education Fund (UNICEF).

⁵⁸ Mkutu K and Abdullahi B. H. (2019). p.26.

⁵⁹ Schlee, G.(1989). Identities on the move. clanship and pastoralism in Northern Kenya. Gidion.S Were press.

Other sources of critical information are the reports of the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), the Concern world, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Safer World - organizations dealing with conflict and environment management in Isiolo. The reports help to identify the kinds of conflict in the region and the actors involved.

The primary data was obtained from oral interviews conducted in Isiolo County which is the focal point of the study. The researcher requested for an introduction letter from the Department of History, at the University of Nairobi, to facilitate the processing of a research permit from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), a required introductory document for data collection in the field.

In the field, the researcher was interested in information about the Meru and Borana people and why they fight. This primary data was gathered through interviewing selected respondents. The research assistant, who lives in Isiolo, introduced the researcher to the local leaders, the chief who will, and the informants. The respondents included teachers, *Nyumba Kumi* elders, church leaders, health officers and government administrative officers. The researcher purposively interviewed key informants from among the community leaders and government officers. Another set of that were interviewed purposively were women, men, elderly persons and youth.

Other respondents were church elders and teachers – both male and female. The two categories were essential to this study since churches and schools are important socializing sectors and agents. The researcher also interviewed one businessman and one businesswoman in the local market. Finally, the study engaged one community public health officer for information concerning access to health services. In these sessions, the researchers used open-ended questionnaires, face- to- face interviews and also focus group discussions for in-depth information.

The researcher collected the information from the respondents through taking of notes. In some cases, where the respondents granted consent, the researcher recorded the data electronically for further analysis. The collected data was transcribed, analyzed qualitatively and presented descriptively through narration, discussion, argument and analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND ON THE CONFLICT IN ISIOLO COUNTY

2.1 Introduction

Resource-based conflicts have been a common phenomenon in Kenya. From a global context, since the 1950s, the number of ethnic conflicts are unrelentingly on the rise. A considerable number of the insurrections and civil wars after the Second World War were waged in the name of ethnic self-determination or independence. This trend reached a peak after the fall of Communism when battles stopped being waged at the ideological front and instead shifted to the ethno-national front. Recent instances suffice: the ethno-nationalist upheavals in Bosnia; the inferno of secessionist skirmishes in the former Soviet republics and ethnic battles in Myanmar (former Burma).

In Kenya, ethnic conflicts have been perpetuated and experienced at a much lower level than has been experienced elsewhere in the continent. This section of the study sets out to explore the background to the intra-communal conflict between the Borana and Meru. It examines the historical context of this conflict, and traces the development of this upheaval over time. It delves into the causes and catalysts of the conflict while also identifying and analysing the key players in it. The section also the nature, trends, and dynamics of this conflict alongside the driving factors. Within this section, the researcher has analysed both the external and internal factors influencing the conflict.

This chapter, therefore, recapitulates a historical background of conflict in Isiolo County. It traces the conflict to the pre-colonial period and how the colonial period fueled and/or changed the dynamics of conflict in the County. Additionally, the chapter examines conflict in Isiolo County between 1963 and 2008.

2.2 Conflict in Isiolo in the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Period

Borana is part of an Oromo cultural group that is significantly larger. They are the most southern group of a cluster of over four million closely associated Oromo tribes, including Arsi and Guji (or Gujji). The Borana live in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. The Kenya Borana

migrated away from the Oromo and moved southwards to Kenya in the 1500s. Their population in Ethiopia is estimated to be almost four million people.⁶⁰

The Burji community currently lives in south-western Ethiopia and North Kenya, as an East-Cushite-speaking population. The ultimate root of Burji is also called the Amara-burji, which is found in the sixteenth century at a site named Lebanon in northern Ethiopia. However, there have been claims suggesting they were originally from the Amarro region on the eastern side of the Rift valley, Southern Ethiopia, and that traditionally they were great farmers, who spoke East Cushitic language. The Burji is commonly thought to belong to the Amhara of Ethiopia during the time. This perspective is supported by many factors: the name of one is like Amhara and the other is like Amara. Also, between the Burji and Sidama who have to do with the Amhara are substantial linguistic affinities. The Burji language has a lexical similarity of approximately 41%.⁶¹

At the end of the 16th century, the Burjis went in the west from Lebanon and established on the site called Abuno, which they had strong feelings about because of misunderstandings between Burji and Boran. The Burji moved to Barguda from Abuno. Shortly before the last settlement, the Burji divided into two tribes at a site known as the Mure. Wollo, Gamayo, Karama, Annabura and Woteish, came in through a group of Qarado, Yabbi and Umma tribes. In 1895 Cardinal Guglielmo Massaja calculated Burji's population to be one and a half million before the Abyssinian invasion of the Burji in 1896, but another historian Vittorio Bottego assessed the Burji to be 200,000 in the year 1895.⁶²

Conflict in the Isiolo region can be traced to the Borana, who, according to their oral history, once lived in Wajir County to the east as well as portions of what is now Isiolo County. However, recurrent raids by Somali tribes throughout the first three decades of the 20th century compelled the Borana to leave Wajir County. In 1909, the Borana were granted exclusive grazing rights in what is now the Merti district of Isiolo County by the British colonial rulers as a result. Subsequently, grazing rights were extended to the Garba Tula area as well. By the 1920s, the Borana were dwelling in a significant portion of Isiolo County.

⁶⁰ Strategy Leader Resource Kit Home (2012). *The Borana of Ethiopia and Kenya*. Strategy Leader Resource Kit Home. retrieved from, www.strategyleader.org/profiles/borana.html

⁶¹U.S. Center for World Mission (2014). *Burji in Kenya*. U.S. Center for World Mission. From, www.joshuaproject.net/peoplegroups/11027/KE

⁶² Ibid

When the then Isiolo District was demarcated by the British colonial rulers of Kenya in 1929, it was construed as a Borana enclave in order to thwart further aggressive expansionism by Somali groups originating from the Somali-dominated north east. As such, the Borana perceive Isiolo County as an exclusive Borana zone bequeathed unto them by the colonial government in order to make up for their forfeiture of land and resources in Wajir County. At present, they mainly dwell in four areas in Isiolo County: Garbatulla, Kinna, Merti and Sericho.⁶³

Moreover, like all countries whose origins is traced to colonial expeditions, land has always been a very emotive issue and a source of skirmishes. When the white settlers landed in the then British East African Protectorate, they asserted themselves in Kenya's central and rift valley highlands in what is known as the Highlands Belt, in effect displacing local communities. In Meru and Laikipia areas, these displaced populations would find themselves in Isiolo District. After independence, this colonial logic of land appropriation was adopted by the new ruling elites.⁶⁴

Up until 1928, Isiolo town served as a station for ox-trains feeding the Kings African Rifles during the British colonization of Kenya. After serving in the First World War, the British also settled former troops at Isiolo. Isiolo was established in 1929 as a district and a vital British patrol base to stop Ethiopian expansion. Isiolo then gradually expanded as a result of the thriving trade in livestock, cereals, and other diverse items, which was predominately governed by Asian and Somali traders.⁶⁵

The creation of ethnic boundaries amongst social groupings was greatly aided by the colonial separation of the northern drylands into tribal regions. In order to address the locals' sentiments of uncertainty regarding the tenure of their lands—and the colonial Administration's continued ability to give grants to non-natives—the category of "trust land" was created in the 1930s. In 1938, a new line was formed in the colonial land management policy between "native lands," which the Crown "kept in trust for those in actual occupation," and "Crown land," "for which titles may be given." Additionally, Africans were the only people allowed to use some locations, such as Isiolo. In these "African reserves," increasing

⁶³Boye, S R & Randi K (2011). Competing Claims and Contested Boundaries: Legitimizing Land Rights in Isiolo District, Northern Kenya. *Afrika Spectrum: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsbezogene Afrikaforschung* Vol.46 No.2. pp. 99-124.

⁶⁴ TJRC report.

⁶⁵ Mkutu, K.(2019) "Pastoralists, Politics and Development Projects Understanding the Layers of Armed Conflict in Isiolo County, Kenya." Working Paper 7/2019. Retrieved from <file:///D:/M.A%20and%20PhD%20>

resource pressure and land scarcity were driving forces that led to the 1952 Mau Mau insurrection.⁶⁶ The Meru first moved into Isiolo after being displaced by the British from their native land in Nyambene Hills. Then in 1954, Mau Mau Emergency spread into Isiolo, since some of the Meru were suspected of sheltering the Mau Mau fighters.⁶⁷

The Borana attribute the loss of their land to the Meru community to the unfair demarcation by the Boundary Commission of 1962. This is because the Northern Peoples Progressive Party (NPPP), to which the Borana belonged, boycotted the exercise, allowing the Meru to take advantage. The matter was also exacerbated by the Shifta war of secession. Further, the Borana blame the powerful Meru politician, Jackson Angaine, for exploiting the security operations in the then Isiolo district to not only settle the Meru community in the area but to also extend the boundaries of the then Meru district by hiving off and creating new divisions - Buuri and Nyambene.⁶⁸ On their part, the Meru have laid claim to part of Isiolo town as falling within the original demarcated map of Meru: they cite colonial records of revenue collection to justify this case.⁶⁹

The Isiolo Holding Ground, also known as the Livestock Marketing Division (LMD), is a region of around 124,000 hectares adjacent to the town of Isiolo that is currently owned by the ministry of agriculture and is a further source of intercommunal conflict. Before pastoralists' livestock travelled further south, the colonial authorities first built this holding site in 1952 as a place for quarantine and disease screening. There are several thousand semi-permanent residents of several ethnic groups in the region, which borders the counties of Laikipia, Meru, and Samburu.

Conflicts have occurred amongst communities over this area's management, with some purportedly claiming exclusive rights over various parts of it.⁷⁰ Isiolo district was initially part of the larger Somalia before Kenya's independence. This is why its Somali population formed a Separatist Movement that campaigned to join a "Greater Somalia." They joined their kin from Wajir and Garissa in the Shifta War, led by the Northern Frontier District

⁶⁶Roba, S. B, & Randi K. (2021) Retrieved from <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/afsp/article/view/463/461.html> on 23rd September, 2021.

⁶⁷ Mkutu, K. (2019). Retrieved from <file:///D:/M.A%20and%20PhD%20-%20FRIENDS/MERCY%20LIMIRI%20M.A/ISIOLO%20CONFLICT%205.pdf> on 23 September 2019.

⁶⁸ Bilali, S. (2013). "The Nature of Conflicts between the Borana and Meru Communities in Isiolo County of Kenya." Retrieved from <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/60427> on 23rd September, 2021.

⁶⁹ Roba, S B, & Randi K. (2021)

⁷⁰ Mkutu, K A and Halakhe A. (March 2019). *Rapid Assessment of the Institutional Architecture for Conflict Mitigation: Isiolo County - Kenya*. World Bank Group.

Liberation Force (NFDLF), which was eventually suppressed by the government of Kenya. The Shifta War contributed heavily to the militarization of Isiolo and the rest of the North Eastern Province (NEP) OF Kenya.⁷¹

2.3 Conflict in Isiolo County During Jomo Kenyatta's Regime (1963 – 1978)

The northern Kenya region in general, where Isiolo is located, has ever since the colonial period been politically marginalized. The victory of KANU in the post-independence Kenyan political system resulted in a further marginalization of the region and changed the land question from an ethnic to a class based issue because Kenyatta himself and other politicians started taking large areas of land in neighboring Laikipia County, driving the inhabitants further north.⁷²

During the Shifta War, the NFDLF insurgents established their headquarters in Garbatulla. They attacked the military and internal security installations and ambushed police and military patrol units. A state of emergency was declared, which imposed restrictions on pastoralists' livelihoods. It is estimated that at least 2,000 people lost their lives between 1963 and 1967 in the NEP. Livestock were reportedly confiscated, while residents were subjected to brutality and extrajudicial killings, which severely weakened and impoverished them.⁷³

When the Shifta War officially ended in 1967, the state did not undertake any serious disarmament; this left firearms in civilian possession, an oversight that has exacerbated banditry and cattle rustling in the wider northern region. Lack of commitment by the government to the region's security and development was later to violent encounters between the state and armed Somalis, which eventually culminated in the horrific Wagalla Massacre in 1984, on an airstrip in Wajir. The longstanding emergency rule over the northern region of Kenya was officially lifted in 1992. These raft of events have been widely cited as the contributing factors to the poverty levels among the Borana in Isiolo, who are also viewed as "Shiftas" (bandits).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Mkutu, K A and Halakhe A. (March 2019). *Rapid Assessment of the Institutional Architecture for Conflict Mitigation: Isiolo County - Kenya*. World Bank Group.

⁷² Kirchner, K. (2013). *Conflicts and Politics in the Tana Delta, Kenya*. Leiden: Leiden University; p. 7.

⁷³ Mkutu, K. (2019). "Pastoralists, Politics and Development Projects Understanding the Layers of Armed Conflict in Isiolo County, Kenya." Working Paper 7/2019. Retrieved from <file:///D:/M.A%20and%20PhD%20-%20FRIENDS/MERCY%20LIMIRI%20M.A/ISIOLO%20CONFLICT%205.pdf> on 23 September 2019.

⁷⁴ Mkutu, K. (2019). Working Paper.

Resource ownership in the County of Isiolo was not secured throughout the Kenyatta administration. In Isiolo, in the traditional pastoral communities, the group is the foundation for the governance of social resources and not the individual. In the form of tribal, clan and ethnic group, society was ruled by community organisations. Resources are community-owned and there is a common ownership regime. In fact, the security of tenure is primarily a high order in cases when the ownership of resources is scantily held. Because of the omnipresent significance of the resources in pastoral lifestyles, most disputes relate to the use of resources and tenures. Pastoralists rely on their animals to use their dry land's transitory products. Water sites remain the essential connectors for the use of far-flung pasture resources.⁷⁵

In relation to land, the 1963 Trust Land Act gave locals rights of occupation, use, and inheritance, but it did not grant the occupants and users formal property rights. Most land is unsurveyed and unregistered, and people use it according to customary rights without often having title deeds. Due to the lack of a clear definition of who truly controls the land, the Trust Land Act has also been viewed as being unclear. It granted the county council the duty to "give effect to" the rights and interests of local citizens, although it has frequently been misused.⁷⁶

The Meru say that a portion of Isiolo Town is located within the old Meru District; the location of the border is still up for debate today. The Borana who moved to Isiolo Town from the Waso region following the Shifta War are sometimes referred to as "recent immigrants" by the Meru. In contrast, the Meru who have settled in Isiolo Town are regarded as "recent comers" by the Borana. According to the Borana, the national post-colonial administration abused its power, which led to the Meru's current presence in the Isiolo District. As a result, the Meru assert their primary claim to ownership of the land in Isiolo as Kenyan citizens; as a result, the majority of registered plots in Isiolo Town are owned by Meru people.⁷⁷

From a resource control perspective, the elders who comply with communal regulations also regulated the usage of these resources. Their function, their protection, their friends and adversaries belong to a big clan of theirs, and in these communities even people identify fully

⁷⁵ Abdi U. (2015). *Resource Utilization, Conflict and Insecurity in Pastoral Areas of Kenya*. USAID Seminar on Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa. Nairobi: Kenya Pastoral Forum; p. 7.

⁷⁶ Roba, S B, & Randi K. (2021). p.35.

⁷⁷ Roba, S B, & Randi K. (2021). p.37.

as members of an ethnic group or clans, such that their clans and their ethnic groupings are called more than the names of an individual's. The property of the clan is considered to be wells, dams, administrative divisions. The clan safeguards the wealth of cattle and provides re-distribution procedures against losses. This was the cause for bloodshed and frequent clashes. In addition, the rivalry for natural resource extraction therefore becomes a collective problem. Alliances and agreed clan-level leadership structures manage the local grassland internal market competition. There are major confrontations between big groups which are recognized as being in ethnic linguistic patterns and who claim or deny occupying rights to grazing grounds for which no agreement on occupancy or usage has been reached or for which there is no alliance.⁷⁸

Clans also tended to build alliances of military kind with various clans, or even tribes that speak different languages. The 1989 Boran - Degodia Border held across Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia until the beginning of 1997, bringing together almost a half million people. The amazing dissemination of pastoral knowledge guarantees that, despite their ephemerality, the partnerships are observed scrupulously. In addition, the conflict is primarily due to the subsequent struggle for pasture and all partnerships have a more essential role to play in watering cattle, particularly during the limited dry season. These contests often lead to confrontations that all members of opposing coalitions have the capacity to participate.⁷⁹

2.4 Conflict in Isiolo County During Moi's Regime (1978 – 2002)

During the Moi era, there were low key instances of conflict in the first decade of his rule. This was largely due to the nature of leadership prior to multipartyism. Prior to the 1992 multiparty elections, Kenya had held five general elections under one political party system, three *de facto* single party systems and two *de jure* ones.⁸⁰ The apogee of the autocratic process of electoral processes was reached during the 1988 general elections which embraced queue voting commonly known as *Mlolongo* voting. The rigging prompted a heightened campaign to reform the process through the citizenry exercise their democratic right to elect

⁷⁸ Abdi U. (2015). p.8.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ African News. (2017). *A look at Kenya's elections history since independence in 1964*. October 25. Accessed August 18, 2020. From [www.https://www.africanews.com/2017/10/25/a-look-at-kenya-s-elections-history-since-independence-in-1964](https://www.africanews.com/2017/10/25/a-look-at-kenya-s-elections-history-since-independence-in-1964).

the leadership of their choice. With the rescinding of section 2(A) of the 1963 constitution, the year 1992 set forth the onset of competitive multiparty politics.⁸¹

After the liberalization of political competition in 1992, Kenya's political system has been characterized by the winner takes all system, which extends to the distribution of national resources. As such, the system has institutionalized structural inequalities coupled by marginalization.⁸² Echoing similar sentiments, Elischer is of the view that Kenya's political parties largely follow an ethnic conception of composition and are largely of three extractions, namely: the one-community party, the multi-communal alliance type and the multi-communal integrative type. As Elischer further postulates, while political parties in Kenya have been progressively incorporating diverse communities, lamentably, they haven't been able to bridge the country's dominant ethnic cleavages. As such, the multi-ethnic alliance type and the multi-ethnic integrative types of political parties embody tribal mergers of expediency and commitment and, thus, ethnic parties.⁸³

Since the 1992 elections, the greater Isiolo district was embroiled in a succession of ferocious clashes pitting the different ethno-linguistic groups in the county against each other. Between 1999 and 2001, the conflicts that gripped Isiolo were intensely violent in which a number of lives were lost, property looted or destroyed and thousands of people internally displaced. This violence was a response to the period Kenya was facing unprecedented pressure to open up democratic space by allowing multi-party democracy. To resist these democratization pressures, the then KANU leaders at the national government working in cahoots with traditional "ethnic kingpins/warlords" clandestinely organized, sponsored or encouraged ethnic clashes where communities that were perceived to be leaning towards the emerging opposition movements and political parties were being targeted.⁸⁴

Besides the political front, the conflict was also attributable to the perceived skewed distribution of land. In 1992, Isiolo County Council embarked on land titling using the powers given by the Trust Land Act. The Council undertook the process of dividing community land into plots, which were then given to specific title holders as private land.

⁸¹Kandie, Elijah. 2017. *Elections in Kenya*. April 15. Accessed August 19, 2020. <https://www.knchr.org/Articles/ArtMID/2432/ArticleID/1026/Elections-in-Kenya>.

⁸²Oloo, A. (2010). *Elections, Representations and the New Constitution*. Nairobi: Society for International Development (SID).

⁸³Elisher, S. (2008). Ethnic Coalitions of Convenience and commitment. Political parties and party systems in Kenya' German institute of Global and are studies. Working paper series. P68.

⁸⁴ Conflict Analysis Group. "Conflict dynamics in Isiolo, Samburu East and Marsabit South Districts of Kenya." *Amani Papers* 1.3 (2010).

This was carried out on a significant scale. The process involved publishing a notice in the national newspapers about the upcoming distribution of individual title deeds for property plots in a designated region (Tullu Roba) of Isiolo Town. After that announcement, many of the plots were really given to people who weren't at the time district inhabitants, and those residing in Tullu Roba were asked to leave. The county council continued to assign private ownership titles to challenged plots in other areas of Isiolo Town notwithstanding their refusal to do so. Borana as a result, the Kenyan government has not regarded communal land rights in the trust land as property rights. The Borana, who typically think that individuals who got land through allotment procedures (the Meru) had paid bribes, have little faith in this method.⁸⁵

It is believed that the methods used for allocating land have increased susceptibility and unpredictability in the use of land for habitation as well as for generating income. This is particularly true in areas where there is a lot of land demand, like Isiolo Central Division, where individual titles have also been distributed on trust property. Due to this, property rights are becoming more and more contested, overlapping claims to the same plots are appearing, and residents are becoming more and more resistant to evictions.⁸⁶

As a result, the local pastoralists were evicted from common land that they had long used and occupied. They have been refused access to land that was once classified as trust land but that others have now bought for commercial and speculative uses. Owners of conservancies have also been given access to a portion of the community land. The national government's land offices and the Isiolo council's handling of these allocations has been perceived as lacking transparency.

In recent years, fatal violence has broken out between local communities and conservancy owners amid a rising sense of alienation among the Borana from the Kenyan nation, which continues to feel like something very far away to them.⁸⁷

2.5 Conflict in Isiolo County During Kibaki's Regime (2002-2008)

When Kibaki ascended to power, there were inter-ethnic clashes in the larger Isiolo district manifested in cattle rustling as well as conflict over dwindling grazing resources. As opposed to the normal cattle rustling conflicts compounded by "livestock complex" syndrome, which

⁸⁵ Roba, S B, & Randi K. (2021). p.27.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS) (2016). *Conflict Assessment Report*.

is synonymous with pastoralists' communities in the Horn of Africa region, these conflicts were more intense and violent. After the 2007 general election, a pattern of violent and deadly conflict system started to develop in Isiolo district. This saw a parliamentary candidate from Turkana community mount a challenge for the Isiolo North constituency, a seat that was habitually occupied by members of the Borana. While the Turkana candidate lost the election, it was by a few thousands votes, an event that sent political shock-waves in the wider Isiolo District. This led to an upsurge of conflicts, mainly manifested by cattle rustling.⁸⁸

Since the Turkana candidate was propped up by a large chunk of members of Samburu communities residing in Isiolo district, the Somali community (mainly Ajuran, Degodia and Garre) living in Isiolo North constituency teamed up with Borana to frustrate this emerging alliance. The emerging scenario of alliances heralded the increasing incidences of conflict pitting the Samburu -Turkana alliance against that of Borana and Somalis with Meru, another sizeable ethnic group in the constituency leaning towards the Borana-Somali alliance and with end result being "punished," by the Samburu Turkana alliance.⁸⁹ With the proliferation of small arms and light weapons fueled by arms dumps during the Shifta War as well as by arms recycling in the Greater Horn of Africa, ethnic conflicts in Isiolo took a turn of intense violence.⁹⁰

As noted above, inter-community violence on the Meru–Isiolo border is influenced by politics. While the dominant community in the County is the Borana, they are compelled to negotiate with the others in order to secure elections. It is this inter-community political power balance that allowed all groups access to political positions after the 2007 general elections; however, because they are temporary, these alliances can shift and potentially lead to conflict.⁹¹

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

What emerges out of this discussion is that the conflict in the larger Isiolo District (now County) can be traced to the securitization approach employed by the successive colonial and

⁸⁸Conflict Analysis Group. (2010)."Conflict dynamics in Isiolo, Samburu East and Marsabit South Districts of Kenya." *Amani Papers* Vol.1.No.3.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Osamba, J. O.(2000) "The Sociology of Insecurity: Cattle Rustling and Banditry in Northwestern Kenya." *African Journal for Conflict Research* Vol.1.No.2.

⁹¹ Mkutu, K A and Halakhe A. B. (2019). p.23.

post-colonial governments in dealing with insecurity. Both the post-colonial and colonial states treated Isiolo area as marginal vis a vis the other the productive areas of Kenya such as the central and rift valley highlands. Fueled by colonial and post-colonial under-investment in their region, communities in Isiolo County were thus forced to subsist on scarce resources. Consequently, pockets of sporadic violence began to develop, starting with the Shifta War. The situation was further exacerbated by the inadequacies of the security services to exert effective control over Isiolo County.

The absence of effective state control led to the emergence of ethnic power structures. The historic ethnic conflicts are largely a result of this political state of affairs coupled with an attendant cycle of ethnic tensions emanating from the settlement of other groups such as the Meru and the Somalis given the fact that the land was historically owned by the Borana. The alienation of a portion of Borana land for special use by the state, the devious application of the Trust land Act to allocate title deeds only to the Meru, and the overlapping claims of ownership on Isiolo County by both the Borana and Meru – create a veritable powder keg that explodes into cyclic communal violence. After the inception of Multi-Party democracy in 1992, the emergence of inter-communal alliances to secure parliamentary seats further exacerbated the volatility in the area. Another key issue fuelling the ethnic animosity is the traditional scarcity of pastures and water: communities make conflicting claims over the available prime spots to the exclusion of others resulting in violence.

Finally, one more aggravating factor is the widespread availability of small and light weapons in the area, which makes it easier for the tension to escalate into armed conflict.

CHAPTER THREE

CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN ISIOLO COUNTY

3.1 Introduction

This section analyses the causes of conflict in Isiolo County. The chapter not only focuses on the socio-cultural, economic causes and political triggers; it also examines the role of small arms and light weapons, and how the latter has in turn influenced and prolonged the Meru-Borana conflict in Isiolo County. Finally, the chapter interrogates the role of political competition and migration in fueling this conflict.

In Kenya, natural resources have been the main drivers of violence among pastoral groups, such as between the Turkana and Pokot, Karamajong and Turkana, and Turkana, and eastward communities in Moyale (the Rendille and Borana).

In addition, the inter-communal violence has been driven by valuable extractible natural resources, including oil, coal, metals, sand, stone, timber and water among others. Similarly, the local governance structures are not inclusive of all the communities, hence, the recurring claims of exclusion and discrimination.

The predominant economic predisposition of the attendant community of this region is nomadic pastoralism. The populations mainly live in arid and/or semi-arid locations and depend on animal welfare. They depend on the survival of their cattle, which in turn depend on access to pasture and water. Such resources are few and pressurized. They have to be divided amongst communities of the pastoralists. There are widespread and growing concerns about conflicts among pastoralists in relation to the competition for resources, livestock rustling and the large availability of small weapons. This study, therefore, offers a great opportunity for the in-depth analysis of the nature and the causes of resource-based conflict and the effective prevention interventions.

3.2 The Role of Ethnicity and Religion in the Conflict

As a cosmopolitan county, Isiolo, just like other parts of the country, is characterized by ethno-linguistic and religious issues that determine socio-economic and political relations. This phenomenon of social fragmentation and the politicization of ethnicity makes Isiolo County a microcosm of the country's ethnic conflicts. In Isiolo, ethno-linguistic and religious affiliations are the primary identity. This makes ethno-linguistic and religious identity to be

the social sphere in which residents of Isiolo County tend to feel most secure particularly in the northern Kenya region. Tied to the historical conflicts in the area, Cox et al. further argues, levels of trust erode among various ethno-linguistic and religious groups characterizing Isiolo's demographic map.⁹²

Echoing the same, Van den Broeck is of the view that understanding conflict in Kenya should be construed within the prism of understanding social life and the conflict therein which is surrounded with ethno-linguistic innuendos. Moreover, ethno-linguistic affiliation often delineates and demarcates an individual or group's possibilities in the economic, societal, and political range. Van den Broeck argues that the region traditionally known as the northern frontier district reveals a region anxiety with continuous ethno-linguistic skirmishes. To Van den Broeck, calls on ethno-linguistic and religious markers are an indisputable part of the substructure of most skirmishes in the area.⁹³ Much of Isiolo County has a reputation for inter-community livestock theft. Idafin on the Meru border is where Turkana and Samburu pass to raid the Meru farmers: "The Samburu consider Meru cattle as their ATM." And River Bisanadi, whose origin is in Meru County, has become another source of conflict.⁹⁴

In Isiolo, these ethno-linguistic and religious splits are felt in a number of aspects. This includes discrimination and marginalization of some ethnicities in favour of others in employment and wealth creation opportunities and access to developmental programmes. In Isiolo County, this is felt with regards to the security of land tenure where there are perceptions that the Meru encroached onto Borana land courtesy of their closeness to the elites in Jomo Kenyatta's regime. These perceptions are further buttressed by the fact that the then powerful Cabinet Minister of Lands, Jackson Harvester Angaine, was a Meru. The Isiolo Town Council's decision to issue title deeds to the Meru for what Borana considered their Trust lands, increased feelings of ethnic favoritism when Angaine was in charge at the Ministry of Lands and Settlements.

Inter-communal issues that are routinely swept under the carpet as well as inherent historical injustices are the key drivers of conflict in Kenya that emanate from discrimination and marginalization include unemployment, horizontal inequality, and highly centralized ethno-linguistic politics. The net effect of this has been the marginalization of Pastoralists and their

⁹² Cox, F. D., Orsborn, C. R., & Sisk, T. D. (2014). *Religion, peacebuilding, and social cohesion in conflict-affected countries*. Denver: University of Denver.

⁹³ Jan Van den Broeck (2015). *Conflict motives in Kenya's North Rift Region*. International Peace Information Service – IPIS. Paris.

⁹⁴ Mkutu, K. (2019). Working Paper.p.35.

localities in Isiolo County. As such, the violent undercurrents of pastoralist mobilization and militancy underpinning ethno-linguistic and religious relations in Isiolo County are profoundly shaped by local conditions begotten from an age of disillusionment, isolation, and discord by Kenya's Cushitic communities. This is further compounded by the fact that the Christian ethos which defines the political terrain of Kenya which tends to alienate those who subscribe to the Islamic creed, to whom the vast majority of the eastern and northern eastern residents subscribe to.⁹⁵ There is also an ethnic angle to the management of the Isiolo Livestock Holding Ground, with fears that it has been exclusively claimed by one community at the expense of the others.⁹⁶

3.3 Resource Scarcity and Conflict in Isiolo County

This section examines the role of resource scarcity in conflict. Literature on conflict posits a very important link between the economies of a given society whether at the local, country, sub regional, regional as well as global level. Indeed, as many scholars have aptly shown through the analysis of empirical evidence, there is a nexus between conflict and the economy and vice versa. Collier for example, writing in the year 2009, would argue that economic conditions are important determinants of the outbreak and recurrence of conflict.⁹⁷

Wars typically begin after decline in growth, in particular. The risk of disputes appears to stoke strong economic slowdowns and low revenue per capita. Here, it is appropriate to investigate understandings from this literature, which also relate it to both growth slowdown and conflict human development consequences. The study stresses in particular the consequences of low human growth/conflict traps. In terms of the effects of conflict, one of the severe types of abolition of options and rights is the violent conflict, without question.⁹⁸

3.3.1 Resource Competition and Conflict in Isiolo County

The Meru and Borana communities are in a dispute over a variety of resources. The need for basic survival, such as herd mobility, access to water, and pasture, and the accumulation of livestock wealth for the Borana community, and the safety of their crops and business

⁹⁵Anderson, D. M., & McKnight, J. (2014). *Kenya at war: Al-Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa*. African Affairs, Vol.114.No.454.pp. 1–27.

⁹⁶Mkutu, K A and Halakhe A B. (2019). p.40.

⁹⁷ See Collier, P, Anke H, and Dominic R. (2009). *Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War*. Oxford Economic Papers, Vol. 61, No.1, pp. 1-27, Kim, N and Conceição, P. (2010). *The Economic Crisis, Violent Conflict, and Human Development*. International Journal of Peace Studies, Volume 15, No. 1, p. 30.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

endeavors for the Meru community, is what drives conflict between the pastoralist Borana community and the crop-farming Meru community.⁹⁹

In Garbatulla, for instance, respondents pointed out that there are holding grounds that were set aside by the Ministry of Livestock to act as breeding grounds, fattening and slaughtering livestock approximately 24,600 Hectares. Moreover, the National government has employed chiefs and assistant chiefs, and created centers and therefore created conflicts among the herders and the residents especially as a result of pasture and water, they have also built schools through CDF and chiefs camp. When people move to the areas which they are not supposed to be, this causes conflicts. The government is solving the problem by removing and dissolving the centers and transferring the chiefs to other areas or sacking them. The chiefs and the assistance chiefs in this areas help prolong the conflict so that they can still retain their jobs. If this centers are disbanded, then the residents will have to leave the land to the herders and the conflicts will be minimal.¹⁰⁰

3.3.2 Nature and Manifestation of the Competition and Conflict Over Resources in Isiolo County

Conflict among the two communities is manifested in a number of ways. For instance, Herders move from one locality to another due to scarcity of watering points for their animals in the areas they graze and therefore they move where they can access water points and these causes issue with residents especially if they go to boreholes sunk by individuals and water their animals.¹⁰¹ This is manifested through conflicts during the dry season.

Pasture lands conflicts occur mostly during drought periods, where most herders and their livestock move to areas where there is pasture and water in Merti sub-county and Garbatulla County. In Merti, Samburus and Turkana cross to Isiolo area of KOM bordering Samburu and Marsabit County in search of pasture and water. The influx of people coming into Isiolo leads to lots of chaos and conflicts leading to deaths. In Merti which borders Wajir, a lot of livestock closes from Wajir into Isiolo by Ewaso Nyiro into Merti that causes a lot of conflicts between Somali and Borana in Isiolo County.

⁹⁹ Mkutu, K. (2019). *Pastoralists, politics and development projects. Understanding the layers of armed conflict in Isiolo county, Kenya*. Future Rural Africa: future-making and social-ecological transformation. Cologne: Universities of Bonn and Cologne.

¹⁰⁰ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021

¹⁰¹ Field interview with Daniel, Chief - East Location Kiwanjani, 24th March, 2021.

In Merti, the government has sunk boreholes in the areas where the Borana graze their animals. The Borana and other herders have organized grazing patterns which have been formulated by their elders. The herders and their livestock move from one place to another depending on which area the rain is, running away from drought affected areas. They graze their animals around river Ewaso Nyiro during the rainy seasons and once the droughts start coming in and the water levels go down, then the herders take their animals to where the county government has sunk boreholes, meaning the herders are deliberate when they graze their animals, they first consider water points.¹⁰²

Another way in which the conflict in Isiolo County is manifested is in the tussle over which community should benefit from the LAPSSET corridor and its associated developments. The Borana community have a perception that their interests are not secure in the context of the large migration by the Meru community into Isiolo. As such, the Meru and Borana communities engage in low-level but noxious inter-ethnic skirmishes.¹⁰³

The LAPSSET Corridor brought a lot of conflict between the Borana and Somalis, as well as the Borana and Meru (in Nyambene). The conflict came about because everyone wanted to be in the area for compensation purposes. There will be a railway line from South Sudan up to Isiolo. Isiolo will be part of the focus because the petrol will be cleaned in Isiolo and then distributed. The land issue is a big problem as there are many plots owned by like four people and they all have documentation and survey papers. This issue has brought a lot of clashes between the communities in Isiolo County. The issue was a big problem to a point that the land officers were transferred to other parts of the country.¹⁰⁴

Overriding political schemas also gyrate around ethno-political rivalry among groups for power to control and take over the reins of power in the Isiolo County government. Through such political dominance, ethnic groups seek to accrue economic means to spawn wealth and improve their positions in relation to rival communities. During the 2012 pre-election period for instance, the merging of districts and electoral boundaries under the county arrangement created new avenues for skirmishes whereby local populations particularly of the Meru community in lower districts of the then larger Isiolo felt that their control over territories were under threat. This situation was compounded by tribal alliances that were being

¹⁰² Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

¹⁰³ Mkutu, K (2019).p.67.

¹⁰⁴ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

contrived in order to exclude some communities so that others share the spoils that will come in the shape of county elective positions.¹⁰⁵

The Borana do not want the Meru to have political positions in the county. In 2017, the county government was taken over by Borana from MCA to Governorship positions, no Meru has political position. The Borana want all the positions to themselves. The Borana funds like 10 Meru aspirants on a particular position and then they support one Borana candidate. The votes for the Meru are normally being distributed to the 10 candidates and then none of the Meru gets the position and on the contrary the Borana wins the position because they had supported one aspirant. They ensure that their person wins.¹⁰⁶

The perceptions harbored by the Meru community of being marginalized due to lack of sufficient electoral numbers have fueled conflict even as the Borana community feel that the new numbers being marshalled by communities such as the Meru are increasingly detrimental to their continued dominance in an area, they deem their exclusive zone.¹⁰⁷

Conservancies for example Lewa downs, which are funded by donors create their own soldiers, buy guns and weapons to assist some communities to fight raiders. They foster incitement and cattle rustling through Turkana indirectly to steal and enrich themselves especially during the wet seasons.¹⁰⁸

In the Meru Isiolo border, there have been conflicts as regards to the location of the border. The Meru County government for instance has been carrying out surveys and adjudication, placing beacons and giving title deeds in disputed areas such as Mwangaza, Checheles, Gambera, Ngaremara, and Kiwanjani. These sentiments are echoed by respondents who point out at the role of the adjudication process in propagating conflict.

In 2016, the government gazetted areas bordering Ngaremara and Tigania East to be adjudicated and subdivided into plots for the people in the area to be allocated land. The process brought a lot of issues between Turkana, Samburus, Borana, Somalis and Meru. When this adjudication process started, Tiganias from Kianjai, Muriri and Muthara went to the place to also claim that the land being adjudicated belongs to Meru, and they went to court to stop the subdivision against the Borana, Turkana, Samburus and Somalis.

It is also fair to note that the other four communities are also residents of Tigania as much as they are majorly in Isiolo County. This adjudication process brought a lot of issues between

¹⁰⁵ Roba S, (2014). The Politics of Pastoral Violence: A Case Study of Isiolo County, Northern Kenya.

¹⁰⁶ Field interview with Mzee Karuti, a shoe shiner in Isiolo town, 22nd March, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Isiolo County conflict analysis. June 19 2015 Saferworld. <https://D:/M.A%20and%20PhD%20-%20FRIENDS/MERCY%20LIMIRI%20M.A/ISIOLO%20CONFLICT%201.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

the communities causing the communities not to accept each other and harbor hatred and malice.¹⁰⁹

Electoral border rows and tribal assertions over land including endeavors to lengthen boundaries and to “reclaim” the ground that they view as one that they erroneously lost have also rocketed. Many entrants contending for political positions in Isiolo County such as the gubernatorial and senatorial positions have pegged their campaigns on a podium of protecting or pressing forward with tribal interests, a factor that is compounding local tensions.¹¹⁰

In the county of Isiolo, the young were generally fingered as the major violent culprits. Building up, mobilizing, planning and funding of ethnic and clan violence involves economic and political elite, by contrast. In Isiolo County women have been known to encourage and help males engage in community violence, while women tend to be the most impacted.

Women are also catalysts of the conflicts, especially from Samburus and Turkana, at night the sing war songs to incite their husbands and sons to go to war, they sing as follows, ‘if you go out to get livestock and kill men, that’s when you will get wives’. In these communities, no conflict goes on if the women say no to it. They largely influence their men and sons to fight. If their sons defy them, then their mothers will curse them.¹¹¹

There is perceived nepotism in the county; qualified members of the Meru community are given appointment letters for jobs in the county but when they report to work, they find that their names have been removed from the confirmed list, compelling them to surrender the letters of appointment. Thereafter, their jobs are given to the Borana.¹¹²

3.3.3 Land Tenure Conflicts

Another source of conflict in pastoral areas such as Isiolo County emanates from land tenure. As a livelihood and a production system, pastoralism in Isiolo County is practiced owing to the fact that the County comprises of vast arid lands. These vast arid lands cannot support any other sustained livelihood such as agriculture due to the extreme weather patterns and climate change. As such, Jilo further argues, Isiolo’s lands can only support a resilient and mobile pastoralist based economic production system in order to harness the givens of the lands. Due to their concentration on a geographical location deemed unproductive by the state, pastoral

¹⁰⁹ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

¹¹⁰Abdullahi A, (2017), Ethnic Contest and Electoral Violence in Northern Kenya. International Crisis Group. Retrieved on 28th April, 2021 from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/ethnic-contest-and-electoral-violence-northern-kenya>.

¹¹¹ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

¹¹² Field interview with Rebecca, High school teacher, 25th March, 2021.

lands in Isiolo, just like in many areas in the northern region of Kenya, are generally perceived by the national government as marginal with little economic potential and as such, devoid of the need for land security.¹¹³

Land in Isiolo has no titles, so people encroach on others properties and claim the land belongs to them for example in Checheles, Mwangaza, Kiwanjani.¹¹⁴

In many arid and semi-arid areas, resource ownership is not guaranteed. Indeed, in instances where resource ownership is scantily tenured, the security of tenure is largely a tall order. Herders rely on their herds for sustenance. Watering and foraging points remain the fulcrum of resource utilization in these lands. In most ASALs in Kenya, the group rather than the individual acts as the focal point of exploiting the givens of nature.¹¹⁵ However, this is changing in the recent past occasioned by individualization of resource access and control coupled with corruption in land acquisition. To the respondents, double allocation land and plots on the Isiolo county land registry has been a major issue, they allocate land and plots to more than two people on the same piece of land and this bring lots of disagreements and tensions.¹¹⁶

Additionally, double allocation of land and plots in the land registry has caused issues between the communities that reside in town center and other parts of Isiolo County. When the less fortunate people take their cases to court, they end up not winning because the elites use their funds to intimidate the poor who lose their cases in court and the elite takes over the land. This acts causes a lot of resentment among the people who always translates the issues to ethnic groups. The issues are always interpreted as Meru verses Borana and vice versa. When this issues happen, the county government promises to give the communities whose lands have been taken some pieces of land and later they change and this cause the people in the county to fight against each other.¹¹⁷

When it comes to land ownership, different people claim to own lands that don't belong to them. There has been a lot of double allocation of plots after devolution causing chaos and tension among citizens. Many people have been robbed of their properties in Isiolo. Some fight and chase people away but others don't have the economic capacity to do so. For

¹¹³ Jilo, A (2021). Assessment of Indigenous Institutions in Natural Resources Governance Systems in Pastoral Areas of Isiolo Kenya. *Preprints*.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Flora Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto (26th March, 2021).

¹¹⁵ Abdi U. (1998). p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹¹⁷ Field interview with Mzee Karuti, a shoe shiner in Isiolo town, 22nd March, 2021.

example, in 1992 Regina bought 2 pieces of plots in Mwangaza and now Borana came and claimed the land for themselves. The Borana bribes the land officials and gets the papers for a piece of land that is occupied by someone else, this becomes double allocation of plots. The issue is bad to a point where one piece of plot can be owned by 4 people and they all have ownership papers. In 2007, there was a map of Isiolo County that came out, it brought a lot of issues of land ownership in the county, the lands office subdivided the lands into many plots and sold them to other people and this has brought a lot of issues between communities since they all claim that they own some pieces of plots.¹¹⁸

Competition for the utilization of the givens of nature is thus a concern of the group. Kinship and ethno-linguistic ties and acquiesced governance structures are instituted to commandeer rivalries amongst grazing groups within a locality. When laying claim to or contesting assumed rights of occupancy to foraging land over which there is no agreement over occupancy or use, or for which there is no cooperation agreement, major conflicts periodically occur between large groups that distinguish themselves in the ethnic patterns of language, kinship ties, and religion. Societies make some cooperation agreement that unite several groups and ethno-kinship communities. The Borana - Degodia cooperation agreement of 1989 which bound more than 500,000 people in an area straddling across vast swathes of land in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia held until the early months of 1997. Aided by a bewildering spread of information amongst the groups concerned, these cooperation agreements are observed assiduously despite their transient nature. Furthermore, conflict is also largely driven by the attendant competition for grazing, and more critically for watering for foraging especially in the limiting dry period is entered in by all the cooperation agreements. These rivalries often turn into clashes, which have the potential of involving all parties to rival cooperation agreements.¹¹⁹

This phenomenon of ethnic militias that are formed to safeguard the security of tenure of the community is widespread in the country's social political terrain. In the Tana River Delta, they are more likely to be found amongst the pastoralist communities. With no hope of recourse to state established mechanisms of arbitration such as the judicial mechanisms, settling it squarely in the battlefield is the more often resorted means.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Interview with Regina Kagwiria, Nyumba Kumi official and retired teacher, 26th March 2021.

¹¹⁹ Abdi U. (1998). p.8.

¹²⁰ Abdi U. (1998). p8.

Competition over pasture and access to watering points is also another avenue for conflict. Placing the same in context, Idris reiterates the role of weather patterns in pastoral mobility. To Idris, pastoralists make use of ASALs where erraticism in climatic settings is large, meaning that natural resources are equally highly variable in space and time. To this end therefore, as the range resources become scarce, competition also becomes stiffer. This raises the tensions between the communities sharing these common resources.¹²¹

When conflict involves pasture land, it inadvertently draws in herders from all the communities. This escalates the conflicts because they normally take sides for example the Samburus and Turkana supports the Borana in conflict.¹²²

Economic resources emanating from taxes have also been a bone of contention. Over the years, Isiolo has been collecting a substantial amount of revenue. This is further enhanced by its share of funds that are devolved to the Counties by the exchequer. Isiolo County is among the counties doing well in the country. While such resources may be used to enhance the quest for peace in the county as well as addressing the issue of underdevelopment, in a country where public resources are a lootable commodity, this has become a source of conflict. Moreover, owing to undercurrents of ethno-linguistic and religious identity as the basis for resource distribution in the country, each of the ethno-linguistic and religious identities in the county are bound to fight for the exclusive right to determine the resource distribution in the County.¹²³

The management of the natural systems is fraught with many challenges largely due to the tendency for natural systems to be over-exploited by various users. Moreover, the governance of ecosystems particularly in heterogonous societies are characteristically problematic as both the givens of nature and the human societies fending off them are underpinned by a complex interplay of dynamism, variation and ever tilting dependencies. In turn, this has led to an increase in conflicts which are generated by overlapping resource claims between large-scale resource users and local communities.¹²⁴

“Boundaries and Land issues are the major cause of conflict between Borana and Meru especially on the Airport part where the two communities claim that the

¹²¹ Idris, A. (2011). Taking the camel through the eye of a needle: Enhancing pastoral resilience through education policy in Kenya. *Resil. Interdiscip. Perspect. Sci. Humanities*.

¹²² Interview with Flora Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto (26th March, 2021).

¹²³ Constitution & Reform Education Consortium (CRECO) (2012). *Building A Culture Of Peace In Kenya Baseline Report On Conflict-Mapping And Profiles Of 47 Counties In Kenya*. Nairobi: Constitution & Reform Education Consortium.

¹²⁴ Bodin, Ö., & Crona, B. I. (2009). The role of social networks in natural resource governance: What relational patterns make a difference? *Global environmental change*, Vol.19. No.3.pp.366-374.

airport is on their sides. Meru are trying to push the Borana on the boundaries claiming that the airport is on their side.”¹²⁵

These sentiments are further echoed by other respondents;

Livestock theft as Borana steal in cahoots with the Turkana pilfer livestock herds from the Meru coupled with retaliation. Additionally, Mr. Antony who works for Feed the Children, an NGO working in Isiolo, identified business rivalry, struggles over access to grazing areas, encroachment of exclusive ethnic zones by the other community, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as the main sources of conflict in the area.¹²⁶

3.3.4 Conflict over contested Meru-Isiolo border

The Isiolo Meru boundary is a salient issue as identified by the respondents. This emanates from the failure to follow colonial district demarcation boundaries. Respondents of the study pointed out that the colonial boundaries are no longer respected across the board. As such, there has been a push and pull where the Meru pushed the boundary inside Isiolo County. A good example is in Ngaremara and Gambera. The chiefs in the area reports administratively to Meru county and not Isiolo county. The residents of Ngaremara and Gambella live in the area which is claimed to be in Isiolo but when they need to process any paperwork, they go to Meru.

Additionally, the area is highly contested between Meru and Borana. In the 78 area (where the Kenya Defence Forces barracks are located), the administrative side is counted to be in Meru county but it is in Isiolo. Revenue collection for both Meru and Isiolo County are at the same place in Ngaremara and Matercare, both counties have mounted their barriers there. Meaning both counties claim that the areas belong to them, this puts strains on the residents and the people who use the area and route to transport their goods especially sand and the traders in the area because they are forced to pay county levies twice.¹²⁷

The Meru and the Borana have a conflicts over the boundary since the advent of devolution in Ngaremara and Kinna which is close to Garbatulla. Both the Meru and Isiolo county claim that the land belongs to them. The Airport is also partly in Isiolo and partly in Meru County. But both communities claim that the Airport is exclusively in their county. During the census

¹²⁵ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹²⁶ Key informant interview, Antony, NGO Feed the children, 26th March 2021.

¹²⁷ Field interview with Chief Abdi – Central (Isiolo Town center), 24th March, 2021.

period, in 2019, the Ngaremara Ward brought issues because, they didn't know if to count the residents of the area as part of Isiolo or Meru County.¹²⁸

These sentiments are echoed by the Flora Henry, an area manager at Kanguto. To Flora Henry, there is a lot of tribal animosity with the Borana claiming Isiolo belongs to them and the Meru claim that Isiolo belongs to them.¹²⁹ Respondents pointed out that the two communities steal livestock from each other, they also share pasture lands. Moreover, in the course of grazing, as the livestock move from one place to another, they also destroy farmers' crops, the herders also bring the livestock in town centers and this brings conflict. Cows in the neighborhood are stolen at night by Samburus and Turkana and when someone tries to protect their cows from being stolen, they will be killed because these bandits have illegal firearms.¹³⁰

In 2018, for instance, respondents recounted that the farmers market where the Meru are the dominant traders was burnt by the Borana at night and the Meru lost goods worth millions of shillings and the Meru never retaliated. But if the Borana properties are destroyed by Meru, the Borana will retaliate by also destroying Meru properties. Conflict in Isiolo is mostly based on revenge attacks.¹³¹

3.3.5 Conflicts over Water and Pasture

One source of conflict in Isiolo County emanates from the quest for water and pasture and the mobility associated with the same. To Jilo, pastoralists rely heavily on strategic mobility particularly during the dry season in order to make certain access to foraging areas as well as watering points in areas where seasonal climatic variations make it impossible for such givens of nature to be obtainable round the clock.¹³²

Water points for animals are located (some in Ewaso Nyiro in Archers and Tana River- in Lorian Swamp). This water sources are permanent source of food and water for both humans and animals in Isiolo. During dry seasons Isiolo is normally at a better position in issues of pasture and land than its neighbors who encroach, graze and water their animals in Isiolo county. The neighbors from Samburu, Garissa, Wajir, Marsabit and Laikipia forcefully enter Isiolo County with guns in search of food and water for their animals.¹³³

¹²⁸ Interview with George and Amin, staff at Isiolo Peace Link 24th March, 2021.

¹²⁹ Interview with Flora Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto (26th March, 2021).

¹³⁰ Interview with Flora Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto (26th March, 2021).

¹³¹ Interview with Flora Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto (26th March, 2021).

¹³² Jilo, A (2021). p.36.

¹³³ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

The conflict over water extends to the issue of getting paid for levies earned from use of water sources. The water in Isiolo town is drilled in Maili Nane and Lewa by machines and it is piped to Isiolo. So the Meru in the two areas want levy paid to them for the water because Maili Nane and Lewa is in Meru County.¹³⁴

Water is another source of contestation due to upstream obstruction of water coming from Mount Kenya by the Meru to water their farms in large scale. As such, the water getting to Isiolo is not sufficient for sustaining the residents and these cause issues between the communities in Isiolo and the Meru.¹³⁵

Additionally, mobility among herders allows for all encompassing use of forage areas as communal resources pooled through the exploitation of pastoralist cultures and its intrinsic communal attributes. Jilo contends that in societies where pastoralist communities are homogeneous, customary institutions are essential for controlling conflict, governing the use of natural resources, fostering strategic pastoral movement, and negotiating resource use rights. However, in Isiolo County, the presence of such pastoral management systems are absent particularly in lieu of the influx of non-pastoral persons in the polity.¹³⁶

You cannot talk about the Meru and Borana conflict without including other actors who reside in Isiolo County namely; Samburus, Turkana and Somalis. These communities play major roles in this conflict because of their lifestyle is nomadic in nature. They also own a lot of livestock in the region and they rely on these animals as source of their livelihood and survival. Their nature of living is not permanent, they construct semi-permanent houses called manyattas because they move from one point to another as they find pastures and water points for their animals. As they move from one point to another in search of pasture and water, they will definitely encounter lands and properties belonging to Meru and Borana.¹³⁷

Conflict is also felt in Grazing lands where sand harvesting is conducted as an economic activity. Lorries come from Embu, Meru, Nanyuki, Nyeri to harvest building sand in Isiolo especially the Ewaso Nyiro river banks. The demand for the sand in the county is high and the prizes have gone up as a result of the demand. The competition and ownership of the sand in the area is in play and the harvesting of the sand brings conflicts in the area.¹³⁸

3.3.6 Conflicts over Charcoal

There is also a big charcoal business in Isiolo county, Isiolo county residents use the Acacia trees which are common in the region because they produces good charcoal. The charcoal has

¹³⁴ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

¹³⁵ Interview with George and Amin, staff at Isiolo Peace Link 24th March, 2021.

¹³⁶ Jilo, Abdirahman (2021).p.37.

¹³⁷ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹³⁸ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

high demand because the traders of the neighboring towns come and buy charcoal to sell. The charcoal is transported to Meru, Nanyuki, Nyeri and Embu. The harvesting of Acacia trees brings environmental degradation in the region but on the other hand it has brought income in the county.¹³⁹

For instance, in Isiolo West and Ngare Mara locations, some wildlife conservancies have allowed the harvesting of construction materials such as sand for which they charge private harvesters about Kshs 500 per lorry. Every day, about 100 trucks from as far away as Meru are thought to come collect the sand. A quick study shows that over the course of a 20-day working month, the gangs in charge of the sand sites may earn about Kshs 1 million. The Isiolo war economy was based on such easily lootable resources, and the money made from resource exploitation was used to buy weapons.¹⁴⁰

3.3.7 Conflict over Natural Resources and Infrastructure Projects

Contestations over land tenure have been compounded by recent mineral resource speculations as well as the public goods lined up for Isiolo as part of the Vision 2030. Isiolo County has been subject to intensive mineral resource exploration. In the period between 2009 and 2010 for instance, a number of Chinese Companies were speculating for petroleum and natural gas reserves.

There is presence of minerals in Isiolo County: Gem stone located in Garbatulla; Gas in Merti; Gum Arabica used to make Coca cola located throughout the county.¹⁴¹ More Unexploited minerals like blue Sulphur are located in Garbatulla and Isiolo South and Rupees in Sericho.¹⁴²

While the exploration was unsuccessful, prior to these news, there were heightened ethno-linguistic tensions in the area pitting the various ethnicities including the Meru and the Borana.¹⁴³

When a Meru goes to a Borana occupied area to start a club or bar business, they are not allowed because they claim it is ungodly. But Meru allow Borana to trade in their areas for example in Kulamawe and Bulapesa which is majorly occupied in

¹³⁹ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Sharamo, R.(2014) “The Politics of Pastoral Violence: A Case Study of Isiolo County, Northern Kenya.” *Future Agricultures: Working Paper 095*. June 2014. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>

¹⁴¹ Field Interview with Bishop Kalunyu, Interfaith Secretary General, 1st April, 2021.

¹⁴² Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, the Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

¹⁴³ Ibid (2012).

Meru, many Borana own shops. Since Isiolo is a cosmopolitan town, then it belongs to everyone and not just Meru and Borana.¹⁴⁴

These sentiments are further echoed by Grayson who finds a hand of the political elites and their competitions in seeking access to tracts of land earmarked for the infrastructural projects lined up for Isiolo County. To Grayson, political elites both from within and without Isiolo to control speculatively valuable land can also be sources of serious ethnic skirmishes. Operations geared at extracting minerals and linked transport infrastructure projects such as the long-awaited development of the LAPSSET Corridor pipeline, rail and road venture to traverse Isiolo County have at present heralded real estate speculation and land grabbing as well as skirmishes between ethno-linguistic groupings to enhance and safeguard their land access.¹⁴⁵

With regard to the LAPSSET project, Isiolo County is earmarked to receive infrastructural upgrades including a railway and upgraded road networks connecting Lamu to other Horn of Africa landlocked countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Moreover, Isiolo town is pinpointed as a critical area that will be elevated into a tourism hub in line with Kenya's Vision 2030. However, the vast lands in the expanse that is Isiolo is composed of Trust land. As such, most of these lands are communally possessed. Another related news is the advent of conservancies in the neighborhood which are propped up by the government in an effort geared at boosting tourism in the "other frontier". This has resulted in tensions especially in the course of desiccated seasons.¹⁴⁶

In the period between 1996 and 1997, the Kenya Airport Authority signed an agreement between the county council of Isiolo and themselves to appropriate a small part of land in Isiolo County so that they could construct the Airport in Isiolo. The airport land is partly in Kiwanjani and Mwangaza. After signing of the agreement, the KAA took over the land and they paid the county council of Isiolo. The county council was supposed to relocate the residents in Kiwanjani and Mwangaza whose land was taken or pay the residents instead but they never did either. Years later, the county council decided to relocate the residents to other areas of the county. They established a ballot system where the residents were supposed to go choose where they will be relocated to, the land allocated for relocation was parts of

¹⁴⁴ Field Interview with Flora Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto (26th March, 2021)

¹⁴⁵ George G, (2018). The price of oil? Extractive development and conflict risk in Kenya, ECDPM. Retrieved on 30th March, 2021 from <https://ecdpm.org/great-insights/leveraging-private-investment-for-sustainable-development/oil-extractive-conflict-kenya/>

¹⁴⁶ George G, (2018).

Mwangaza and Checheles. The pieces of plots that the county council had chosen for the people to be relocated to, already had owners, so the people who were part of the balloting went and discovered that they were moved to land that belonged to other people. This brought a lot of conflict between both parties because the original owners of the land and the ones whose land was appropriated by KAA all thought they had a right to own the properties.¹⁴⁷

The confusion that the county council of Isiolo brought to its residents has caused a lot of conflicts in Mwangaza and Checheles between the people who balloted the plots and the original owners, these people kill each other because of land. There is also a lot of resentment among communities because of these land issues. The fact of the matter is that where one person is more financially capable than the other, they will take the land by force from the people who were originally there, some take over the land by involving their leaders and as a result of political influence, so the issue has moved from being a land issue to a tribal issue. The cause of this conflict that has been ongoing for years in Isiolo.¹⁴⁸

The same rings true with regard to access to resources such as quarries;

Quarries are located in Matercare, Milimani and Mwangaza. These quarries are on people's lands and the ones mining the stones refuse to move from the lands because the stones are a source of their income, therefore this causes the conflicts between the miners and the owners of the land.¹⁴⁹

The use of these resources has been overseen by community elders who are the custodians of communal laws. In such societies, people perceive themselves as members of an ethnic group or sub-groups of an ethnicity e.g. clan.¹⁵⁰

Meru are always development oriented, the Borana sold their pieces of plots in town center, *Kambi ya Juu*, LMD, and Laga where there were farms originally. This left the Borana as nomads because they didn't have their original lands but the Somalis never sold their lands. The Meru therefore bought majority of the properties. The livestock found in Isiolo County are Cows, Camels, Sheep and goats. The ones with camels in town export the camel's milk and beef meat to Nairobi and other neighboring towns. Somalis who sell their meat and milk also buy more properties in Isiolo County. Some residents in Isiolo also own shops abroad in Dubai who sell clothes and minerals. They bring the resources back to Isiolo and help in the growth of the economy.¹⁵¹

In their report on historical injustices in Kenya, the TJRC pointed out that there was a close nexus between wrongs on land use and acquisition and ethnic skirmishes in Kenya. Such

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Regina Kagwiria, Nyumba Kumi official and retired teacher, 26th March 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Regina Kagwiria, Nyumba Kumi official and retired teacher, 26th March 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Abdi U. (1998). p.8

¹⁵¹ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

wrongs on land use and acquisition, the TJRC further pointed out, can take many forms. This includes forceful evictions of groups and social classes, members of specific ethno-linguistic groups being favoured in order for them to profit from settlement schemes at the expense of others, the illegal takeover of individual and community owned land by public and private institutions as well as land grabbing by government officials.¹⁵²

The tensions and conflicts emanating from mineral resource speculation should be construed within the prism of fragility in different regions within a polity. Exploration and development by companies in fragile contexts such as the northern Kenya region results in contestations between communities and the state, between communities along ethno-linguistic lines as well as elite conflicts. This further spirals into conflict over allocation of resources, mineral revenue as well as jobs and other opportunities.¹⁵³

Supporting the findings of the TJRC as well as Grayson, Halakhe finds that land and development projects in Isiolo are a source of a vast majority of skirmishes. Just like across the country, a vast majority of the residents of Isiolo County depend on land for survival. Owing to climate change, the deterioration of land carrying capacity has been a key source of conflict as the Borana move their herds in Meru areas.¹⁵⁴

Land and pieces of plots have become very expensive in Isiolo county as a result of the LAPPSET project which is set to improve the economic status in Isiolo county. Isiolo county which is a resort city, has benefited on the Isiolo – Marsabit- Moyale highway which has connected the county to Ethiopia and South Sudan. The county also has an International Airport which will be used by the region to transport its goods. This economic boom in Isiolo county has therefore caused the land prices to go up as investors also are seeking to be part of the economic boom in Isiolo county. Apart from town center plots which are demarcated and have titles allocated to the residents, the other land are ‘Trust lands’ making the land in Isiolo county as ‘communal lands’ and therefore most pastoralists use them for grazing their livestock.¹⁵⁵

The issue of extraction and development projects have further reinforced tensions and conflicts due to the lack of community participation. This emanates from disparities between what exploratory and development contractors and/or governments at the national and devolved levels take in as evocative participation, and how groups perceive this which eventually morphs into a monumental foundation of gripe. Expectations of the extraction and

¹⁵² TJRC report.

¹⁵³George G, (2018). p. 33.

¹⁵⁴Halakhe, A. B. (2013). ‘R2P in practice’: Ethnic violence, elections and atrocity prevention in Kenya. Occasional Paper Series No. 4. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

¹⁵⁵ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

development projects in terms of fiscal progress and explicit social investments are at their very climax, particularly in places like Isiolo County.¹⁵⁶

Addressing security concerns to protect economic interests has further exacerbated tensions. Extractive and development projects contractors as well as conservancies have been using public as well as private security agents in order to protect their chattels, infrastructure and human resource.¹⁵⁷

Lewa down conservancy boss buys the weapons for Turkana. Once they are armed, they steal animals from other communities, for example in Kambi ya Juu, the 'conservancy' chased the residents from the area by arming Turkana so that they can grab the land from them.¹⁵⁸

To Okumu, wildlife conservancies further exacerbate tensions among herders and other groups as they are usually fenced off denying pastoralists the mobility they need in order to access pastures and watering points for their herds particularly in dry seasons. The attendant lack of access brought about by conservancies negatively impact on inter-group dealings and shaped the undercurrents of conflicts, especially among the Borana and the Meru.¹⁵⁹

3.3.8 The Role of Elections and Ethnic Divisions in Fuelling the Conflict

Before the general elections of 1992, Kenya had held five general elections under one political party system, three *de facto* single party systems and two *de jure* ones.¹⁶⁰ The apogee of the autocratic process of electoral processes was reached during the 1988 general elections which embraced queue voting commonly known as *Mlolongo* voting. The rigging prompted a heightened campaign to reform the process through the citizenry exercising their democratic right to elect the leadership of their choice. With the rescinding of section 2(A) of the 1963 constitution, the year 1992 set forth the onset of competitive multiparty politics.¹⁶¹

Following the re-introduction of political liberalism in 1992, Kenya's politics are characterised by the winner takes all system, which extends to the distribution of resources.

¹⁵⁶ George G, (2018). p. 33.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.p.34.

¹⁵⁸ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

¹⁵⁹ Okumu, W. (2013). *Trans-local peace building among pastoralist communities in Kenya: The case of Laikipia Peace Caravan*. Cologne: Cologne African Studies Centre.

¹⁶⁰ African News. (2017). *A look at Kenya's elections history since independence in 1964*. October 25. Accessed August 18, 2020. <https://www.africanews.com/2017/10/25/a-look-at-kenya-s-elections-history-since-independence-in-1964> .

¹⁶¹ Kandie, Elijah. 2017. *Elections in Kenya*. April 15. Accessed August 19, 2020. <https://www.knchr.org/Articles/ArtMID/2432/ArticleID/1026/Elections-in-Kenya> .

As such, the system has institutionalized structural inequalities coupled by marginalization.¹⁶² Echoing similar sentiments, Elischer is of the view that Kenya's political parties largely follow an ethnic conception of composition and are largely of three extractions, namely: the one-community party, the multi-communal alliance type and the multi-communal integrative type. As Elischer further postulates, while political parties in Kenya have been progressively incorporating diverse communities, lamentably, they have not healed the country's dominant ethnic cleavages. As such, the multi-ethnic alliance type and the multi-ethnic integrative types of political parties embody tribal mergers of expediency and commitment and, thus, ethnic parties.¹⁶³

3.3.8.1 Political competition

In enumerating on political competitions and conflicts, Scott-Villers et al. trace the roots of conflict in many places in Kenya such as Isiolo County in the tussles that are geared towards to impelling the balance of power and the dissemination of economic resources. To Scott-Villers et al., the levels of violence vary but linger persistently when compounded with the dynamics of politics.¹⁶⁴

Scott-Villers et al. further postulate that political entrepreneurs in Isiolo County use ethnic affiliation and impel tribal and group grievances particularly among the pastoral communities such as the Borana as the basis for political mobilization. Scott-Villers et al. traces this two four areas, namely; a struggle for the proceeds of devolution, even to the magnitude of interfering with it; secondly, the employment of violence to swing voter constituencies en masse; thirdly, use of violence to curtail the other ethno-linguistic and religious group or groups from acquiring a share of the economy; and fourthly, the construction of tribal identity courtesy of a system of economic inclination and clientelism.¹⁶⁵

Political issues are also a cause of conflicts in Isiolo county, all the communities want their leaders to be part of the county government and the leadership, for example, the Meru want their people to be leaders and on other hand the Borana

¹⁶² Oloo, A 2010. *Elections, Representations and the New Constitution*. Nairobi: Society for International Development (SID).

¹⁶³ Elischer, S. (2008). "Ethnic Coalitions of Convenience and Commitment: Political Parties and Party Systems in Kenya." *German Institute of Global and Area Studies Working Paper Series* (German Institute of Global and Area Studies) p.68.

¹⁶⁴ Scott-Villers, P.et al (2014). *Roots and routes of political violence in Kenya's civil and political society: A case study of Marsabit county* (IDS Evidence Report N. 71, Addressing and Mitigating Violence). Brighton: IDS.

¹⁶⁵ Scott-Villers, P.et al (2014).p.70.

want their people to be leaders in the government and therefore this brings chaos between the two communities as they all struggle for power in the county.¹⁶⁶

In response to such sentiments, Abdille and Abdi are of the opinion that the transfer of funds into Isiolo County for use on development projects has frequently led to political, ethnic and even county competitive conflicts, as new majority and minority organizations are striving to control and benefit from the finances. Simultaneously, large-scale domestic and regional infrastructural project such as the pipeline, rail and highway corridor Lamu - Port - South Sudan - Ethiopia - Transport (LAPSSET) project raised the political power stakes and brought about recognized land dispute and other unfavorable social and environmental effects. Development and urbanization will offer both advantages and hazards, including new kinds of violence and criminality.¹⁶⁷

In examining the tribalization of electoral skirmishes in Kenya, Muema Wambua argues that Kenya's electoral processes since the advent of multi-partyism are unavoidably underpinned by tribal undercurrents and strategizing. In explaining why violence is an organizing theme in Kenyan politics, the author traces the same to the foundation of pluralist democratic politics in the country. Wambua postulates that Kenya's electoral processes are anchored on political party structures and strategies that segment the country along ethno-linguistic lines as political leaders clothe in ethnic nationalism in an attempt to secure ethnic backing and patronage.¹⁶⁸

3.3.8.2 Ethnic Marginalization

In Isiolo County, there is growing disquiet that the incumbent governor's Borana community dominates the county executive positions, locking out other tribes in the county from various opportunities.¹⁶⁹ This can be seen in access to opportunists as enumerated by a health worker in the county's hospitals.

The Meru community is the most marginalized particularly in access to opportunities and service delivery. The Borana refer to the other communities including Meru as 'Nywele Ngumu', meaning rough hair. All the tribes that are not Borana including other tribes from all

¹⁶⁶ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹⁶⁷ Abdille, A., and R. Abdi. (2016). "Kenya: Development, County Governments and the Risk of 2017 Election Violence." International Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-development-county-governments-and-risk-2017-election-violence>.

¹⁶⁸ Wambua, M. (2017). "The ethnification of electoral conflicts in Kenya: Options for positive peace." *Accord Journal of Conflict Reconciliation* .p.2.

¹⁶⁹ Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies.(2020). Conflict Assessment Report. DANIDA Peace, Security and Stability (PSS) Programme-Kenya 2016-2020.

over Kenya are classified as “Meru” hence the treatment is the same. Meru community generally does not like chaos since they own majority of business in town center and they have invested in properties in the county, and they are slow to attacks. But when a Borana is provoked mistakenly by a Meru, they create a lot of chaos especially in town center so that they can use the opportunity to loot the businesses that belong to the Meru. For instance, in Isiolo Level Five Hospital, when a Clinical Officer on duty is a Borana, and the people from his community come, he will attend to them first regardless of who came first. If other tribes came early to be attended to, they will only care about attending to their tribesmen first instead of treating all the patients equal.¹⁷⁰

The Borana dominated county government has also been accused of nepotism. Respondents point out that they favor one community against the other one, for example, the Borana are the majority employees in the government offices, courts, schools, lands offices. These means they are favoured and given more opportunities than the other communities in the county and these causes resentment.¹⁷¹ Because Isiolo is an arid area and it receives seasonal rains that are never enough, the county government sets money aside to sink boreholes across the county, but the money is mostly given towards the Borana populated areas for example in Merti, the county has sunk many boreholes and the Meru areas have not received money to sink the boreholes.¹⁷²

The Borana claim Isiolo as their historical possession and perceive other tribes living in the county including the Meru as migrants who are late entrants into the area looking to edge out the Borana. As such, members of non-Borana communities have been habitually locked out of policymaking forays, county government employment opportunities, county government contracts and education funding opportunities.¹⁷³ The Borana-dominated government has thus been blamed for heightening ethnic tension in the county. Moreover, it has been perceived as exclusivist and prejudiced due to its behavior and attitude to non-Borana communities. As such, minority communities feel this exclusion more acutely and have also adopting forms of ethnic organization and politics.¹⁷⁴

Political issues are also a cause of conflicts in Isiolo County. All the communities want their leaders to be part of the county government and the leadership, for

¹⁷⁰ Field interview, Senior Health records & information officer, Isiolo General Hospital, 23rd March 2021.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Regina Kagwiria, Nyumba Kumi official and retired teacher, 26th March 2021.

¹⁷² Interview with Regina Kagwiria, Nyumba Kumi official and retired teacher, 26th March 2021.

¹⁷³ Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies.(2020). p.33.

¹⁷⁴ Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies.(2020). p.36.

example, the Meru want their people to be leaders and on other hand the Borana want their people to be leaders in the government and therefore this brings chaos between the two communities as they all struggle for power in the county.¹⁷⁵

Additionally, while non-Borana groups such as the Meru community have been organizing in cooperative agreements that could be perceived as chaperons for equality and non-discrimination in the county of Isiolo, it is quite possible that such alliances could be used to aggressively pursue genuine power-sharing as well as the equitable distribution of the doles of devolution or in the extreme, initiate and propel exclusivist practices.¹⁷⁶

3.4 State Insufficiency

State insufficiency and a pervasive culture of impunity have also been fingered out as the root cause of conflict in Isiolo County. The Kenyan state is largely absent in the northern frontier. Coupled with decreasing traditional authority, impunity has prospered. As much, armed groups operate with reckless impunity. As a result, Van den Broeck further postulates, impunity has been cultured into a localized norm in Isiolo County with blatant disregard of the rule of law devoid of accountable. This has led to a continuous upsurge and further diffusion of skirmishes across the County pitting various ethnic groups against each other.¹⁷⁷

Moreover, over the years, skirmishes have morphed into a regular currency in social relations in Isiolo largely due to the fact that very little is done to pursue the course of justice. Moreover, futile and incongruous state responses to herders' skirmishes in the region and a broad state of unruliness have turned impunity into a fact of life making it a primary undercurrent for inter-communal skirmishes. While instances of impunity have been documented in Isiolo County over the years, very little has been done to put the perpetrators to trial. To compound matters further, years of lawlessness and impunity have hollowed out the acceptability of the Kenyan judicial authorities and the competences of the State to create structures on which transparent courts could be founded. As such, armed groups have been moving freely largely inspired by the fact that the chances of being brought to justice are minute.¹⁷⁸

In light of the foregoing, Van den Broeck further postulates, the pervasiveness of the culture of impunity coupled with state absence and the failure to bring security and justice

¹⁷⁵ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (2020).

¹⁷⁷Jan Van B (2015). *Conflict motives in Kenya's North Rift Region*. International Peace Information Service – IPIS. Paris.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid (2015).

circuitously thrives in conveying the precise opposite, lawlessness and conflict. To Van den Broeck, state institutions have cataclysmically failed to reach the grassroots. In this regard, people and communities are of the perception that there is no justice unless they create their own version. For the people of Isiolo County, guns in civilian hands are a necessity as they are used as a means to provide security where the state is absent. In such an environment, retaliatory attacks are a regular phenomenon and are meant to bring justice to the dead or the vandalized or lost possessions suffered in an earlier raid. This has cemented the culture of violence and has also been fingered out as the key culprit in the endless cycles of violence in Isiolo County resulting in many deadly casualties.¹⁷⁹

3.4.1 Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Isiolo County, dubbed the small arms supermarket of the Horn of Africa, has been a haven for small arms and light weapons which are inexpensive due to their ease of obtainability. This can be accredited to the incursion of arms from the many conflict zones dotting the Horn of Africa such as northern Uganda, the larger Sudan and later South Sudan, Ethiopia which has been awash with Soviet weaponry and Somalia.¹⁸⁰

KPR (Kenya Police Reserves) were Ex- military officers who belong to all tribes in Isiolo County. The KPR were trained and given uniforms and weapons to protect their communities against the theft of their livestock by the bandits. Later the KPR were disbanded and disarmed by the government, some surrendered the weapons and others didn't. Some of the KPR officers used the weapons for their own selfish reasons in raiding areas and also stealing from some communities.¹⁸¹

The tag, arms market, is attributable to the wide latitude Isiolo has in terms of the availability of all types of small arms and light weapons that finds its way to the ready market in Isiolo and later to other proximate counties such as Meru and Laikipia. The first incidence of small arms and light weapons in civilian hands in Isiolo County has been dated back to mid-1960s during the Shifta War in which Isiolo County served as the conflict's epicenter. Lasting about four years from 1963 to 1967, the Shifta War marked the beginning of exclusion of the region and its people reinforcing the colonial attitude of a closed district.

In most cases when the government has not intervened due to lack of resources and availability, the people are left to defend themselves against other communities and this causes deaths and chaos in Isiolo County. On the other hand, the government

¹⁷⁹ Jan Van B (2015).p.7.

¹⁸⁰ Jan Van B (2015).p.8.

¹⁸¹ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

takes over the villages and do investigations and once they establish the wrong doers, they then release them if their leaders demand it.¹⁸²

When the government rounded up all weapons in the civilian hands and suppressed the Shifta, a new wave of conflict between the Borana and Somali emerged in the 1980s. Manifested itself through sporadic attacks and cattle rustling, the conflict was also as a protest against the penetration of missionaries into Isiolo, which was led by Somalis, majority of whom are Muslims, as the beginning of Christian dominance in Northern Kenya which should be resisted.

The politicians in Isiolo County are arming people along ethnical groups because of political interests. Politicians arm their people through clans that is why the conflict in arid and semi- arid areas will never end. It is a divide and rule situation. It has become a business to sell arms, the arms are acquired from neighbouring countries and sold here cheaply. This weapons are also accessed by bandits who also are actors in the conflict.¹⁸³

The rapid acquisition of such arsenal in Isiolo started in 1992 when over a dozen Borana men were tied together and killed at a place called Kuro Barata in Garba Tulla Sub-county, Isiolo County. This massacre led the Borana community to acquire weaponry from Ethiopia through Moyale. As such, the subsequent years of the 1990s decade became a hallmark of full blown conflict with raids and counter raids between the Borana and Somali using small arms and light weapons.

Guns are sourced from the Black market while some are also government weapons acquired illegally. Politicians in office also supply guns. Borana politicians remind their community that their lands were taken away from them. So they push other communities out so that they can take over. The politicians in turn funds the conflict and buy the weapons for their communities. On the other hand, the elite residents also give politicians money so that they can be protected by the government, for example in 2017 campaigns the Somalis gave Governor Kuti money for elections so that when he wins he can protect them and their businesses.¹⁸⁴

The threat posed by piracy and the proliferation of dangerous weapons in criminal hands, is made worse by the threat convergence posed by transnational criminalities. Conflict-SALWs interaction creates a complex ecosystem of terror and securitization to thrive. Furthermore, this conflict-SALW interactive threat environment promotes longer-term cooperation

¹⁸² Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

¹⁸³ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

between organized crime further resulting in hybrid organizations that merge elements of both and spiraling the security threat.

3.4.2 The Role of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Aggravating the Conflict in Isiolo County

Conflicts between shepherds and the contest for resources, the widespread availability of small weapons and the rising concerns about livestock waste are often exacerbated.¹⁸⁵ This section analyses the increased use of small arms and light weapons as an enhanced level of the conflict.

Small arms and light weapons have become a critical focal point of the inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County. The constant attacks among herders, and the already discussed encroachments on pastures and water resources, have seen the warring sides arm themselves to defend their cattle and property. Invaders are also armed with sophisticated weapons forcing the residents to enhance the capabilities of their arms. As these attacks proliferate, the limited or ineffective action by the state security machinery - military camps and police stations - who are supposed to deal with internal security, is a point of concern. On the one hand, while the police conduct patrols, they cannot reach all areas of the County because the terrain is rough and they are also aware of the risk of ambushes by armed bandits. On the other hand, the presence of the military in Isiolo County does not guarantee security for residents since the soldiers are restrained by law from intervening in civilian matters. This contributes to the acquisition of small arms and light weapons by civilians leaving the communities vulnerable and in perpetual conflict with each other.¹⁸⁶

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has heightened the conflict in Isiolo County. Jilo argues that since the overlapping mandate of traditional and state institutions in security and justice provision has remained a major challenge, small arms and light weapons have been used to enhance access to common pool resources such as pasture and water in Isiolo County.¹⁸⁷

The two communities use guns for protection. In year 2016-2018 the government commissioned the KPR (Kenya Police Reserve) who were given 300 weapons to help protect the communities in the event of cattle raids. The government trained

¹⁸⁵ Pkalya, R., Adan, M., & Masinde, I. (2003).p.2.

¹⁸⁶ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

¹⁸⁷ Jilo, A. (18 March 2021).p.54.

Ex-Military officers and gave them ammunition to protect themselves and the communities. Since the KPR personnel were not paid by the government as it was earlier decided, they used their Government issued weapons for stealing to put food on their table. In 2018, the government disarmed the officers and arrested some of the KPR officers who used the weapons for the wrong reasons.¹⁸⁸

Pastoral communities arm themselves for various reasons. First, Van den Broeck argues, they need weaponry for fortification against aggressive raiding parties from other communities. As such, small arms and light weapons provide a tremendous and straightforwardly obtainable solution to the state's pathetic protection measures. Secondly, small arms and light weapons are used for initiating raids and in skirmishes. Third, guns are deemed a perfect possession as it can be bartered with livestock and other commodities. Moreover, these weapons give status and open doors towards power positions that were previously unreachable.

As can be seen, the political manipulation of scarce resources has been at the center of conflict in Isiolo, the issue of scramble for power is making it necessary for communities to be displaced and hence disenfranchised. This has further been compounded by the availability of firearms making the conflict deadlier. In addition to the use of arms the attacking seems to be well-coordinated and facilitated.

3.5 Migration and Conflict in Isiolo County

Undercurrents of migration have permeated ethno-linguistic and religious conflicts in Isiolo County. This can be seen in perceptions of migration into the County. The Borana's oral history states that they dwelled in parts of what is today Isiolo County as well as segments of the Wajir County to the east in precolonial times. In the first three decades of the 20th century however, frequent attacks by Somali groups forced the Borana to move out of Wajir County. In response, the British colonial administrators bequeathed the Borana exclusive grazing rights in what is now Merti area in Isiolo County in 1909. Subsequently, grazing rights were extended to the Garbatulla area as well. By the 1920s, many of the districts were controlled by the Borana. By 1929, the then district of Isiolo had been formed by the British to prevent further development by groups of Somalis from the north east. The district was constructed as Borana district. As such, the Borana perceive Isiolo County as an exclusive Borana zone bequeathed unto them by the colonial government in order to compensate for their loss of

¹⁸⁸ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

land and resources in Wajir County. At present, they essentially occupy four areas in Isiolo County; Garbatulla, Kinna, Merti and Sericho.¹⁸⁹

In the Nyambene Hills, immediately south-east of central Isiolo, on their other hand, the Meru were small-scale farmers. Intensive techniques of agriculture were established in the region by fertile soils. The colonization led to a trend of individualization of land rights with the introduction of tea and coffee as a permanent crop in the 1940s. During that time, the Meru started moving to the City of Isiolo. In Bulapesa and Wabera the Meru reside mostly. This exodus from the district of Meru was directly linked to land tenure changes. Unlike Isiolo's colonial area, Meru lands were not owned and operated in accordance with the Trust Land Act.¹⁹⁰

These sentiments are echoed by Ramata Ahmed;

Meru have encroached Isiolo and pushed the boundaries inside Isiolo, so any water coming through Meru and Isiolo boundary, the Meru use it for massive irrigation. They pump water into their farms to cultivate onions and tomatoes on large scale and to transport them in large quantities to other towns and in the process they deplete the water reserves that feed Isiolo County. The Meru residents in Isiolo make monetary payments of water coming to Isiolo County to from Meru for the water coming from Mt. Kenya. This has been controversial and it was intervened by Kenya Water Board trying to help them resolve the differences. The issue is still pending. River Isiolo and other seasonal rivers that take water to Ewaso Nyiro are the contested waters between the Meru and Borana.¹⁹¹

The idea is that portion of Isiolo City is located within the ancient district of Meru among the Meru. The boundary has therefore remained a matter of dispute. In addition, the Borana relocated in Isiolo Town from the Waso following the Shifta War to consider a substantial number of Meru resident in Isiolo County as "recent immigrants." The Meru established in Isiolo City are perceived as "recent immigrants" by the Borana in a same way. The Borana was kind enough, as the Kenyatta government gave the then powerful Minister of Land and settlement courtesy of the misuse of power to the post-colonial national government, which allotted part of Isiolo City, Jackson Harvester Angaine, himself a Meru, who they argue allocated Borana land to his people.¹⁹² Isiolo was originally occupied by Meru and Somalis.

¹⁸⁹ Roba B, and Randi K (2011).p.119.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.p.122.

¹⁹¹ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

¹⁹² Roba B, and Randi K (2011).p.119.

The Turkana came in as workers for Somalis. The Borana then came much later to be residents of Isiolo County.¹⁹³

These sentiments are echoed by the respondents who point out that in the Post-colonial period, the Meru believe that Isiolo North was majorly for Meru people. The Meru in Isiolo were paying land rates to the district. During this period, the Borana sought permission to Meru elders to be part of the then Isiolo north and they indicated commitment to pay the land rates to the district.¹⁹⁴ In 2015, former Governor Munya of Meru County had raised issues of boundaries in Isiolo County. He claimed that Ngaremara and Gambera are extensions of Meru county and saying that people in the areas should pay levy to Meru County. The former Governor Munya elected a tax collection barrier in the area to collect tax which was later burnt down by the residents in the area. During that period, the former Governor's entourage was attacked by the residents chasing him away with guns and he made a narrow escape. Because the residents there are majorly pastoralist and herders, they own illegal weapons to protect their animals, they attacked the police that accompanied the former Governor, and they could not withstand the heat and they ran away. The area of Gambera and Ngaremara is rampant with conflicts because the Meru and Isiolo county claim that the land belong to them.¹⁹⁵

There is also an issue of external immigrants to Isiolo County who have influenced how conflict evolved. There has been an internal migration from all Kenyans to Isiolo county because of economic opportunities. External migrators are from Ethiopia, Somalia as refugees and others as illegal immigrants. They enter illegally by bribing their way through our porous borders. He further points out that many outsiders have flocked into Isiolo in search of better opportunities. The external immigrants from Ethiopia and Somalia come and finds their fellow clansmen who migrated earlier therefore sparking competition. There is also rampant corruption to legalize documents of immigrants. These immigrants have also learnt the local languages and therefore finding their footing in Isiolo County. The foreigners from Somalia and Ethiopia come to schools and get documents therefore making themselves as citizens which later brings issues in the county. In the long run, the influx of foreigners and other communities flocking Isiolo has led to competition among the immigrants and the residents in the county. The residents of the county refer to the immigrants in the county as

¹⁹³ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

¹⁹⁵ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

“Milandufute” meaning those who migrated to Kenya on barefoot, and now they have made success and now they are competing with locals and they grew “horns”. This competition among residents and migrants brings bad blood and therefore sparks conflicts.¹⁹⁶

3.6 Spoilers and the Conflict in Isiolo County

Politicians have been fingered out as the biggest conflict spoilers in the conflict between the Meru and the Borana communities. The politicians fuel the conflicts by funding different groups to conflict against the other communities especially during the election periods, they also incite their communities to steal livestock from other communities so that the animals can be slaughtered and sold.¹⁹⁷

Supporting the same, Ramata Ahmed argues that politicians incite the residents to fight and keep them busy so that they can use the opportunity to enrich themselves with land and livestock. The politicians acquire the resources as the people continue to conflict with each other. There will also be a railway line passing from Lamu-Garissa-Isiolo-Addis, and Samburu-Turkana-South Sudan. The elite have grabbed land in the areas in prospects of being compensated by the government when the project kicks off as the communities are busy fighting.¹⁹⁸

The politicians in Isiolo County are arming people along ethnical groups because of political interests. Politicians arm their people through clans that is why the conflict in arid and semi- arid areas will never end. It is a divide and rule situation. It has become a business to sell arms, the arms are acquired from neighboring countries and sold here cheaply. These weapons are also accessed by bandits who also are actors in the conflict.¹⁹⁹

Businessmen have also been fingered out as spoilers. The rich businessmen incite and find the residents of their own communities to buy weapons to protect themselves and their properties because the government has no capacity in Isiolo to protect them.²⁰⁰

On the other hand, Antony who works for the Feed the Children in the region notes that the conflicts spoilers in the region are politicians, business people, the elite/rich people, immigrants, government officials and security officials. The spoilers aim is to oppress the locals by diverting their attention so that they cannot be in unity so that they focus on fighting

¹⁹⁶ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

¹⁹⁷ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, the Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th March, 2021.

¹⁹⁸ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021

¹⁹⁹ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021

²⁰⁰ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021

instead of economic aspects. And on the other hand the spoilers will concentrate in taking over the economy for themselves. Security officials in the county are also corrupt, they take sides after being bribed. In this way, they brew conflicts in the area, they are part of the conflict problem in the county. In this way, they fuel conflict for economic gains.²⁰¹

3.7 Conclusion

Conflicts over resources dot the whole landscape of Isiolo County. These conflicts flare up between communities over grazing land, over cattle, over water points and over cultivable land. These resources are the principal anchors of livelihood in Isiolo County, hence the likelihood of conflict over access to and control over them. These conflicts go back a long way, in some cases to the pre-colonial period.

The increase of the rural disparities between rich and poor / landless farmers, rich farmers and poor livestock owners is also a major observation across this conflict area. These changes have led to substantial rivalry for the few resources of the area where land is normally grown and/or feasible for grazing, and where there is water. In addition, the deterioration of the environment in land productivity and water shortages has added to competitiveness intensity. The grazing systems involving the transportation of huge livestock herds to places in water and the pursuit of pastures, particularly among pastoral communities, have produced a significant problem. Private land ownership reduced these required pastoralist movements, and the impact on pastoralist cultures was significant and disastrous.

Moreover, the severity and frequency of confrontations between livestock grazing people have been on the increase. The rustlers typically attack pastoralists for livestock and sell them for guns or sustenance. Consequently, the pastoralists had to obtain weapons for their defense. Another category of this conflict involves highly coordinated and extensive livestock robbery between pastoralist communities. There is a commercial angle to this violence due to the high demand for meat in urban areas and export markets. In addition, there is a growing cross-border connection with the warring armed groups increasingly acquiring weapons from Ethiopia.

There is also a link between underdevelopment and different types of conflict in this investigation. The relationship between poverty and violent conflict is apparent in Isiolo

²⁰¹ Key informant interview, Antony, NGO Feed the children, 26th March 2021.

County. Desertification and drought, which ravage the larger area of northern Kenya, exacerbate ecological, economic and social difficulties.

As such, it is evident that economic factors such as the competition over resources, poverty and underdevelopment cause conflict in the region. The interplay of two factors; first that of poverty and underdevelopment occasioned by the fact that the area is one of the most unproductive areas in the predominantly agrarian economy of Kenya as well as an attendant characteristic of the abuse of the traditional culture of cattle rustling to restock livestock after severe droughts or diseases is another cause of conflicts in this vast district compounds matters worse and thus predisposing the area to conflict. The fact that the area's communities no longer raiding to replenish their stock but raid to kill, maim and enrich themselves and have in effect commercialized livestock raids implies a deeply rooted conflict which calls for immediate intervention.

As we have seen from the secondary data, it is evident that economic factors such as the competition over resources, poverty and underdevelopment cause conflict in the region. As we have seen, poverty and underdevelopment, occasioned by the unproductivity of Isiolo, are further compounded by the abuse of traditional culture of cattle rustling to restock livestock lost to droughts or diseases.

Communities in the area not only steal animals from their neighbors to replace what they might have lost to other communities, but they have also found it enriching to sell the stolen livestock. In addition, climatic change has also increased conflict in the area by straining economic means of the region. As we have seen, the area's desertification as well as consecutive periods of drought have devastated vast swathes of Isiolo County. This has brought a convergence of ecological, economic and social adversities, which in turn predispose the region to a vicious cycle of conflict.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPACT OF RESOURCE CONFLICTS IN ISIOLO COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of the resource-based conflict pitting the Borana against the Meru in Isiolo County. It analyses the economic impact of the conflict, the human cost of the conflict, the resultant insecurity, and the destruction of property and productive assets. Finally, the chapter analyses the conflict prevention mechanisms that could to ensure competition over resources remains non-conflictual. It explains the role of informal community-based groups, the interventions by non-governmental organizations, efforts by faith-based groups, the work of the County government and the formal initiatives by national government agencies.

4.2 Economic Impact of the Resource Conflicts in Isiolo County

Isiolo County, like its neighboring counties that constitute the semi-arid northern region of Kenya, is characterized by poor roads, armed warriors/bandits/rustlers, devastating famines a critical policy problem because it threatens to undermine the rollout of meaningful devolution of political and economic governance for the region's people as well the implementation of the critical projects under *Kenya Vision 2030*. In Isiolo, the fear of devolution and complex political and economic interests apparently continue to fan violence among the various communities. Violence seems to coexist with development and transition in northern Kenya, despite the changing governance landscape. Economic development and growth thrive in a peaceful environment. Where violence is persistent, economic systems collapse, businesses and infrastructure are destroyed and lives of individuals are lost. This raises the fear that the promises of the new constitution promulgated in 2010 might remain a mere mirage for the communities in Isiolo. Partly because of this persistent violence, the County's poverty rate stands at about 76.2 percent. Despite its rich tourism base, Isiolo offers a rather grim picture of a poor county which is in need of the economic and social progress that devolved governance promises.²⁰²

²⁰² Sharamo, R. (2014). *The Politics of Pastoral Violence: A Case Study of Isiolo County, Northern Kenya*. Retrieved February 27, 2021, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a089c4ed915d3cfd000408/FAC_Working_Paper_095.pdf.

In addition, the outbreak of inter-communal affects the costs of livestock and consumer items indirectly. According to Guyo, poor security and low incomes impact both on the demand and supply of goods and services. Loss of livestock persuades herders to sell their cattle in order to buy other goods. The stolen livestock are channeled into other neighboring countries or counties, thus depriving Isiolo County of its wealth. The prices of livestock perennially decrease due to shortage of pastures forcing pastoralists to sell their cattle at a low prices. In the same vein, too, the many years of inter-ethnic disputes in Isiolo County has led to the destruction of many houses, theft of vehicles, as well as the burning and looting of businesses. And since people fear to travel to conflict-prone regions to buy and sell their products, the prices of every day consumer products have become expensive.²⁰³

Data sourced from respondents in the filed confirmed that the loss of livelihood, destruction of property and retarded development were the key impacts of the persistent conflict between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County. When pastoral livelihoods collapse, it results in food insecurity. Indeed, even when populations relocate to the reserve pasture region, some of the operations of the previously flourishing animal markets are severely affected.²⁰⁴

Further, the present rustling of large-scale livestock among pastoralists is a big cause of misery, since they inflict faster and concentrated harm than drought. Unlike drought, large-scale raiding endangers the usual risk distribution strategies, animal loss controls and restorations, and when targeted simultaneously at many homes, can decimate a person and dislodge the entire network of staff, friends, and relatives who could have helped mitigate food insecurity in a few hours.²⁰⁵

The inter-communal conflict has also been worsened by unevenness in group growth across tribes and clans. More importantly, there was an increase in availability to water and pasture in dry seasons, due to ecological deterioration, among other things. The young also failed to participate effectively in the creation and growth of peace owing to analphabetism, lack of economic possibilities, unemployment, breakdowns of social and familial connections and

²⁰³ Guyo Sankala Sama. (2019). "Assessment of the Dynamics of Resource-Based Conflict on Human Security in Kenya: A Case Study of Isiolo County." Unpublished M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.

²⁰⁴ Odhiambo, Michael Ochieng. 2012. *Impact of Conflict on Pastoral Communities' Resilience in the Horn of Africa: Case Studies from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*. Nakuru: RECONCILE And FAO; pp. 24.

²⁰⁵ Odhiambo, Michael Ochieng. 2012. *Impact of Conflict on Pastoral Communities' Resilience in the Horn of Africa: Case Studies from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*. Nakuru: RECONCILE And FAO; pp. 24.

other cultural inhibitions. These naïve young people have been used and utilized in terrorism since the early 1990s both for material necessity.²⁰⁶

When conflicts occur, herders cannot protect their animals from flying bullets. The conflict also prevents herders from taking their animals for vaccinations, since veterinary officers often shy away from such violence. This might lead to loss of livestock as a result of untreated diseases.²⁰⁷

Livestock theft in Isiolo is commercialized these days. When different groups steal the livestock, they carry them in Lorries and transport them to slaughter houses for meat. If herders follow their stolen cows and discover them in Meru areas like the Kianjai slaughter house, the Borana will fight the Tiganias to the extent of killing them. This is how the spillover effect is experienced in the county. Mostly all the communities that have herders have spies and informants in different regions therefore in most cases even if they don't get to retrieve their animals back, they always know the community that stole from them. There is also a lot of rumour spreading in the area.²⁰⁸

The conflict has also curtailed development. It frequently affects the government and its services, especially the distribution of famine relief in the remote areas in the county affected by drought and hunger. Distribution of examination papers when there is national examinations becomes a problem because of insecurities, the officials have to be escorted by police who also have limited resources in dealing with bandits. Administering of medical services in the remote areas to the people affected by conflicts also becomes a problem as sometimes they are attacked by bandits on the roads. When conflict happens, sometimes the army in the region responds to help the affected communities with food and medicine. Additionally, the development of the LAPSSET project in the area is often affected because the construction workers flee the sites due to conflict.²⁰⁹

Additionally, the Meru and Borana conflict in Isiolo has led to the loss of investor confidence in the county. As such, local and foreign investors shy off from investing in the region because of the sporadic conflicts and tensions building up in the county. Although there are numerous military and police checks on the roads, Tourists cars are attacked and the tourists are robbed. This sends negative messages to the international community and the countries issues travel warnings to the region. Tourism sector in the region should be booming because

²⁰⁶ Odhiambo, Michael Ochieng. 2012. *Impact of Conflict on Pastoral Communities' Resilience in the Horn of Africa: Case Studies from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*. Nakuru: RECONCILE And FAO; pp. 24.

²⁰⁷ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

²⁰⁸ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

²⁰⁹ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

of the several resorts and parks in the county, but this is not witnessed because of the conflicts. The hotels and local traders in the region don't benefit as they should.²¹⁰

Investors fear investing in Isiolo due to ethnic clashes. The ethnic clashes have been there for a long time. They exist to date, they occur and then settle down. In relation to the livestock, every time the herders move from one place to another in search of pasture and water, there has to be clashes. Nomads have no permanent homestead, they normally move to areas where they can find pasture.²¹¹

Businesses are also affected. This is evidence by the closure of businesses where both communities are involved.

Borana do business with Meru because they sell the cows to Meru for meat mostly. There is also a big market for cows and goats in the region, sometimes the pastoralists take their livestock to other markets too namely Kianjai, Ngundune, Muthara and Meru town.²¹²

The conflict retards business development as people in the county do not concentrate on their enterprises because of widespread uncertainty. The traders shy off from investing large amounts of money because their properties will be destroyed. For example, the market in Isiolo town is constantly burned down by groups of people and this destroys properties worth millions of shillings. Moreover, the economy does not grow for the people and county – people don't prosper because there is always conflicts. People make money and invest elsewhere because of fear of resource destruction. When tension build up especially in the town center, people don't open up their businesses. The people want a secure movement and easiness to do business, if this is not possible then the people are scared to do business.²¹³

4.3 Political Impact of the Resource-based Conflict in Isiolo

Isiolo County reflects some of Kenya's political disputes. According to Guyo, there is local anxiety between Isiolo's big five communities: Somali, Samburu, Borana, Meru, and Turkana. Mistrust between these communities is worsened by anxiety associated with the projects implemented by the national government in the region. Politicians intentionally spread disinformation about widespread discrimination of some communities from such projects. There is a belief that the LAPSSET project would damage the habitat and relocate pastoralists, taking over their grazing land without compensation. In one instance, during the

²¹⁰ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

²¹¹ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

²¹² Field interview with Gaitakuria, a Meru herder in Isiolo County on 21st March 2021.

²¹³ Field interview with Jared Onsare, Teacher St. Pauls Kiwanjani Secondary School, 1st April, 2021.

construction of the Isiolo airport, people in Meru and Isiolo counties were short-changed in land repayment, because the authorities misappropriated the funds.

4.4 The Social Impact of Resource Conflicts in Isiolo County

Every conflict has ramifications for a given society whenever they occur. Some of these ramifications include the loss of lives, and the destruction of property amongst others. In this regard, this section deals with the impact of conflict in Isiolo. The rationale behind this section is the consensus that recurrent conflicts have adverse effects on societies in which they occur. The inter-communal conflict between the Borana and Meru of Isiolo County has created social impact in the form of deaths, displacements, and insecurity. This section examines these aspects of social impact on the County of Isiolo.

One of the impact of the ethnic conflict in Isiolo County has been deaths and the displacement of people. This was aptly captured in the field interviews where respondents enumerated the losses of lives due to the bouts of conflict. Moreover, the children stop attending schools and some defer their education. People are also misplaced from their places of works and from their homes, the most affected when the conflict persists are children, women, the old and disabled who find it hard to move and run during the conflicts. In most cases, when the conflict is ongoing, some businesses are looted. The county government revenue collection goes down when people shut down their businesses. Isiolo is a cosmopolitan town, where investors from different regions to invest and carry out their businesses. Those who get affected by inter-communal conflict opt to sell off their property and business and move away, leaving the County poorer.²¹⁴

Another impact of the inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County, resulting from the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, has been the increased poaching of Elephants, Rhinos and Leopards, and to smaller extent, Lions and Hippos for their nails and teeth. There is also a marked rise in the smuggling and consumption of bhang from Ethiopia also famously known as ‘Shashamani,’ in Isiolo County. This drug is further smuggled to other regions of the country. The smugglers buy it from Ethiopia at Kshs 5,000 for one kilogram and sell it in Isiolo County Kshs 30,000 per kilogram.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

²¹⁵ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

One respondent said this:

The influx of drugs that originate from Ethiopia namely Shashamane (bhang and kete which are very strong) this is what the youths are smoking and they will be crazy. The youths are filled with the urges to fight and cause chaos. These drugs once they are mixed, they become very strong and once it is consumed after a period of time it leads to death. The county has experienced a few deaths in relation to the drug consumption.²¹⁶

Respondents have pointed out human trafficking as one more impact of the insecurity that results from the inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County. Criminals have taken advantage of the prevailing situation to move refugees from Ethiopia or Somalia to Kenya at between Kshs. 150,000 to 200,000 per person.²¹⁷ The trafficking is mostly done after securing the complicity of the security officials. The money from such trafficking is mostly used to fuel the conflicts in the Isiolo County and the region as a whole. There is cut-throat competition in this lucrative business. The money from the drugs and human trafficking gets into circulation to enrich criminals, as well as the elite, while at the same time funding more attacks against other communities.²¹⁸

4.5 Insecurity and Inter-Community Tensions in Isiolo County

The inter-communal conflicts create tension and pressures among the affected communities. People fear and don't trust each other. If there is no trust, then it becomes very hard for them to relate with each other.²¹⁹

It is also important to note that Isiolo is insecure to a point that people do not walk at night. There are random killings, revenge killings, both documented and undocumented, thefts and destruction of properties among communities. For instance, if a shop belonging to a Meru entrepreneur is vandalized by the Borana, the following day, the Meru will vandalize the Borana shop; if the Borana steal cows from the Meru, the following day, the victims will also steal cows from the Borana. Communities promptly take reciprocal revenge action against each other for every infringement. Due to the complexity of the conflict in Isiolo, the authorities are often unable to resolve the inter-communal differences.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th march 2021.

²¹⁷ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

²¹⁸ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

²¹⁹ Field interview with Mr. Dabaso Boro, Chairman Isiolo Sub County Peace Committee on 25th March 2021.

²²⁰ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

Conflicts have led to the collapse of relations and traditional social networks among communities. The death of men during conflicts has also altered the traditional role of the family, with women taking on additional duties.²²¹

In most cases the Borana have guns so Meru can't fight with them, they just allow their cows to be stolen and later follow up with the police. This creates enmity between the two communities.²²²

The breakdown in contacts between the communities also exacerbate theft among the communities. For instance, respondents pointed out that in Isiolo, the Borana always work with the Turkana to steal from the Meru. Once this happens, the Meru reports the thefts to police who in turn follow the trails and get the livestock. As the police pursue the thieves, they both clash and in some cases, the Turkana and Borana fight with the police using guns and both parties end up losing their lives.²²³

Death is also a common occurrence when herders from the Borana and Meru communities clash. Because the Borana use sophisticated weapons, the Meru in most cases end up losing their lives protecting their animals. The relationship between these two communities has worsened because they are incited by their leaders to commit more crimes especially during the election period.²²⁴

Mr. Ahmed Seid who is the Chairman of the interfaith groups also adds that,

The youths in the county are in conflict with themselves and the system. They are unable to withstand economic pressures because of unemployment and poverty levels are high. Some have resolved to using drugs and other have become bandits because of lack of opportunities in the county. The county does not have conducive policies to look into the young people needs and spend resources allocated to them rightfully. When a small issue happens to the youth, they overact because they have been left idle. It is important to note that any conflict that the young people are involved in, it is normally premeditated.²²⁵

Additionally, there is intergenerational transfer of enmity as adults brainwash their children to think that the other communities are not good, a child will grow up by resenting the other community and in the end, this is another way of incitement and the young lads premeditate on conflicts.²²⁶

²²¹ Odhiambo, Michael Ochieng. 2012. *Impact of Conflict on Pastoral Communities' Resilience in the Horn of Africa: Case Studies from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*. Nakuru: RECONCILE And FAO; pp. 23.

²²² Field interview with Gaitakuria, a Meru herder in Isiolo County on 21st March 2021.

²²³ Field interview with Gaitakuria, a Meru herder in Isiolo County on 21st March 2021.

²²⁴ Field interview with Gaitakuria, a Meru herder in Isiolo County on 21st March 2021.

²²⁵ Field interview with Ahmed Seid, Chairman Interfaith Council and Member of the National Council of Elders, 24th March, 2021.

²²⁶ Field interview with Sarah, Assistant Chief - Waso Sub-location, 25th March, 2021.

The adoption of violence by young people has a significant effect on the normative and conventional hierarchy of society, where the elderly are now overwhelmed by their disobedience, and seek to have a modelling influence on their actions. National and County economy is undermined by the collapse of the coping mechanisms caused by continuing war. To survive following the loss of livelihood caused by the break-up of coping mechanisms, people use negative enterprises such selling property, damage and infrastructure vandalization, while corporate elements of society relocate to metropolitan centers to look for menial work.²²⁷

4.5.1 Insecurity and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons is both a consequence and driver of insecurity in Isiolo County. The fear of “other armed” communities compels both the Meru and the Borana to acquire firearms from both largely illicit sources to defend their lives, their property and their livestock. Isiolo is increasingly growing into a hub for the small arms trade from Kenya’s northern neighbors. Traders often transport guns along with animals and other commodities, including miraa (khat), or on boda bodas (motorcycle taxis). Most pastoralists consider firearms to be essential for defending their assets, especially in places where the police presence is poor. Guns used aggressively exacerbate inter-communal violence, and they allow youths to operate outside of culturally defined boundaries and the authority of elders.²²⁸ Another closely allied consequences of the proliferation of small arms in Isiolo is violent extremism and radicalization of youth into terrorist activities. The proximity of Isiolo to the porous Ethiopian and Somalia borders is a serious concern: Isiolo County provides a transit point and a multi-ethnic cosmopolitan hideout where the terror operatives easily blend into the general population while planning to execute their missions.²²⁹

Another impact of the foregoing insecurity is the displacement of teachers who are forced to abandon their work stations or even their profession altogether. This inter-communal conflict and insecurity also affects students’ ability to study and attend school besides damaging school infrastructure. Matters are not helped by the fact that some teachers and students also

²²⁷ Odhiambo, Michael Ochieng. 2012. *Impact of Conflict on Pastoral Communities’ Resilience in the Horn of Africa: Case Studies from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*. Nakuru: RECONCILE And FAO; pp. 23

²²⁸ Mkutu, Kennedy Agade and Abdullahi Boru Halakhe. (March 2019). *Rapid Assessment of the Institutional Architecture for Conflict Mitigation: Isiolo County - Kenya*. World Bank Group.

²²⁹ Ibid

participate in conflicts, increasing their likelihood of being exploited and killed. This ultimately affects students' performance and literacy levels in the county.²³⁰

Guyo has noted that the armed inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County has created population dislocation, albeit on a small scale. Majority of the displaced people have managed to return home but others have not. There is additional danger associated with such displaced people: they can be a target of recruitment into armed groups or extremism.²³¹

While the price and costs of small arms and light weapons differ variedly on type, age and the place from which one acquires it and the time, upon which demand is usually high when there is conflict, most sources of small arms and light weapons destined for Isiolo County remains in Somalia and Ethiopia while the bullets are believed to be sourced from the government ordinance factory in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County courtesy of corrupt military officers. The main reasons for the arms acquisition is due to weak or lack of state presence (security) coupled with police unfamiliarity with the terrain of Isiolo County and neighboring areas and usually restrictive commands that keep the police on the highway and only during the day.²³²

Echoing similar sentiments, Mkutu argues that Isiolo County, together with Moyale and Mandera are centers of small arms and light weapons trafficking. This is largely due to its strategic location as a gateway to the North as well as its accessibility and centrality on the Kenyan map. As such, Isiolo not only serves the needs of illegal small arms and light weapons needs in the County itself but also in other pastoralist government forsaken counties, Nairobi with a set supply of small arms and light weapons from its neighboring northern countries.²³³

According to Mkutu, improvements in transport infrastructure have made this easier. In 1997, an infamous 'supermarket' for lethal arms was shut down by security agents. However, this did not halt the illegal trade. Known routes of small arms and light weapons trafficking into Isiolo include those making their way from Ethiopia through the border town of Moyale as

²³⁰ Guyo Sankala Sama. (2019). "Assessment of the Dynamics of Resource-Based Conflict on Human Security in Kenya: A Case Study of Isiolo County." Unpublished M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.

²³¹ Ibid

²³² P E A C E O R INTO PIECES Conflict Analysis and Mapping for Isiolo and Marsabit Counties. Isiolo Gender Watch. 2017.

²³³ Kennedy Mkutu, 2019, Pastoralists, Politics and Development Projects. Understanding the layers of armed conflict in Isiolo county, Kenya, in, BICC, *Future Rural Africa: Future-Making and Social-Ecological Transformation*. Cologne: Universities of Bonn and Cologne.

well as through the expansive Marsabit county; Somalia through Mandera, El Wak and Wajir; as well as South Sudan through the sprawling arid lands of Turkana and Samburu.

The Meru are not just victims of the increased availability of lethal weapons in illegal hands, but it is also believed that they are complicit. Miraa vehicles supplying Garissa and Moyale sometimes return with caches of small arms and light weapons. In his study, Mkutu points out that in Isiolo town, guns are conveyed by PSV motorcyclists.²³⁴

Another product of conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Isiolo County is cattle rustling. Cattle rustling is a menace that prevails in the pastoral communities living in Arid and Semi-arid communities. It remains a lucrative practice among these communities' world over. Traditionally this activity was considered as a cultural practice that was sanctioned by elders in the communities involved. However, cattle rustling has in recent times gained currency as a major threat to security and a cause for great concern. In the academic world, scholars trivialised cattle rustling as a mere cultural practice but this has also changed as new trends and dynamics emerge for instance the commercialisation and internationalisation of cattle rustling.²³⁵

Cattle rustling is commercialized, the communities use bandits who are armed to steal from the pastoralists and they take the livestock to Kenya Meat Commission for the animals to be slaughtered and meat sold to other towns. It has become a major business amounting to billions of Kenya shillings yearly. Even the employed herder have come a part of the raiders and bandits, they steal animals from other herders and sell them to the elite who are part of the business.²³⁶

This idea has also been reinforced by other scholars who argue that to a large extent, the general view that cattle rustling has undergone fundamental transformation. It has evolved from a cultural practice where communities test bravery and prowess to warfare between various communities. In Isiolo County, this evolution can be traced to the 1990s when the cultural practice transformed and started being regarded as 'cattle rustling' where weapons such as guns were introduced. Small Arms and Light Weapons replaced the crude and traditional weapons used and this was made worse by destruction of property and murder.²³⁷

²³⁴ Kennedy Mkutu, 2019, Pastoralists, Politics and Development Projects. Understanding the layers of armed conflict in Isiolo county, Kenya, in, BICC, *Future Rural Africa: Future-Making and Social-Ecological Transformation*. Cologne: Universities of Bonn and Cologne.

²³⁵ Cheserek, G.J. (2007). *Resource Use Conflicts Between Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Communities in Kenya*.

²³⁶ Field interview with Rebecca, High school teacher, 25th March, 2021.

²³⁷ Kimenju, J., Singo M., & Wairagu, F. (2003). *Terrorized Citizens: Profiling Small Arms and Insecurity in the North Rift Region of Kenya*. Nairobi: SRIC.

In Kenya, the main source of livelihood for nomadic communities is domestication of livestock. Pastoral communities in the country can be found in Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Baringo North, Marakwet, Isiolo, Trans-Nzoia and Marsabit. These areas experience high levels of rustling and the main causes include weak governance systems, political and economic marginalization, and inadequate resources.²³⁸ The animal house is an essential kind of pastoral capital and is a tool for production, stockpiling, transportation and transportation of food and money, in arid and semi-arid environments. Here, the primary drivers of the pastoral economy, as populations obtain livelihood from livestock resources include natural resources such as pastures, water, natural vegetation, and animals. In lieu of the foregoing, cattle rustling has been a salient feature in communities living in arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya as well as other African countries serving the purpose of offering a pool of cattle wealth from which, bridegrooms can draw their bride price as well as helping a given community replenish their livestock herds particularly after a livestock-ravaging epidemic, drought, or after a raid.

In contemporary times, however, cattle rustling has become a key capitalistic predatory mode of wealth accumulation with devastating consequences. The ensuing conflicts related to cattle rustling affects development as well as the provisioning of essential services in pastoralists' areas due to the ensuing disruption of the communities' livelihood systems by restricting economic development. In addition, diseases may spread through raiding of infected animals. Structurally, amenities such as education services may be affected when teachers are forced to withdraw from conflict stricken areas and the communities. There is also outbreak of diseases like Typhoid and Cholera when people move to the same region as they share minimal amenities in flight of conflicts.

4.5.2 Insecurity, Political Violence, Radicalisation and Terrorism

This section analyses the impact of political violence, radicalisation and terrorism on the peace in Isiolo County. One of the impacts of the inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County is the normalization of the use of violence in politics. Most displaced people were never resettled or compensated; and armed criminals were never prosecuted. This impunity is a suitable prelude and opportunity for opportunists who might wish to instrumentalise violence for political outcomes. Often political incentives are stronger than peace motivations for

²³⁸ Mogire, E. (2004). *The Humanitarian Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Threat to Security*. Eldoret: Moi University Press.

conflict. The violence is believed to work in such a manner that any good institutional move that may seek to reform the system is continually undermined.²³⁹

Ethno-political conflicts in Isiolo County have also fueled religious militancy. Religion fuels inter-faith war by generating intolerant and incompatible ideas about identity, especially by pitting the Muslims against Christians.²⁴⁰ The identity-based conflicts often result in asymmetrical warfare pitting the states' machinery against irregular rag tag militias and terrorist groups.

This inter-communal conflict in Isiolo has also created a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. In Kenya, most of the terror groups have religious extremist connotations largely using harsh interpretations of the Quranic concept of jihad. Their resilience and ability to turn Africa into terror zones is based on the fact that they have woven supranational terror infrastructures as well as cultivating linkages with disaffected sections of the populations.

This is the case with terror groups operating in Isiolo such as the Al Shabaab. The group has expanded terror activities in the East Africa and the Great Lakes Region wreaking terror havoc in various countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi and using Isiolo as a recruitment center, arms distribution center as well as a terror launch pad. The primacy of the security issue occasioned with the threats by terror groups has been none greater than in the Greater Horn of Africa region. This is occasioned by the fact that terrorism has been targeted at a number of countries in the region with terror infrastructure being widespread. In addition, terror activities have targeted not only the countries involved but also western interests in the horn of Africa region. To counter terrorism, these countries have forged security fronts that aim at tackling conflict together. The 2010 Kampala bombings that saw man-hunts across the region and extradition arrangements is a case in point.

Many young people in Isiolo County are either radicalized or radicalizing courtesy of the Al Shabaab, which is suspected to be having a presence in the area. The terrorist group has been giving the wrong narratives to the youths which have involved themselves in violent actions. The Al Shabaab has been recruiting the youths through cells by looking for loopholes in the youth unemployment, poverty levels and also in the acquiring of legal documents in the

²³⁹ Scott-Villers, P., Ondicho, T., Lubaale, G., Ndung'u, D., Kabala, N., & Oosterom, M. (2014). Roots and routes of political violence in Kenya's civil and political society: A case study of Marsabit county (IDS Evidence Report N. 71, Addressing and Mitigating Violence). Brighton: IDS.

²⁴⁰ Huntington, S. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

county. The youths are lied to during recruitments that they will be given money and properties but they end up living in the bush, they are forced into marriages and they later become the slaves of their recruiters.²⁴¹

Cases of students being drawn from school to join the terror group are rampant in the county. Respondents recounted that there is recruitment of students by the Al Shabaab, they are taken from school unwillingly to Somalia. In 2016, in Isiolo boys, over 30 students disappeared from school and they were taken to Somalia to become part of the Al Shabaab, they were taken to the bush to be tortured and radicalized, the ones who escaped from the extremists lived to tell the stories. In 2017, at least 7 students were captured and rescued by the army from Al Shabaab, where they were undergoing radicalization; they had to sit their national examination from police custody. Some boys were captured, forcefully recruited and taken to Somalia; those who refused to do Al Shabaab's bidding were killed.²⁴²

Like many African conflicts, the inter-communal violence in Isiolo has been resurgent and continuous, spelling doom for the region. Conflicts in the northern Kenya political landscape despite being local have tended to escalate to other countries and regions. This is largely because of the ambiguous nature of African boundaries which are largely vestiges of the continent's colonial heritage. The borders have divided ethnic communities between two or more nations such as the Somalis who are in four nations; united by ethnicity and divided by maps. To this effect therefore, conflict erupting in one region is more likely to escalate to other areas. This is the case with the horn of Africa region where conflict in Somalia has been escalating to other regions, bringing about security nightmares.

4.6 Conflict Management in Isiolo County

This section examines the various efforts to manage the resource-based conflict between the Meru and Borana communities in Isiolo County. It gives special attention to the formal initiatives by the state and its agencies as well as the informal mechanisms at the community level, which also bring the state and non-state actors together.

4.6.1 Community based initiatives

A number of mechanisms have been employed to address conflict in Isiolo County. For instance, respondents pointed out that the communities affected use barazas and community

²⁴¹ Field interview with Ahmed Seid, Chairman Interfaith Council and Member of the National Council of Elders, 24th March, 2021.

²⁴² Field interview with Rebecca, High school teacher, 25th March, 2021.

leaders to bring the communities together for reconciliation. This helps them differentiate the offense from the generalized ethnic grouping of issues. For examples, the residents are used to assigning collective communal culpability for offences committed by individuals. The community leaders help to differentiate the offender from the community or from their religions, either Muslim or Christian.²⁴³

Additionally, respondents pointed out that the Nyumba kumi, area managers, and bodaboda leaders are involved in the conflict resolution process. Interfaith/interdenominational committees are involved to bring both the Muslims together. Although the youths are used by politicians and leaders who give them money to cause chaos, they also use them to bring the young people together for dialogues. Intermarriages between the communities also helps the communities to settle differences on account of being in-laws.²⁴⁴

4.6.2 County government initiatives

The council of elders from all the communities in the county is also involved in the mediation and dialogue processes to help address the issues. If the communities concede wrongdoing, then they are fined and the disputes are settled. Interfaith organizations may then take over the issues for dialogue by further bringing the people together. The county administrators also take part in conflict resolutions by bringing peace committees and the residents together. Once the communities feel their matters have been addressed, then they can relate with each other. But even after the mediations, there are always underlying issues that make the conflicts to spark again.²⁴⁵

Sarah who is an Assistant Chief in Waso Sub Location, and who attends the peace meetings, points out that the leaders, council of elders, governor, county commissioners, county security teams are called to bring people from the grassroots and bring the youth leaders together for dialogue. Everyone is tasked to preach peace to their communities. The communities must reconcile first so that they are able to live together. If grudges are there between communities, then the dialogues help the resolving and reconciliation to happens between the communities. Moreover, workshops are organized to sensitize the citizens and dialogue on issues of conflict. The NGO's and CBO's involved are Gender Watch, Interfaith Organizations, Isiolo Peace Link, Stars of Hope Organization among others. The youth and

²⁴³ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

²⁴⁴ Field interview with Chuchu, Chief – Waso Location, 19th March, 2021.

²⁴⁵ Field interview with Mr. Mutua, a Deputy County Commissioner, 24th March, 2021.

residents are also sensitized against radicalization, if they hear anyone was taken to Somalia, the community is supposed to report to the authority so that the young ones can be tracked and brought back home.²⁴⁶

4.6.3 National government efforts

A number of national government peace building efforts, for instance, have been directed to the county of Isiolo. One such measure is the posting of additional law enforcement agents in the county. Skirmishes among pastoral groups or those pitting pastoralists, on the one hand, against farmers, on the other, are inspired by the quest to gain entry to watering points and forage lands. With devolution, inter-ethnic politics and power competition have added another layer to the inter-communal clashes through the need for political endurance and the accretion of individual prosperity. For instance, the devolution of resources and political power to the county level since 2013 has heightened competition between the elite and also among the different communities. Owing to the fact that infrastructural and macroeconomic plans have been made known, tensions have surfaced coupled with fears of exclusion, marginalization and dispossession of customary land rights through speculative land-grabbing and uncompensated state acquisition. With Isiolo being a hub of the illicit weaponry trade, SALWs have become conflict multipliers at every level.²⁴⁷

Due to the poor rough terrain, even when the police gets reports of the wrangles and insecurities, they are unable to respond to help the residents. The police also don't have adequate resources e.g. money to fuel the cars, their weapons are not as sophisticated as those of the bandits and manpower. This leaves the residents helpless and therefore they acquire arms to protect themselves. As a result of the use of fire arms, many residents' loss their lives, other are displaced and crippled for life.²⁴⁸

Edukan, a security official in Isiolo, noted that in 2019, the Turkana killed police in Ngaremara, the police had intervened on the conflict between the Turkana and Meru that reside in Ngaremara. The Turkana and Meru were conflicting about the pasture lands. The Meru claimed that the land belonged to them and they prohibited the Turkana from grazing the lands. The Turkana tried to graze their animals by force and the Meru informed the police who responded to the issue. When the police intervened the Turkana used their sophisticated

²⁴⁶ Field interview with Sarah, Assistant Chief - Waso Sub-location, 25th March, 2021.

²⁴⁷ Mkutu, Kennedy. *Pastoralists, Politics and Development*. 3rd December 2019. 24 February 2021. <<https://www.crc228.de/2019/12/03/kennedy-mkutu-published-his-paper-on-pastoralists-politics-and-development-projects-at-the-bicc/>>

²⁴⁸ Field interview with Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.

weapons which they acquired illegally to fight and wound the police and they ended up killing one policeman.²⁴⁹

Additionally, because of the presence of illegal sophisticated weapons in the county, killings have become easy. When these raids and killings happens, the police are unable to intervene because the raiders use the sophisticated weapons and the police do not have such capacity.²⁵⁰

When the government security officers deployed in Isiolo County are active in prevention of conflicts in the county, the politicians influence higher offices so that the security officers can be transferred from Isiolo County to other regions. The involved parties bring allegations of corruption so that the security officers who are involved in bringing peace and curbing conflicts in the county are transferred to other regions.²⁵¹

Devolution of power and resources was another state inspired approach to reduce the previous all electoral battles for the presidency, and redress regional marginalization and inequitable development. As a result, 47 counties were created with their elected governors enjoying considerable power and control of budgets worth billions of shillings. Lamentably, even though devolution has brought fiscal and political facilities closer to the grassroots, it has also extended tribal schisms in counties and galvanized tribes to install one of their own into the many elected devolved seats.

4.6.4 Inter-community peace accords

Another approach employed to address conflict is in the form of peace accords. One good example is the Peace Accord of 2013 signed in Nanyuki town in which political elite from both Isiolo and Meru counties committed themselves to eliminate the longstanding tensions emanating from the demarcation of their common border. In the words of Guyo, the 2013 Accord was a successor to previous declarations on peace in Isiolo County facilitated by NGOs. Peace caravans have been held to sensitize communities on existing peace agreements such as the Garissa and Modogashe declarations. The Modogashe declaration, for example, was signed in 2001 and revalidated later in 2005 and 2011 between the warring communities. It was designed to address the major issues that caused conflict in the region. The peace agreement sought to address issues of unauthorized grazing, cattle rustling, trafficking of

²⁴⁹ Field interview, Edukan Security Personnel, 23rd March 2021.

²⁵⁰ Field interview with Rebecca, High school teacher, 25th March, 2021.

²⁵¹ Field interview, Abdi Aziz Ahmed, a Businessman in Isiolo county, 22nd March 2021.

illegal firearms and highway banditry. In order to end conflicts over water and pasture, the declaration directed pastoralists to seek permission from elders and chiefs of the areas they were moving into. The pastoralists were also to be cleared by District Security and Intelligence Committees (DSIC) in their host areas and to also surrender any weapons they brought along with them. Provision of a platform through which conflicting communities can air their grievances and discuss possible solutions has been seen as the declaration's most notable achievement. Communities felt that the more roles they have been given by the declaration to identify their security challenges, motivates them more to manage conflicts and collaborate with government security agencies.²⁵²

4.6.5 Peace efforts by NGOs

Non-governmental actors have also been actively involved in conflict resolution processes. The USAID initiated the AHADI resilience programme to support the NDMA and six ASAL counties of Garissa, Isiolo, Mandera, Marsabit, Wajir and Turkana to build community resilience in the face of prolonged droughts caused by climate change. To address the challenges faced by the arid and semi-arid counties such as Isiolo County including weak governance and policy environment, over-reliance on livestock and chronic climate vulnerability as well as the debilitating cycles of drought and the effects of climate change which often lead to massive losses of livestock of which a majority of the people rely on, as well as resource-based conflicts that threaten lives and livelihoods, AHADI, under the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) has been working with national and county governments, communities and partners to build capacity of county governments and strengthen good governance and secure development outcomes that reduce vulnerability and contribute to the overarching goals of strengthening food security and reducing poverty.²⁵³

AHADI has been developing sector policies for livestock, water, rangeland management, adaptation to changes in climate and the reduction of risks caused by disasters. In 2017, this programme focused on strengthening sector governance, providing support to create an enabling environment for better service delivery. Additionally, the programme focused on technical assistance to enable Isiolo County to develop policies, sector plans and to guide the

²⁵² Guyo Sankala Sama. (2019). "Assessment of the Dynamics of Resource-Based Conflict on Human Security in Kenya: A Case Study of Isiolo County." Unpublished M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.

²⁵³ State University of New York/Center for International Development (2017). Agile and Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions (AHADI) Annual Progress Report – October 2016 to September 2017. Washington, DC: The United States Agency for International Development.

design of programs that would help to strengthen good governance and enhance service delivery. This support included engaging citizens in policy development through meaningful public participation.²⁵⁴

Another programme mooted by non-governmental groups is the Pastoralist Communities Climate Resilience Program (PCCRP) within the auspices of the NCKK. Under the programme, NCKK trained community climate change ambassadors, facilitated their interactions with government and organized stakeholder forums to discuss and validate the findings of a CIDP review assignment and develop the Climate Change Mainstreaming Framework (CCMF) for the counties of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Turkana. The forums targeted county government officials and community climate change ambassadors. During the forums, the NCKK presented the results of the CIDP review with the aim of helping participants to identify gaps for climate change mainstreaming in key sectors within the CIDP.²⁵⁵

4.6.6 Measures to combat violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism

Various players in Isiolo County have been involved in working together to address violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism. For instance, Imams talk against radicalization but that the issue is a matter of huge debate among Muslims. The county government has also carried out some civic education about radicalization, while the Interfaith Network has conducted some preliminary sensitizations in schools and tertiary institutions, but had to stop due to lack of finances. In addition, the county has tried to provide some menial jobs for idle youth, but there is no coherent policy within the county to address this challenge. The intervention by the national government has seen the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit indiscriminately arrest youth, amidst claims that there are demands for bribes to earn freedom from custody. There are cases of police harassment of parents of youth suspected to have joined Al Shabaab. Further, whistle blowers are said to receive threats raising suspicion of complicity by police in this issue. Finally, reports of youths being abducted and killed by suspected security agencies are rampant. In brief, there appears to be no coherent and purposeful approach to address this challenge by the community, the county government and the national government.

²⁵⁴ State University of New York/Center for International Development (2017). Agile and Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions (AHADI) Annual Progress Report – October 2016 to September 2017. Washington, DC: The United States Agency for International Development.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the economic, social and political impact of the inter-communal conflict between the Borana and the Meru in Isiolo County as well as the measures and interventions applied to mitigate the situation. It has equally analyzed the displacement of the population groups, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the increasing radicalization and extremism among the youth, political violence as well as efforts to resolve these challenges.

It is worth noting that the conflict in Isiolo area is attributable to resource scarcity, poverty and underdevelopment occasioned by the fact that the area is one of the most unproductive areas in the Kenya. There is also the abuse of the traditional culture of cattle rustling to restock livestock after severe droughts or diseases, predisposes the area to conflict.

In many arid and semi-arid areas, resource ownership is not guaranteed. Indeed, in instances where resource ownership is scantily tenured, the security of tenure is largely a tall order. As we might have shown in the previous argument in Chapter two, most of the conflicts have a bearing on the resource use and tenure practices because of the ubiquitous importance of the Rangeland resources in pastoral lifestyle. Pastoralists rely on their animals to use their dry land's transitory products. Water marks remain the key nodes in the use of far-flung grazing resources. The group is the foundation of control of social resources in traditional pastoral cultures in most arid and semi-arid regions in Kenya rather than in the individual. In the form of tribal, clan and ethnic group, society was ruled by community organizations. Resources are community-owned and there is a common ownership regime.

Elders who enforce the communal regulations regulate the usage of these resources. Their function, their protection, their friends and adversaries belong to a big clan of theirs, and in these communities even people identify fully as members of an ethnic group or clans, such that their clans and their ethnic groupings are called more than the names of an individual's. The property of the clan is considered to be wells, dams, administrative divisions. The clan safeguards the wealth of cattle and provides re-distribution procedures against losses.

Competition for natural resource exploitation is, therefore, a problem for groups. Alliances and agreed clan-level leadership structures manage the local grassland internal market competition. Major disputes occur between larger groups which are identified in language or blood ethnic models and who claim or challenge presumed occupation rights over grassland,

which are unalloyed or unalloyed. Efforts aimed at peace building have been undertaken by elders at the community level, by faith based groups, by NGOs, by the County Government and by the National Government. The conflicts, however, have subsisted in spite of these initiative, raising the need for more innovative and robust approaches to the inter-communal conflict between the Borana and Meru in Isiolo County.

In summary, the inter-communal conflict in Isiolo County has displaced communities, led to the destruction of homesteads and businesses, caused numerous deaths, created economic hardships and poverty and exacerbated the recurring cycle of violence and insecurity. The interventions that have been deployed include local inter-community efforts, NGOs initiatives, as well as various actions by both the County and National governments. These initiatives have had mixed results, therefore, there is need for more robust efforts to solve this challenge.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and draws appropriate conclusions. It institutes a number of recommendations which will be of great importance to policy makers in their effort to design measures that are geared to ending this seemingly endless cycle of violence and turning the tides on Isiolo County. This study examined natural resource conflict between the two warring communities -Meru and the Borana - in Isiolo County, between 2008 and 2019. The project paper set out to establish the main causes of the violent conflict, the relationship between the conflict and natural resources in the county, and the impact of the conflict on the two communities. The research was guided by three hypotheses: the first hypothesis was that lack of equity in access to management of resources was the cause of conflict; the second one was that scarcity of land, water and pasture was another source of the inter-communal conflict; and the last one was that deaths, displacement and destruction of livelihoods were the major impact of the conflict. The study was framed within the environmental scarcity framework of Thomas Homer-Dixon. Research data was derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary respondents, mainly drawn from the affected communities in Isiolo County, were interviewed orally using a question guide. The secondary data was sourced from books and journals obtained from both online databases and physical library facilities. The data was synthesized and analyzed to generate this thesis.

The study finds that Isiolo County is characterized by ethno-linguistic and religious fissures that determine socio-economic and political relations. This phenomenon of social fragmentation and the politicization of ethnicity makes Isiolo County a microcosm of the country's ethnic conflicts. In Isiolo, these inter-community tensions have been characterized by discrimination and marginalization of some ethnicities in favour of others in employment, wealth creation opportunities and access to developmental programmes. As such, the violent undercurrents of pastoralist mobilization and militancy underpinning ethno-linguistic and religious relations in Isiolo County are profoundly shaped by local conditions begotten from years of alienation, disaffection, and dissent.

At the economic level, the study finds that the management of the natural systems is fraught with many challenges: in one illustration, natural systems are generally over-exploited by various users. In Isiolo County, this is characterized by the increased competition and demand for natural resources such as land, pasture and water as well as political resources

such as political positions and public goods from the national and devolved levels of governance. The Isiolo Meru boundary is a salient issue as identified by the respondents. This emanates from the failure to follow colonial district demarcation boundaries. Other economic sources of conflict in Isiolo County include clashes over access to water and pasture, sand harvesting and land tenure.

The political manifestation of this conflict stems from a lack of democratic attitude among participants, especially the court and civil society, and deficient avenues of democratic redress that are either weak or non-existent and hence threaten to deconsolidate palpable. In addition, violence is another cause of conflict as part of the political DNA. Perceptions of exclusion from governmental positions and development projects among communities in Isiolo County also generated a siege mentality inside the municipalities and clans. In the county, political competition is also another source of conflict. The study found out that there are many ethnic competitions, revenge attacks, supremacy, alliance buildings in the county and this brings rivalries. Additionally, undercurrents of migration have permeated ethno-linguistic and religious conflicts in Isiolo County. This can be seen in perceptions of migration into the County.

The study established that there are a number of resources under contestation between the Meru and Borana communities. Conflict between the Borana community who are pastoralists and the Meru Community who are crop farmers is motivated by the struggle over land, access to water, pasture, political power and influence. In their ambition to control and dominate the Isiolo County administration, the attendant political struggles mirror ethnic tussles. The politicians know that political domination contributes immensely towards the building of economic resources.

Along the Meru Isiolo border, there have been conflicts relating to the location of the border. The County Government of Meru, for instance, has surveyed and divided land while issuing ownership documents in areas that are still disputed such as Checheles, Gambera, Ngaremara and Kiwanjani. The influx of livestock from neighboring areas in Isiolo puts pressure on the resource base. Neighboring communities from Wajir, Marsabit, Tana River, Samburu, and Garissa have traditionally moved their livestock into Kula Mawe and Kinna during the dry season and back as soon as it rained. This has changed in recent decades as most of the immigrant herds never return to their place of origin due to recurrent, prolonged dry spells and droughts.

Internally, different communities migrate from their territories to other peoples' territories in search of pasture and water. They follow where there is grass and scrubs to feed their livestock. Drought has been recurrent in the region because of failure of rain. Because Isiolo is on the middle of many mountains and also it is on a sloppy position, even when heavy rains fall, they end up causing floods killing the livestock' and destroying crops and pasture lands. Before the colonial days, where climate was good and people were few, drought used to come after a long period of time. As a result of global warming, today drought is persistent, there is severe drought, no rain, and consequently there is inadequate pasture for animals, people scramble where there is pasture and they come by force with weapons and normally there are no agreements between the parties to graze their animals because they will not wait for their animals which is a source of their livelihood to die, therefore this causes conflicts among communities.

With regards to the impact of ethnic conflict in Isiolo County, most people have been displaced from their ancestral lands and other have fled to other parts of the region in search of better environments to live. During most of the conflicts in Isiolo County, most people are displaced as they scamper for safety in other areas. This also results in societal distrust and disharmony. In Isiolo, there is tension and pressures among communities. People fear and don't trust each other. If there is no trust, then it becomes very hard for them to relate with each other. Everyone is surrounded with tribalism and selfishness forgetting that we are all human beings, people tend to believe in their religion and tribes.

In addition, fighting has resulted in the loss of livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure, as well as the destruction and the disintegration of social services for millions of people. The violence has also been worsened by unevenness in group growth across tribes and clans. More importantly, there was an increase in availability to water and pasture in dry seasons, due to ecological deterioration, among other things.

The young also failed to participate effectively in the creation and growth of peace owing to illiteracy, lack of economic possibilities, unemployment, breakdowns of social and familial connections and other cultural inhibitions. These young people who are driven out of material need have been used and utilized since the early 1990s in terrorism. One of the political impacts of the conflict in Isiolo County has been the normalization of the use of violence in politics. The brutal trick of pushing away voters associated with opponents has been used in Isiolo County. Because the majority of displaced persons were never relocated

or indemnified in the previous conflicts in Kenya, and since most perpetrators of inter-communal disputes were never punished – there seems to obtain a feeling that violence is a legitimate means of influencing the results of elections.

Other political impact of conflict in Isiolo include the internationalization of conflict. Ethno-political conflicts in Isiolo County have fueled religious militancy. Faith-based conflicts are usually inspired by the lack of tolerance for, and accommodation of, their divergent world views. In this county, the Muslim-Christian conflict pits the nomadic herders, on the one hand, and the crop farmers such as the Meru, on the other, in a Huntingtonian fashion. The identity based nature of these conflicts often results in asymmetrical warfare pitting the states' machineries of violence with irregular rag tag militias and terrorist groups among others. Additionally, conflict in Isiolo has created a fertile ground for terrorism. In Kenya, most of the terror groups have religious extremist connotations largely using harsh interpretations of the Quranic concept of jihad. Their resilience and ability to turn Africa into terror zones is based on the fact that they have woven supranational terror infrastructures as well as cultivating linkages with disaffected sections of the populations. From the study, it is also evident that the conflict in Isiolo County has had serious security repercussions on the state of security in Kenya with a “domino effect” occasioned by imperiled development as well as the spread of illegal firearms.

The interplay between struggles to exploit the givens of nature and political dynamics can further compound the skirmishes where there is a risk that growth is largely pursued as a way of pushing selfish politics that result in the enrichment of some elite. In Isiolo County, it plays out in such a way that communities become particularly vulnerable to being co-opted to serve covert political interests. Moreover, with politics being characterized by the zero-sum winner takes all model, it increases inter-community tensions, with the key question being, which group supervises and benefits from the appropriation of funds from the government.

Kenya's ancient culture of heritage is reflected in the exclusive politics of the transferred governing structures and other players. This culture has endured an erroneous sense of rights among populous and economically strong communities and consolidated it. Non-Borana populations like the Meru, as can be seen, in the County of Isiolo feel under-represented in the county leadership controlled by Borana members. Although the move to devolution was seen as a tool to deconstruct the culture of exclusive politics via greater access to public resources and a stronger feeling of nationality, politics remains organized along ethnic lines.

This study suggests a number of recommendations that could be useful in conflict resolution. First, this study vouches for a holistic approach that integrates both state and non-state interventions. This includes the distinctive positioning of religious personalities and institutions, organizations of civil society, famous Isiolo figures and young people and women. Non-state actors as well as disenfranchised groups are crucial in reaching individuals who see suspicious state measures in the county, as well. This is crucial to creating reconciliation that is needed both between states and society to create trust and collaboration.

Secondly, in developing systems focusing upon representation as a center of reconciliation and conciliation, civil society actors will be critics. As such, players within civil society in Isiolo County should create a program of outreach and conversation to help the State reach areas. The consequence will be a closer relationship between the state and its electoral district of Isiolo, as well as a bridge between state and society.

Thirdly, reporting channels for information need to be introduced. This will be essential to create consensus on major political milestones in the reconciliation process, including in relation to the sharing of resources. The approaches of civil society that integrate the social structure of the multi ethnic County, formed by traditional identity modes, should be focused on ensuring the integration of the two communities into peace-oriented working relations through vertical integration measures at the level of local, governmental, district and county. In addition, such strategies for peace-building must help to achieve the long-term objective of a harmonized people capable of horizontal integration to construct a unit of ethno-linguistic unity that transcends social separation through bridging.

With tactics that are more promising to peace-builders, power-sharing and identity-building together, the two communities should guarantee that they implement a shared power policy by including a practicable formula for power-sharing. In the early phases of state development, power sharing is required in county decision-making and resource distribution procedures and it is a prelude to potentially beneficial repercussions. Incorporating all communities gives the county's governing structures a considerable potential for legitimacy since it deals with representation in a way that most inhabitants know.

The Nyumba Kumi and Area managers are not involved in the county processes. As such, there is a need that they should be recognized by the county and National government because they risk their lives even at night to deal with the issues in the community at their expenses. Moreover, the county should plan to compensate them and provide security to them

because they move at night. Additionally, there is a need to set up platforms for dialogues between all communities in the county. This will help mitigate the problems in future. The use of inter-faith leaders as well as Imams will go a long way in healing the wounds that stoke animosity between the communities. The Imams are highly respected in the Muslim society, so the people listen to their opinions.

The National Government Administrative Officers should be impartial as this will be critical in helping the locals particularly in lieu of the tribal nature of the county government. There should be equality and inclusion in governance in the county owing to the cosmopolitan nature of the county, there is a need for ethnic balance in political positions in the county so that all communities' interests are looked into. Additionally, there is a need to observe the 1/3 gender rule in leadership.

The issue of allocation of ownership title deeds for land needs to be carefully determined to prevent illegal encroachments. This will eventually reduce conflict. Additionally, there is a need to innovate macroeconomic measures designed to diversify the ways of livelihoods and reduce dependency on livestock, they should be involved in local trades and farming. The law enforcement agencies should devise ways to deal with economic sabotage that is designed to impoverish certain communities. Deal with the issues of business destruction and looting. Closely related is the need for the national government should increase their presence in the region to deal with issues of insecurities effectively.

Because conflicts can reoccur, it is therefore, important for leaders and elders to look for the root causes of these conflicts. In any particular moment, the conflict management must be a continuous process. The people involved should put up structures to monitor, get early warnings and know how to deal with the conflicts on a daily basis. Sensitization of the youth especially on issues of radicalization and help them deal with psychological issues because the youths normal fall into depression easily and also indulge in drug taking which in turn leads to the youths getting involved into violence. The leaders have also used diplomacy in stopping conflict among communities. They have resolved using dialogues, arbitrations and restorative justice systems. The county is returning some cases to be resolved by the elders in the grassroots by amicably resolving and cooling down the citizens.

These initiatives could help to mitigate the inter-communal violence between the Meru and Borana in Isiolo County. The interventions have to be innovative enough to address the

resource-based triggers of this persistent conflict between the two communities, thereby assuring the County and the country of peace which in turn catalyzes development.

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10. Edukan Security Personnel, 23rd March 2021.
11. Gaitakuria, a Meru herder in Isiolo County, 21st March 2021.
12. George and Amin, staff at Isiolo Peace Link, 24th March, 2021.
13. Henry, Area Manager, Kanguto, 26th March, 2021
14. Karuti, a shoe shiner in Isiolo town, 22nd March, 2021.
15. Mutua, a Deputy County Commissioner, 24th March, 2021.
16. Ramata Ahmed, 22nd March, 2021.
17. Rebecca, High school teacher, 25th March, 2021.
18. Regina Kagwiria, Nyumba Kumi official and retired teacher, 26th March 2021.
19. Sarah, Assistant Chief - Waso Sub-location, 25th March, 2021.
20. Senior Health records & information officer, Isiolo General Hospital, 23rd March 2021.
21. Jared Onsare, Teacher St. Pauls Kiwanjani Secondary School, 1st April, 2021

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