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RESILIENCE IN CHANGING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS: THE GARRI PASTORALISTS IN SOUTHERN FRONTIERS OF ETHIOPIA

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Abstract. While conflict and the resulting damage to livelihoods displacement are commonly seen as socio-economically and politically disruptive, yet it is essential to recognize that they can also present opportunities for social transformation and collective continuity. This study used historical methods to examine how Garri communities cope with recurring displacement and instability. Through historical analysis and interviews, the study explores Garri's resilience in a complex political setting. Garri's ability to handle crises and create stability is influenced by their historical experiences, cultural adaptations, and strategic alliances. Particularly, the Garri shift from reactive to proactive resilience helped them maintain their collective continuity and ontological security. The town-making and commercialized pastoralism highlights their adaptability to uncertainties and proactive response to evolving circumstances. Proactive resilience is irreversible, sequential, autonomous, and result-oriented. Therefore, Garri's resilience mechanisms reveal multifaceted narratives of adaptation, transformation, and strategic response, offering valuable insights into the complex dynamics of survival, living with and adapting to uncertainties, and community rebuilding within a dynamic environment. The study argues that conflict and displacement, despite their hardships, should be viewed as opportunities for collective development and continuity. Communities can achieve ontological security and collective continuity by adopting proactive resilience mechanisms and seeking constructive solutions.

Key words: *frontiers, displacement, town-making, somalization, commercialization.*

Rezumat. Conflictele și daunele care rezultă asupra deplasării mijloacelor de trai sunt considerate în mod obișnuit ca perturbatoare din punct de vedere socio-economic și politic, dar acestea pot prezenta și oportunități de transformare socială și continuitate colectivă. Acest studiu a folosit metode istorice pentru a examina modul în care comunitățile Garri fac față deplasărilor și instabilității recurente. Prin analize istorice și interviuri, studiul explorează rezistența comunității Garri într-un cadru politic complex. Capacitatea de a gestiona crizele și de a crea stabilitate este influențată de experiențele lor istorice, adaptările culturale și alianțele strategice. În special, trecerea Garri de la reziliența reactivă la reziliența proactivă

i-a ajutat să-și mențină continuitatea colectivă și securitatea ontologică. Păstoritul urbanistic și comercializat evidențiază adaptabilitatea lor la incertitudini și răspunsul proactiv la circumstanțe în evoluție. Reziliența proactivă este ireversibilă, secvențială, autonomă și orientată spre rezultate. Prin urmare, mecanismele de reziliență ale comunității Garri dezvăluie narațiuni cu mai multe fațete ale adaptării, transformării și răspunsuri strategice, oferind perspective valoroase asupra dinamicii complexe ale supraviețuirii, conviețuirii și adaptării la incertitudini și reconstruirii comunității într-un mediu dinamic. Studiul susține că conflictele și strămutarea, în ciuda dificultăților lor, ar trebui privite ca oportunități de dezvoltare și continuitate colectivă. Comunitățile pot obține securitate ontologică și continuitate colectivă prin adoptarea de mecanisme proactive de reziliență și căutând soluții constructive.

Cuvinte cheie: *frontiere, deplasare, urbanism, somalizare, comercializare.*

1. Introduction

Pastoralists experience various uncertainties and insecurities from constant migration, mobility, and displacement caused by climate change, conflict, and development-induced relocation [1-3]. Displacement disrupts people's lives and breaks the established social, cultural, and economic networks of the displaced, which are crucial for sustaining their lives and livelihoods. Africa has a higher number of displaced people affected by conflict, violence, and natural disasters. The Horn of Africa is characterized by significant population displacement due to various factors such as conflict-induced displacement, natural disasters, development initiatives, and other demographic shifts. Conflict-induced displacement has been a long-standing and pervasive issue in this complex and dynamic region, leading to both internal and inter-continental displacement. Ongoing conflicts, political instability, and historical tensions have forced communities to migrate, contributing to the displacement pattern in the region [4]. For a long time, the Horn of Africa has been subjected to the interplay of foreign interests and local forces, resulting in destabilizing consequences for the wider region [5].

The term 'displaced population' refers to people forced to leave their original residential place and community due to conflicts, violence, natural or human-made disasters, or development projects [6,7]. People in this community are highly vulnerable to disasters due to their limited social networks and inability to share their problems with their neighbors. Thus, they do not receive adequate support during and after disasters. They also remain at high risk of physical attack, assault, and abduction, and frequently, they are deprived of adequate shelter, food, and health services.

For several centuries, in the past and recently, Southern Ethiopia has become prominent for frequent displacement of people caused by several factors. Recently, the problem has become ethnic conflict or state intervention-driven conflicts between ethnic or communal groups [1,8]. Notably, in numerous instances, state interventions have been identified as aligning with specific groups, intensifying ethnic tensions, and amplifying displacement [9,10]. This area has witnessed the development of communities primarily comprised of groups who have been displaced due to frequent violent conflicts and natural disasters.

Historically, pastoralist groups such as the Garri, Gabra, Sakuye, and others have been recognized for their frequent mobility, displacement, and flight traditions when confronted with insecurity challenges [11,12], including several natural calamities, conflict, and

mistreatment. This mobility behavior is the response to challenges that reflect a long-standing adaptive pastoralist livelihood strategy deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and economic fabric of the area. The historical precedent of mobility is often intricately tied to the pastoral or semi-pastoralist lifestyles traditionally practiced by these arid land communities [13,14]. In times of pastoral resource scarcity, inter-group competition, and conflict, the decision to migrate has served as a means of physical survival and a strategic response to safeguard cultural heritage, resources, and social cohesion. Decision-making about migration in conflict situations is complex and influenced by a range of factors, including possession of knowledge about the environment, existence of reliable resources, dependable allies, stable social relations, assessments of risk factors like disease, social networks, and political and structural conditions in the destination areas or societies [15].

During the 1960s and 1970s, inter and intra-state conflicts in the region displaced various pastoral communities. This included the Garri, Gabra, Arssi, and other Somali and Oromo-speaking groups in the region [9,16]. Most of these people were displaced locally within the state's border, while others were forced to cross state borders and move into other locations in the Somalia and Northern Kenya Communities [17]. Previous research indicates that Somali or Somali-affiliated pastoral communities have been particularly affected by conflict-induced threats [18]. Despite being impacted by displacement experience, they were often categorized as 'victims,' but it is essential to recognize that they possess agency and actively respond to risks emerging from the challenges of displacement experience [19]. These prove resilience in the face of displacement. The specificities of each displacement situation play a crucial role in shaping the response to be taken in the form of livelihood patterns [20].

This paper explicitly emphasizes the Garri in the Southern frontiers of Ethiopia, exploring their resilience mechanisms in response to recurring uncertainties, risks of natural disasters, conflict, and displacement effects through historical analysis. Based on an empirical analysis, the study seeks to unravel the multifaceted strategies employed by the Garri community to cope with the risks, uncertainties, and challenges posed by frequent disruptions to their livelihoods, organization of their society, and socio-cultural fabric. By delving into the complex dynamics of their resilience to uncertainties and risks, the research aims to contribute nuanced insights into how the Garri community copes with the enduring impact of risks of uncertainties, conflict, and frequent experiences of displacement, shedding light on the adaptive measures, community networks, and cultural strengths that sustain their cohesion in the face of adversity.

2. Context of the study

The historical frontier between Ethiopia's and Kenya's contemporary state of artificial colonially created territorial borders has been marked by a complex interplay of mobility and multiple frequent displacements [21-23]. These were mainly created by frequent natural disasters, pastoralists' mobility needs, frequent resource-based competition, and violent conflict. Accordingly, pastoralists in this frontier region frequently cross this border for various reasons and face the risk of flight and involuntary displacement. There is a risk of disruption of their traditional migration pattern and pastoral livelihood. It also disrupts their patterns of access to pastoral resources and thereby strains their social and economic stability. This frontier region is home to various Somali and Boran/Oromo-speaking mobile pastoralist communities consisting of the Garri, Gabra, Borana, Rendille, Sakuye, and others [12,21]. Mobility-based multi-species herding base pastoralism is a vital feature of their

livelihood, so they keep cattle, goats, sheep, and camels [24]. This traditional way of life is deeply woven into their cultural fabric, shaping their social structures, economic systems, and traditional knowledge [25,26]. Their rich knowledge of the land, its resources, and the seasonal movements of their herds has been developed over generations.

While this frontier region is home to different Somali and Borana/Oromo-speaking pastoralists, their relationship is marked by both cooperation and conflict. During the pre-colonial era, these groups established a formidable alliance known as *pax-Borana* [11]. However, this cooperative relationship has been transformed into tension, animosity, and erosion of these groups' socio-cultural and economic bonds. Specifically, the colonial intrusion and domination in the Horn region and the southward expansion of the Ethiopia state in the late 19th Century played a significant role in triggering this shift [21]. This shift represents a departure from a solid inter-group partnership to an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and lack of cooperation, impacting the overall dynamic between the communities involved. One of the significant challenges is the escalating resource competition and conflict in the area, which has resulted in disrupted access to grazing lands and water resources. The reduced access to traditional scarce grazing lands and water resources and the state's unilateral interventions contradicting pastoralists' interests have undermined pastoralist livelihoods' long-term sustainability [14]. Among the communities directly affected by these conditions are the Garri. They faced a significant involuntary displacement situation, with more than half a million people displaced from the southern part of the country [8,9]. According to Getachew [9], this large-scale displacement crisis was unprecedented in Ethiopia's history and has been recognized as one of the country's humanitarian crises.

The Garri community has encountered notable flight and displacement experiences throughout history. One of the well-known mass historic flights or exodus is *Keed Gurayi*. It was a trick/flight that took place as a strategic response to escape and avoid dominance imposed by the Borana [11,14]. Bul Hussein, the esteemed community leader, designed and led the Garri flight to the east of what is now the Southern Somalia region. This flight among the Garri served as a symbol of resilience and social identification. The second displacement occurred during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I, followed by the defeat of Italians by Ethiopians' restoration of the imperial government [9,16]. During the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-41, the Garris suffered from victimization and reprisals, forcing them to flee and seek refuge among their ancestral relatives. The emergence of *Jig-heer*, a rebellion against the restored imperial administration during the post-Italian occupation era, marked a significant period of resistance [22]. In their struggle against the repressive imperial regime, the government took a retaliation measure. These measures were explicitly targeted at the Garri residing in the Somali-inhabited regions in the southern frontier of Ethiopia [16]. Many Garri people were forcibly displaced from their homes, uprooted from their ancestral lands, and separated from their families and support networks. This displacement caused immense hardship. The Garri community underwent their subsequent displacement during the Derg regime. This displacement was driven by the rise of Somali nationalism and irredentism policy, which aimed to unify dispersed Somali communities residing in the Horn of Africa [27]. Accordingly, after Somalia achieved independence in the 1960s, the government asserted territorial claims over neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia. This entangled the border region of Somali-speaking groups in the intra-state territorial conflict [28]. The Garri and other groups allied with the Somali irredentist movement experienced the repercussions of this evolving geopolitical tension. Following the defeat of the Somali state and the irredentism movement,

a wave of reprisals followed [9]. Ethiopian state reprisal was violent and characterized by the destruction of villages, looting of livestock and property, and indiscriminate killings of individuals. The severity of the state's violent military measures prompted people to flee in various directions. In his works, Getachew [9] stated that, many sought refuges in Somalia and Kenya, while others sought support from relatives in urban centers such as Negelle and Moyalle. Additionally, some opted to submit to the protection offered by the Ethiopian army in villages that were created as a safe haven by the military.

The complex involvement of diverse actors and factors intertwined with incompatible actors' interests in local conflicts often complicate the outcome of the displacement and responses to the situation. This, in turn, further complicates the dynamics of intergroup relations and cooperation within the region. Accordingly, to adapt to uncertainties and unpredictable situations in the region, the Garri have developed reactive and proactive resilience mechanisms upon returning from displacement to defend their internal cohesion, collective survival, and livelihood. These approaches entail utilizing external alliances, traditional social networks across boundaries, and shifting alliances as strategic resources and social capital. These mechanisms have reshaped across generations as the Garri community adapts to the evolving challenges of recurring natural calamities and inter-groups conflict and its subsequent displacement. This article, therefore, discusses the complex network of resilience mounted among the Garri community, explaining their reactive strategies in response to displacement and their proactive initiatives designed to envision conflict-induced discontent.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a historical methodology to explain the resilience mechanisms employed by the Garri community in response to recurring displacement, drawing upon a historical review. Supplementary information was gathered through interviews with community members. By synthesizing existing knowledge and integrating firsthand experiences, the article aims to comprehensively understand Garri's resilience strategy within a complex socio-political landscape context.

3.1. Study design

The study utilized a qualitative grounded theory approach to guide the research process. Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that involves systematically collecting and analyzing data to develop dimensions based on the experiences of individuals. This approach allows for the progressive development of abstract conceptual categories, enabling the synthesis, explanation, and understanding of the data and the identification of patterned relationships within it [29].

3.2. Study setting

The study explored the dynamics of conflict, displacement, and resilience within the Dawa Zone of the Somali Region in Southern Ethiopia, explicitly focusing on four Woredas: Lehye, Udet, Mubarak, and Qededuma. These Woredas were selected based on their historical significance in the long-standing inter-group pastoral conflict, frequent displacement experience, and resilience discourse. By examining these specific areas, the study aimed to understand better the unique challenges and resilience strategies employed by communities in this region. This geographic focus allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the complexities of navigating the interplay between pastoralism, frequent natural disasters, inter-group conflict, displacement, and resilience.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Early Political History: Resource Based Rivalry and Collective Action and Contested Boundaries

Historically, the pastoral communities in southern Ethiopia exhibited typical characteristics involving mutual raiding, feuds, and local warfare [12,14]. Despite the relatively good record of cooperative history, the communities in the area have been plagued by ongoing mutual hostilities and conflicts, negatively influencing the inter-group cooperative relationships between different groups. According to scholars, the emergence of this conflict can be linked to three interrelated factors: intense rivalry for over access to pastoral resources [28], such as grazing lands, water sources, and control of critical trade routes [30].

The conflict has been crucial in defining collective social boundaries, differentiating among others, and securing grazing rights. One of the informants explained that the inter-group conflict over access and use of pastoral resources in contested areas becomes intense during dry seasons. Conflict over claims to specific territory is one factor in demarcating borders. At the end of the conflict, however, negotiations over the contested boundaries often led to the demand for a truce or the pursuit of reconciliation. Those who are defeated often manage traditionally to avoid destruction. According to Getachew [9], the party that lost the contest sought refuge with neighbors or relatives, integrating into their social groups as clan siblings or vassals or forging new alliances if they remained organized and decisive. The dynamic nature of social interactions in the aftermath of conflict further underscores the adaptability of different social groups. Accordingly, social virtues play a crucial role as catalysts for reshaping the evolving social fabric.

Keed Gurayi, is not just a history of flight but also an example of social adaptability in the face of social calamities and associated risks. It is a story widely held among various communities, such as the Garri, Ajuran, Sakuye, and Rendile. It is a story in which people's decision to escape undertaking a shift portrays a long migration trick towards the southeast. It was caused by the oppressive and brutal actions of the then most influential group of the Borana Saboo towards the Garri. This oppressive rule and competition for limited resources such as pasture and water created a volatile resource competition. According to the informants' narration, Sheki Bule Hussein, a prominent wise leader in the Garri community, is said to have proactively sought a peaceful and resource-endowed territory. His exploration led him to Konfur, where he identified the area as suitable for temporary shelter.

Consequently, many families of the migrant Garri and related groups sought refuge among their Somali neighbors and were incorporated as clients (*sheegat* in the Somali language), while others formed alliances. However, those who opted to stay with livestock in their original habitat became vassals (*tirisso* in the Boran language) of the Borana. The social dynamism in the frontiers fostered multilingualism among most groups [13]. They speak the af-Somali and affan-Borana, specifically the Borana dialect, which led to sharing various cultural practices, attitudes, and beliefs. It also often facilitated shifts in identity besides language, adapting new cultural characteristics, or preserving their pastoral livelihood.

Despite existing differences, various social groups on the frontiers come together and make temporary alliances in the face of common enemies to create collective structures and unite against common enemies. The virtue of the alliance extends beyond ethnic and religious identities [14]. The Borana and various non-Oromo groups, such as the Garri, transcended their historical differences to create an unprecedented alliance known as the

pax-Borana. This alliance significantly departed from the prevailing socio-political crisis, primarily characterized by politicized and religious boundaries. This alliance, characterized by supra-clan collaboration and a determination to overcome past animosities, emerged as a strategic response to external threats. According to Schlee [12], a notable example of their collaboration was their collective efforts in countering common adversaries, such as the Maasai. This alliance cultivated resilience and laid the foundation for ongoing cooperation and shared accomplishments.

The alliance's impact was particularly evident during the dire epidemics and severe famine of the nineteenth Century. The devastating natural calamity known as '*titte cinaaca guuraca*' epidemic, characterized by livestock disease with rib cages blackened with flies, led to widespread displacement. Accordingly, the Garri, Gabra, Garrimarro, Sakuye, and Arissi fled in different directions and sought refuge in various directions during this period among the various groups. Significantly, Borana groups hosted evacuees from various social backgrounds [14]. Mutual assistance was also observed between the relatively unaffected Garri and Garrimarro and Somali clans hosting displaced Borana. This support contributed significantly to the resilience and post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery of diverse communities from the challenges of epidemics and famine. By transcending the narrow ethnic, religious, and local boundaries, these groups secured the sustainability of their communities.

4.2 The colonial partition and its political practices: Redefining Relationships

Nonetheless, the Garri of the frontier regions and Garris established alliances have undergone a significant shift from colonial conquest and fallacies in the political and social landscape from the last decade of the 19th Century. The colonial powers' imposition of colonial rule, subsequent partitioning of the region and the people, and the division of groups along clan lines, formerly one cohesive group into two states and two different citizenships, have created new and complex dynamics [31]. The establishment of Italian Somaliland and the Kenya colony and the expansion of the Ethiopian Empire divided the grazing lands between three states [9, p.112]. They created new political identities and loyalties, often leading to conflict and tensions between neighboring communities [16]. The redefinition of social, economic, and political relations among the various communities has been a significant outcome of these experiences. The arbitrary boundary lines and colonial administrators' efforts to restrict cross-border mobility in Kenya caused significant tensions. In 1910, to stop Somali expansion into Borana areas, British colonial administrators introduced tribal areas and "the Galla-Somali line," imposing fixed boundaries and implementing police patrols to regulate the movement of nomadic communities [23]. One significant consequence was denying access to pastures across borders, contributing to inter-group tensions. The existence of armed robbers and cattle rustling and armed colonial force police (*duba*) intensified conflicts as allies were armed and encouraged to raid other groups. This escalated violence and deepened animosity, perpetuating a cycle of retaliation. These changes have profoundly impacted the Garri and their alliance, as they have struggled to adapt to the new realities and maintain their cultural and economic traditions.

Moreover, the communities on the Ethiopia-Kenya-Somali borderland's mobile pastoral livelihoods patterns, which involved crossing international borders, made them vulnerable to attacks and impacts of natural calamities. Consequently, they were often accused during inter-state conflicts. Incidents along borders involving government troops were noted as early as 1900 and persisted through the 1920s and 1930s [23,32]. The

inevitable entanglement of ethnic groups with their traditional grazing territories extending across national boundaries led to their involvement in these local as well as transnational regional conflicts. Besides, the British implementation of the divide-and-rule policy heightened tensions between neighboring communities, exploiting cultural, linguistic, and religious differences to fuel animosity. As a result, communities such as the Garri, Borana, and Gabra were displaced from their pastures in northern Kenya, consequently abandoning their territory to Somali clans. This strategy deepened the impact of conflicts on pastoralist groups, leading to their forced displacement and territorial losses [33].

On the Ethiopian side, the imperial regime pursued British policy in Northern Kenya more or less, emphasizing pursuing one group over others for effective frontier governance. These had, in turn, significantly contributed to the erosion of long-established inter and intra-group relationships, undermining the social cosmology of the inhabitants of the regions. As a result, the regime has begun to support the militarily then powerful group the Borana over all other groups, specifically the Muslim Oromo and Somali pastoralists [34]. This preference can be attributed to several factors, including their 'historical dominance' and kin's position towards the imperial regime [16]. Consequently, as the most trusted allies of the regime, the Borana were granted protection and appointed to positions of power within government offices. In contrast, the Muslim Oromo and Somali-speaking pastoralists experienced political marginalization and exclusion from positions of influence and power. Indeed, the inequalities in treatment based on religious, linguistic, and cultural affiliations generated inter-group tensions, aggravating the divisions among the groups on the frontiers.

During the short fascist Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941, significant changes in the political and administrative practices occurred in the southern frontiers of Ethiopia. These changes impacted the area and its residents, including the Borana allies of the overthrown Ethiopian government. The effects of the relatively short Italian occupation were profound. There was a notable shift in policy regarding the frontier groups. According to Oba [16], the Italian authorities adopted a policy of granting privileges to Muslim groups to undermine the Christian Ethiopian regime. According to Galtay [35], this policy shift had far-reaching consequences for the Borana allies. They endured a significant number of casualties, resulting in significant mortality. Therefore, these events' impacts unequivocally shaped the region's history, fundamentally redefining inter-group relationships.

After the 1941 liberation of the colony, there was a shift in the government's policy towards the Somali and Oromo on the southern frontiers [36]. The Imperial regime aimed to reward the Borana for their loyalty and support during the struggle against the Italian occupation. Then, the state granted privileges to the Borana. However, it adopted a different approach towards the Muslim Oromo and Somali groups, viewing their support for the Italians as a betrayal. During that time, a resistance force known as the *Jig-heer* rebellion emerged, backed by the Italians, as a counter to the imperial regime [16]. However, in the march against this rebellion, a lot of Garri communities were indiscriminately killed, and some fled to relatives in the neighboring regions [9]. The imperial regime eventually crushed the rebel forces along with the local Borana militia. Therefore, the shift in policy within the periphery and state became dynamic. On the one hand, the government favored Borana and gained advantages, as well as military training and arms delivery backing from the government administration, consolidating their position in the area and beyond the frontier in Kenya. On the other hand, the policy led to heightened tensions and resource, territorial claim centred

conflicts between Somali herders and the Borana, and Borana, Arssi, and Guji Oromo on the other hand, resulting in destabilization of the region.

The tension between the Borana and other groups in the frontier's region began to resurface in the following decades. In order to manage inter-group conflicts and maintain control, the Imperial government of Ethiopia implemented a strategy of creating tribal grouping territories or tribalism and imposing restrictions on mobility [14]. Any group whose members crossed into another group's territory risked penalty or financial payment. However, this policy did not stop pastoralists from crossing the administrative boundary and creating tribal borders; instead intensified competition over limited resources. Raids, fuelled by the desire to secure resources, made conflicts increasingly prevalent. In 1963, a significant conflict erupted in Diree, which is now the southern part of Borana and Guji zone between the Garri and Borana, pressuring the government to intervene militarily. However, as Getachew [9] noted, the government's position or support and alliance with Borana created a contradiction in its actions against Muslim Oromo and Somali-speaking pastoralists involved in the transnational conflict.

Consequently, tensions escalated between the Borana Oromo and Somali pastoralist communities. This tension intensified conflict and led to a series of violent massacres in which a significant number of Garri individuals lost their lives. According to eyewitness informants, among those killed were Robow Hassen Gababa, the Garri chief, and six influential clan elders. The assassination of the then Sultan and the head of Garri's prominent elders, coupled with the indiscriminate use of state violence, had a profound impact, fuelling widespread resentment among the Garri.

4.3 Garri's Role in the Rise and Growth of Resistance Movements

In response to these grievances, a guerrilla campaign led by Alio Hassen Gababa emerged against the Ethiopian army during the *Shifta War* (1963-1970). This resistance movement culminated in the establishment of the Somali Abbo Liberation Front (SALF) during the Ogaden War (1976-78) [16,22]. Simultaneously, along the Kenyan border, an armed struggle against the oppression imposed by Muslim pastoralists was led by Hassan Goro, a fighter who later became a prominent military commander along with Aliyow. These interrelated conflicts, collectively called the *Shifta Wars*, underscore the complex dynamics of regional unrest, ethnic tensions, and the emergence of resistance movements during this historical period [9]. The subsequent resistance efforts revealed profound grievances and a desire for self-determination among the Garri, other Somali groups, and Islamised Somali-speaking communities such as the Gurra, Gabara, and Muslim Borana and Guji. This highlights how the government's policy and its actions not only intensified interethnic tensions between the Oromo and Somali communities but also fuelled broader regional conflicts and resistance movements.

The continued active armed resistance and the government's determination to crush the rebellion by force had a bold and lasting impact on the Muslim pastoralists in the southern frontiers. This resulted in multifaceted repercussions that significantly influenced various aspects of the pastoralists' livelihoods, including pastoralism, trade, and other networks. First, the strategic decision of the Ethiopian administration to recruit, train, and arm them with modern weapons to arm the Borana and utilize them in military operations against the Garri and their allied groups marked a significant turning point in the local and regional war in the area. This Ethiopian government decision had profound implications for the dynamics and outcomes of the conflict. In other words, the alliance intensified the

violence and laid the groundwork for long-term hostilities between the Borana, the Garri, and other neighbors of the Borana. Secondly, the aftermath of the widespread anti-government and Borana loyalty witnessed a significant reconfiguration of power dynamics within the local administration. This led to a fundamental restructuring of authority and influence security in the region. The Borana, owing to their strong allegiance and support to the regime, were appointed to prominent roles in the military, security, and administrative positions in the local and other state positions in local administration. Their role mainly involved overseeing security, surveillance operations, and suppression of anti-government and forces activities. This consolidation of Borana's military and administrative power enabled the Borana to strengthen their influence on the frontier region, which involved solidifying their political and military authority. However, this similarly resulted in the marginalization of other ethnic groups and exclusion of all other groups not allied with the government, intensifying pre-existing tensions in the region. Finally, the consequences of these one-sided Borana-favored government actions reached the grassroots level, leading to the physical destruction of villages' water points and widespread looting of livestock and personal property. Garri and other Muslim Somali and Borana-speaking communities suffered from indiscriminate military and extreme human rights abuses, resulting in substantial human lives loss and mass displacement.

In response to turmoil and the subsequent loss of livelihoods and mass displacement, people adopted various alternative paths to ensure survival. They mainly relied on migration or flight to Somalia, seeking temporary shelter and safety [9,19]. This decision epitomizes a pragmatic approach toward the volatile and insecure situation where individuals sought personal and community safety and temporary shelter. Some individuals or families decided to settle among kin and friends' family in urban centers like Negelle, Hudet, Wachile, and others in the region, relying on familial and kinship support networks. Nevertheless, a minority of individuals who lacked alternative options opted to seek refuge in settlements created under the protection of the Ethiopian army. During this period, the Ethiopian government implemented strategic measures to consolidate its control and authority over the Garri territory and enhanced security surveillance. Troop deployment was extensive, covering the area expansively, with a particular emphasis on selected critical locations such as Wachille, Udet, Wallena, Dedertu, Ley, El Der, Jara, Malka-Mari, and Qadadduma. The deployment of a large number of government troops was meant to prevent potential disruptions and preserve governmental control over the territorial expanse [16].

Furthermore, according to Getachew's [9] assessment, the territorial claim advanced by the government of Somalia over the Ogaden and Somali inhabited areas of the southeastern Ethiopia region further contributed to suspicion towards Somali and Muslim Oromo pastoralists. The Bale and Borana region's suspicion emanated from the perceived capacity of Somalia's territorial claim to influence this specific demographic group. Therefore, Muslim pastoral and agro-pastoral were subjected to discriminatory surveillance and treatment. The regime provided substantial administrative and military backing to the Borana to implement this surveillance, positioning them to implement state, military, and surveillance measures. However, this policy inadvertently led to the increasing dominance of Borana and solidified their sphere of influence in overall other groups in the frontier region. For that reason, the Borana vigorously contributed to supporting their military raids against Muslim pastoralists suspected of aligning themselves with Somalia during the Ogaden War of 1977/78. Therefore, many individuals from the Garri community sought refuge in

neighboring Kenya and southern Somalia. This war-displaced population included the Garri people and various Muslim groups, such as the Gabra, Guji, Degodia, Gura, Arsi, Marrehan, and Borana peoples. The magnitude of the humanitarian crisis caused by this displacement was significant, leading to the intervention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [1]. The support provided by the UNHCR in locations such as Lugh, Baidowa, Bardera, Bulhao, and Northern Kenya played a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of these refugees throughout their displacement.

4.4 Survival Struggles: Multiple Citizenship and Avoiding Atrocities

The protracted state of oppression that plagued the Garri and Somali clans in the southern Ethiopian borders and region reached its peak during the devastating drought of 1974-75, compelling them to seek refuge in Somalia. This shift in allegiance was primarily driven by the prevailing circumstances of persistent political and administrative oppression, which left them with no other choice. The irredentist Somali government of the time exploited the resentment and grievance of the area's people towards the Ethiopian government's vulnerability to further its national political interests. Getachew [37] claimed that Somalia had been supporting dissident factions within Ethiopia, taking advantage of the political turmoil after the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime. Amid the political turmoil and instability in the region, Somalia increased its involvement in Ethiopian affairs. It supported the liberation fronts operating in the Ogaden and southeastern Ethiopia region of the then Bale and Borana districts, resulting in the spread of pastoralist insurgent movement in the Borana and Bale region [27]. This effort by the government of the Republic of Somalia to assist dissident or insurgent Somali and Muslim Oromo (Arsi, Guji) groups amplified unrest, intensifying the already dire insecurity situation the Garri and other Somali clans faced. The Garri informants describe this period as a time when individuals were forcibly surrounded "*gaaf-naam ya ban*" and individuals were being forcibly conscripted against their will into the army or standby force. However, the prevalent use of military force emerged due to government tyranny and widespread political unrest, resistance which finally compelled Garri and other political unrest, compelling people to seek refuge and support from anyone in any way possible.

The inter-group conflict in 1960 worsened after Somalia gained its independence. The Somali government, driven by its newfound sovereignty, made territorial claims on Somali-inhabited regions of southern borderlands regions inhabitants of Kenya and Ethiopia. Consequently, this geopolitical manipulation entangled the clans in a transnational inter-state conflict that unfolded between Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. As a response, the Ethiopian government implemented oppressive administrative strategies to maintain its administrative control on the Somali inhabited region. These measures sought to restrict the movement of pastoralists across borders and enforce their settlement in government-selected areas, allowing for increased government surveillance of Somali citizens. According to an informant from Qededuma, the event was recalled as highly frustrating (*nama jeeqa*), with government forces stationed nearby, creating a tense atmosphere. Many soldiers were deployed in major military garrison towns to maintain a robust military presence. Therefore, people found themselves trapped amid escalating tensions and growing inter-state border clashes. The volatile situation peaked with the Ogaden War of 1977-1978, dragging the local population and their local inter-group disputes to become part of the inter-state regional conflict. They became the epicenter of a more significant intra-state conflict.

The Somali ethnic and Somali-inhabited areas of southern Ethiopia launched an offensive in early 1977 to capture the Ogaden region in Ethiopia. In the case of Southern Ethiopia (Bale and Borana) faced little resistance and made significant territorial gains until they reached the area of Ogoba near a place South of Negelle town. At this point, the Mengstu government organized a counter-offensive, supported by international socialist allies' forces, which turned the flow of the conflict [38,39]. By mid-1978, the Somalian forces were forced to retreat, unable to withstand the Ethiopian government and its ally's forces. However, guerrilla warfare continued for several years, resulting in dire consequences for the civilian population, including large-scale massacres. Accordingly, the conflict perpetuated a cycle of violence and bloodshed. A significant portion of the dissident Somali and non-Somali Muslim population, including many Garri individuals, sought refuge in neighboring Somalia [9,37]. Due to the loss of their pastoral livelihoods and the resulting destitution, many individuals or families were compelled to leave their homes. They sought kin support across the Ethiopian borders in Somalia and Northern Kenya. Others took up arms against the repressive regimes and their supporting forces, fighting for their rights and freedom. According to informants, for the majority, Garri and their neighbours' lives became difficult for those who remained in the conflict-ridden area, marked by immense challenges and hardships. They further explained, the war resulted in widespread poverty, hunger, involuntary relocation, and forced sedentarization of people. Communities were torn apart, leaving people divided and separated from one another.

Though exact figures are not available, it is estimated that the number of individuals forcibly displaced across the Ethiopian-Somalian border from 1960 to 1990 exceeded 200,000 [9,40]. This large-scale displacement of local people affected not only Garri but also other communities, including Gabra, Gujji, Marrehan, Arssi, Garrimarro, Gurra, Digodia, Somalized Arssi Oromo group, Sidama, and specific Islamized Borana communities. However, precise statistical data regarding Ethiopian refugees' migration patterns into Somalia and their subsequent repatriation to Ethiopia remains elusive. According to Getachew's [9, p.116] analysis, several factors contributed to the current unavailability of such data. Firstly, social upheavals in southern Ethiopia, 'western Somalia,' and northern Kenya since the 1960s have resulted in population displacement and migrations on both sides of the state border. The volatile nature of these state frontier regions has led to migration patterns that are often simultaneous and overlapping. This complexity makes it challenging to track and quantify the number of individuals crossing borders as "refugees," "returnees," or "stayees" to their home countries. Secondly, the complex dual or multiple-state citizenships issue among mobile pastoralist groups residing in the Ethiopia-Kenya-Somalia border region adds a layer of complexity. These communities have traditionally disregarded and disrespected this artificial state and administrative boundaries in their search for water sources, grazing lands, and market access. Besides, there has been significant intermingling between people of diverse ethnic identities in these areas. Lastly, during the 1970s and 1980s, the Somalian government intentionally inflated the number of refugees to secure foreign aid. The deliberate inflation of refugee numbers by the government of Somalia for political and economic purposes has distorted data. Accordingly, it became difficult to measure and accurately determine the magnitude of the refugee influx and subsequent repatriation.

Following the 1980 USA-mediated peace agreement between the governments of Somalia and Ethiopia, the repatriation process encountered various challenges and complexities. Initiated in 1981 and gaining Western economic aid in 1984, it faced significant

political obstacles. The Somali government, heavily reliant on aid, resisted the repatriation facilitated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [9]. Equally, the Ethiopian government appealed that it would provide security to the returnee refugees and insisted on the return of Ethiopian refugees through government-controlled centers. Aid distribution became a tool for using state control in Ethiopia, while the Somali government continued to oppose the repatriation process, asserting that Ethiopia was unsafe.

Finally, following substantial international pressure and persistent negotiations, a tripartite agreement was ultimately achieved in 1986. This landmark achievement marked a significant turning point, paving the way for resolving the long-standing conflict. This agreement facilitated the repatriation of refugees from Somali camps to the border town of Dollo-Gedo and later to the temporary UNHCR receiving center in Boqolmayo. Scholars argue that the resettlement process failed to consider the returnees' original homes and preferences, resulting in tensions stemming from historical conflicts over resources such as grazing lands and water rights [9,13,41].

Amidst the deteriorated situation, the majority of Ethiopian refugees in Somalia opted for informal repatriation, bypassing government-regulated channels. Escaping camps without assistance, many returned to Ethiopia via Kenya. However, their reintegration was marred by mistreatment, including assault and imprisonment, as they were seen as traitors' allies of the Somali enemy. Also, the returnees were resettled in highly disputed and contested areas with pre-existing long-standing conflicts with their traditional adversaries, often lacking vital resources like water, building materials, and firewood. The scarcity of pastoral resources and lack of access to essential social services posed a persistent challenge to the survival of the Garri people. Resource-based territorial conflicts emerged as a significant issue, transforming the frontier region's local politics into conflicts over valuable resources along ethnic identity lines. Amid this intricate situation, the government of Ethiopia nurtured tensions among different regional groups in its pursuit of effective control over the frontier region. The government, using military and other tactics, fuelled tensions between different groups, including the Garri and the Degodia, Degodia-Borana, Degodia-Arssi and Borana and Merhan, Garri and Boarana, and Degodia-Marrehan, etc [36].

Moreover, instead of seeking to address long-standing ethnic conflicts, Ethiopian governments opted to arm specific groups that intensified ethnic strife. According to the research conducted by Getachew [9,37], the decision to arm certain government-favored allied groups in the Horn of Africa with advanced weaponry has resulted in far-reaching and profound consequences. This strategic choice has profoundly impacted the region's political, social, and economic landscape. This has resulted in an ongoing cycle of violence that remains a significant challenge in the 1990s. This influx of modern small and light weapons has caused the continuous displacement of people, leading to their separation from their means of livelihood. Significantly, local rivalries became intertwined with more significant clashes, complicated efforts to address through traditional rituals like blood compensation. The different practices vis-à-vis compensation between the Somali *dia paying* and the Oromo *aada seera*, as Oba [16, pp.137-139] argued persuasively, greatly complicated the search for/in finding a resolution to the conflict between Garri and Borana. The contrasting social cosmologies further hindered addressing the conflict and its underlying ontology.

4.5 Connotations and major tenets of Garri Resilience mechanism

Despite the complex post-return landscape, the Garri communities devised reactive and proactive resilience mechanisms to cope with the emerging challenges. In an earnest endeavor to end the cyclical conflict and the consequential displacement, various mechanisms were put into place. These approaches were considered to address the root causes and mitigate the recurrence of hostilities and the subsequent forced displacement of individuals and communities. The reactive mechanisms can be considered as short-term strategies. They were implemented as immediate responses to the conflict and displacement, aiming to address the pressing needs of the affected individuals and communities. According to Getachew's [9] analysis, one reactive approach that was utilized in response to the conflict was the strategic division of family members across different locations and across the frontiers in Northern Kenya towns Manderla, Rammu, Moyale, and others, dispersing them into nearby towns and across the national borders in the wider Horn of Africa region. Dispersion into nearby towns such as Moyalle, Arero, Mega, or Negelle became a common practice as individuals sought opportunities for employment and secure livelihoods. These urban centers provided promising prospects for stable income and access to vital resources that were limited in their villages. Besides, this approach aimed to mitigate the risks associated with concentrated groups and minimize the potential for further escalation of tensions. By dispersing family members, it was hoped that the conflict dynamics would be disrupted, fostering an environment for de-escalation and reducing the likelihood of violent confrontations.

Furthermore, another reactive strategy employed by the Garri communities involved seeking support from non-displaced relatives and kin in the diaspora. As Getachew [9] stated, old customs and social networks remained a powerful influence and helped to rehabilitate and reestablish the dispersed communities. This approach enabled them to temporarily mitigate the impacts of displacement by relying on the social support networks of their extended families and clan brothers. They have received *hiirb*, a livestock donation, food, or money collected from the clan, the victim members, or begged *dabarre*, a livestock loan for up to three generations [9, p.121]. However, some remained in their villages or near the UNHCR Offices and temporary shelters in Negelle Borana and other centers. They sought to voice their grievances and advocate for addressing their needs. However, relying on reactive resilience did not provide the Garri with long-term sustainability nor adequately enable them to survive the pressures from the state and local community they encountered. The frequency of regional and local instability has necessitated a revision of the existing paradigm of safe existence. Since new challenges and threats are no longer typical, the protection system for their leveling is not well developed in the social systems as expected.

As a pragmatic response to breaking free from the perpetual cycle of discontent caused by displacement, the Garri followed progressive and innovative solutions to build a sustainable and resilient future for the Garri society. Adopting this approach was driven by a clear recognition that relying solely on reactive strategies would not be enough. It became evident that merely reacting to the immediate short-term consequences of displacement perpetuated a sense of marginalization and a cycle of violence. This collective consciousness catalyzed change, prompting the adoption of a proactive resilience approach as an ontological turn. The recalibration of resilience signifies an emancipatory shift, demonstrating their pledge to find more effective and enduring ways to address the challenges of recurring displacement. This shift represents a fundamental transformation in

their approach as they strive to address the challenges more effectively and enduringly. Scholars also proved that during periods of crisis, when the fundamental value orientations of development change, forming and nurturing a new ideology of safe development on a new value basis usually begins [42]. Despite their hardships, crises should be considered personal and collective development opportunities. Therefore, the discontent in the area and the persistent sense of otherness objectively played a role in the Garri community's consolidation as social entities. These factors compel them to address internal contradictions, fostering self-preservation and sustaining stable social development and collective continuity.

One of the notable proactive resilience mechanisms adopted by Garri communities was town-making or deliberate promotion of settlement or sedentarization initiatives to create a stable and organized community. These efforts involved deliberate planning and organization to develop designated areas where community members could farm in sheltered settlements, reside and build durable modern houses, open connecting roads to main highways, merchandising shops, and engage in various activities. The Garri communities sought to enhance social cohesion, promote collective decision-making, and foster a sense of belonging and security by creating structured involvement in educational and health facilities in the settlement areas. Another notable proactive resilience mechanism employed by the Garri communities was 'Somalization,' which drew upon traditional knowledge and practices well-suited to their specific context. This initiative aimed at embracing and incorporating traditional wisdom; the Garri leveraged their cultural heritage to navigate the challenges they faced. 'Somalization' along with 'Islamization' allowed them to tap into their rich traditions, customs, and indigenous systems of governance to address social, economic, and environmental issues. The final proactive resilience mechanism employed by the Garri communities was the commercialization and diversification of their pastoral livelihoods. This commercialization involved engaging in various economic activities and embracing entrepreneurial endeavors. According to Coote and Angel [43], the safe existence of the social system depends on maintaining social solidarity to counter internal and external factors of instability. Accordingly, the Garri communities, by diversifying their sources of income and exploring new economic opportunities, engaged in trade, agricultural activities, import and export, and international business aimed to enhance their financial stability and reduce their vulnerability to external shocks. These strategies were crucial in enhancing the communities' adaptability and resilience.

From the perspective of proactive resilience mechanisms, the subsequent exploration explores the strategic approaches adopted by the Garri communities in southern Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and the diaspora. This discussion aims to highlight the importance of these mechanisms in mitigating challenges and addressing the entropy that arises within the space-time continuum.

4.6. Garri Resilience: From Flight to Town-making

One significant resilience approach employed by the Garri pastoralists involved the establishment of settlements and their town-making, representing a departure from their traditional livelihood and flight trend. In the past, historical accounts indicate that the Garri was known to flee when faced with challenges, including conflicts and ecological crises [11,14,34]. However, upon their return to their homeland after experiencing displacement due to conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s, the Garri underwent a significant shift in their response. Although the returnees were initially accommodated in temporary facilities

provided by the UNHCR, and later, some were allowed to return to their homelands, the Garri remained dissatisfied. The reason behind their dissatisfaction was the historical complexities surrounding the Garri communities. As one of the informants stated, these complexities include mistreatment by neighboring communities [borana] and the state, as well as claims of alliance during the Italian occupation and Somalia expansions. Institutional othering was prevalent, disproportionately channeling resources to certain social groups. As a result, tension escalates, and intergroup relations worsen. The Garri individuals who had settled in areas outside their vicinity began to experience displacement. Although certain areas experienced significant development initiated by the Garri community, they were displaced.

Faced with adversarial conditions and the trend towards fragmentation, the Garri strategically transformed small villages into towns with a distinct Somali culturalization. The towns, particularly the smaller ones, traditionally have a village-like atmosphere. This adaptive strategy was a pragmatic response, reflecting a shift from traditional nomadic livelihoods to urban settlements. Hudet is a very good example of Garris's promotion of town-making. Accordingly, the traditional scattered settlement pattern underwent a significant transformation. It transitioned into organized towns characterized by the construction of mosques, Islamic centers, and the establishment of various businesses. Udet, Chilanqo, Ley, and Qededuma, among other small settlements, have undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving into robust Garri settlement areas. The transformative process represents a significant consolidation of the community. Previous villages have undergone a substantial metamorphosis, emerging as centers of Garri. The transformation into strong Garri settlement areas, as Getachew [9] claims, fostered a sense of solidarity and collective security.

The Garri strategically formed ethnic enclaves as a proactive measure to shield themselves against the dominance and hegemonic influences exerted by the majority of Borana. Similarly, it serves as a countermeasure in response to these dynamics. Once seen primarily as a means of escaping conflict and displacement, flight transformed into a settlement approach through the townization of villages and ethnic enclaves. As expressed by one informant, this shift was supported by influential figures within the Garri community, including clan leaders and the Sultan. Their endorsement reflects a deliberate and collective effort to resist the recurring conflicts that often lead to displacement. They intended to create a more stable and secure environment as an emancipatory turn. One informant further confirmed that prominent Garri leaders are pivotal in guiding the community toward embracing settlement as a proactive resilience approach. Prominent leaders like Haji Mohammed Hassen Gababa were among them. Their endorsement recognizes the limitations of reactive resilience and asserts the community's agency in addressing persistent conflict.

In addition to town-making, the Garri elders and leaders formed towns with mixed clan settlements. According to my key informants, the rationale behind this was to avoid intra-clan resource competition, feuds, and territorial disputes, which could make them vulnerable to external threats. Through advocating for settlement, these leaders aim to offer a tangible alternative to the cyclical nature of conflict and displacement experienced by Garri communities.

Following their extended stay in the Somali Republic, the Garri underwent a profound transformation in both socio-cultural and economic dimensions. It influenced their subsequent preferences and choices upon returning to their homeland. This transformative shift may have manifested as a distinct preference towards urbanized living instead of the traditional nomadic pastoralist existence. According to Sato [19], exposure to urban

environments played a pivotal role in reshaping the outlook of returnees, accentuating the appeal of town life over their former nomadic lifestyle. In southern Ethiopia, a town is the center of commerce, and occasionally, there are small farms around the town. The town is often located at a critical point along the main road and trade routes. The study's empirical findings unequivocally assert that town-making (*townization*) serves as a mechanism for diversifying economic activities and is a substantial mitigation strategy against the daily risks of attacks and violence. By asserting their territoriality, the Garri effectively curtail their exposure to disputes around crucial resources such as water points and grazing areas. As the study observed, territoriality contributes to reducing conflicts' vulnerabilities. It thereby enhanced the ontological security and collective continuity of the Garri community.

4.7. The Transformative Trajectory of Somalization

As historical research has shown, the southern frontiers of Ethiopia have undergone a nuanced historical trajectory [14,16,41]. The processes of 'Boranization,' 'Amharanization,' and 'Somalization' characterize this trajectory. Different forces attempted to expand their sphere of influence over the frontiers. Amid the colonial partition, frontier communities faced significant pressure from the British and Ethiopian states. These processes strongly prove the diverse cultural influences that have [re]shaped the area over time. Historical sources suggest that during boundary demarcation, there were instances where the Garri community faced significant pressure to claim an affiliation deceptively or to identify themselves as a Borana group [23]. These sources indicate that external forces influenced the Garri, compelling them to align themselves with the Borana identity, even if it contradicted their historical and cultural heritage. This pressure arose due to the agreement between the British and Ethiopian Imperial states to delineate the boundary along tribal lines. However, due to their unique settlement patterns, social movements, and historical incidents, the social group on the frontiers developed a distinct identity pattern. According to a study by Getachew [9,37], the historical backdrop of the southern frontiers is not characterized by cultural homogeneity but rather by various influences that have contributed to its rich and multifaceted identity.

The Garri, strategically settled between the Borana and Somali groups, fostered a distinctive identity incorporating elements from both cultures. This unique identity had a significant impact on the overall settlement pattern. People residing close to the Borana community evolved a linguistic affinity by developing the Affan Oromo, a Borana dialect. Conversely, those near the Somali community cultivated the Rahawein southern Somali dialect of Aff Somali. They became bilingual speakers, proficient in the Affan Oromo and Aff Somali. Their linguistic dexterity empowered them to actively participate in business networks and act as intermediaries between the Somali and Oromo groups.

After establishing a modern state based on the Westphalian concept of territory, frontier communities underwent a shift in dynamics, marked by tense relationships. The state's preference for one group over another through patronization created distrust among the communities on the frontiers. The Garri, in particular, experienced institutionalized marginalization, causing ontological insecurity. They faced a history of frequent displacement involving securitization of their identity [*Somali*]. As a result of this policy and local conflicts, the Garris frequently experienced displacement, which compelled them to form alliances with foreign forces for their protection. Under the reign of Haile Selassie and the Derg, the Garri were targeted by the exclusionary policy, compelling them to seek refuge in neighboring

countries. Consequently, upon their return from refugee camps, a significant process of somalization among the Garri commenced.

The Somalization of towns represents an emancipatory move in which urban centers embrace Somali cultural practices, entrepreneurship, architecture, social norms, eating habits and etc. The houses transformed, adopting a Somali architectural style with Islamic influences. Simple clothing evolved into Islamic and Somaloid patterns, previously worn only by respected elders and the Sultan. In the process of somalization, language emerges as a paramount cultural paradigm. It wields profound implications for identity, communal cohesion, and the acculturation of individuals within urban environments. Sato's [19] observation underscores that individuals who experienced their formative years as refugees in Somalia show a greater proficiency in the Somali language than their command of the Borana language. The significance of language, particularly the fluency in Aff Somali, becomes emblematic of the embodiment of town culture and social categorization. Therefore, language was critical in shaping individual and collective identities within urban environments.

The historical relationship between the Garri and the Borana community, who are close to each other, has resulted in the Garri adopting the Aff Borana language. This linguistic connection has led some to perceive the Garri as a subgroup within the Borana community. The shared language has contributed to a perceived cultural association, leading to the classification of the Garri as an integral part of the Borana collective [14]. However, the Garri community's assertion of their Somali identity has introduced a complex layer of contestation regarding their land. As they affirm their Somali cultural affiliation, the uncontested use of the Aff Borana language becomes a contested terrain. According to scholars, this shift in the assertion of Somali identity among the Garri community has significant implications for their use of the Aff Borana language and their territorial claims [13,21,28]. The persuasive argument emerges that fluency in Aff Somali facilitates social cohesion and serves as an identity marker, belongingness, ethnic identification, and emancipation within the fabric of the overall Somali culture. However, it is essential to note that the strategic settlements of the Garri community have resulted in their development as multilingual communities capable of conversing in Somali, Kiswahili, Affan Oromo, Arabic, and Amharic. Due to these, the Garri leaders encourage formal and informal education and inspire the youth to learn diverse languages and skills. All this is part of preparing the Garri youth for unknown future challenges and uncertainties.

In addition to language, a study conducted by Schlee [11,12] reveals that both the Garri and Gabra communities consider their Islamic religion a fundamental aspect of their ethnic identity. This religious affiliation is a significant marker that aligns them with other Somali clans, fostering a sense of unity. The relationship between the Garri and Borana communities became strained as they started to use religious affiliation as crucial markers, leading to tensions between them. In their interactions, the Garri community adopted the term "*Kuffar*" as a pejorative reference to the Borana, labeling them as unbelievers. Conversely, the Borana utilized the concept of "*Safara*" to identify Somali groups as newcomers. As Durkheim [44] contended, religion is crucial in fostering community cohesion, promoting social control, and providing individuals with meaning and purpose during life's transitions and tragedies. Therefore, the Garri, using their Islamic religion *Sunni/shafii*, as an ethnic marker, emphasized their unique cultural heritage, asserting their identity within the broader Somali social identity. The Garri viewed the somalization of their identity and

adherence to the Islamic faith as an emancipatory process aimed at escaping domination, marginalization, and institutional anarchy. The Garri community's strong sense of Garri identity remains unwavering, as their leaders and the majority firmly assert their Garri heritage. However, they also desire to maintain autonomy within the broader Somali context. Historical and present-day factors influence this pragmatic approach to embracing Somali cultural identity. One significant factor shaping the Garri community's decision to embrace Somali cultural identity is the process of state formation and the dynamics of federalism. As various Somali-speaking groups navigate the complexities of statehood, the Garri community recognizes the importance of aligning themselves with the Somali identity to maintain their distinct cultural heritage while participating in the larger Somali political landscape.

Another factor impacting the Garri community's preference for embracing Somalization is the phenomenon of ethnonationalism, particularly the assertive influence of Oromization on the Garri and other smaller Oromo-Somali-speaking groups. The Garri community, faced with the encroachment of Oromo cultural influence, finds strategic value in aligning with the broader Somali identity to preserve their distinct heritage and safeguard their autonomy.

Recently, the Garri adopted customary rules known as *Xeer Kerri/Garri* [*xeer-Dhaqameedka*] standard law for the entire Garri community to regulate internal relations and alleviate external vulnerabilities. These rules were an essential part of their somalization process, similar to those of their Somali counterparts. This traditional system encompasses various aspects of communal life, offering a comprehensive framework for resolving disputes, upholding justice, and regulating behavior. The principles enshrined within *Xeer Garri* have played a significant role in maintaining social order, nurturing a strong sense of social cohesion, and fostering mutual understanding. Informants also noted that *Xeer Garri* not only draws upon the principles of Sharia law but also integrates contemporary governance values. This blending of traditional and modern influences reflects the adaptability and dynamic nature in response to the changing dynamics of their social fabric. In 2021, there has been a notable development regarding *Xeer Garri*. Efforts have been made to document the oral traditions of this customary law in written form, recognizing its importance. This initiative aims to preserve and safeguard the knowledge and wisdom embedded within *Xeer Garri* for future generations. By transitioning from an exclusively oral tradition to a documented form, the Garri community seeks to ensure the longevity and accessibility of their cultural heritage, allowing for broader dissemination and study of *Xeer Garri's* principles and practices.

4.8. Commercialization of Livelihood: From Camel Herding to Business Networks

The Garri, in contrast to their neighboring communities, have embraced diversification and promoted a livelihood system that combines pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, and commerce activities. Notably, camel herding is central to the Garri's commercial activities. Their involvement in local and long-distance livestock trading commercial activities, particularly camel herding and livestock trade, has profoundly shaped their livelihood system. Historical records indicate that the Garri have a long-standing reputation as exceptional camel breeders and participation in regional commercial activities in the Horn of Africa, with their expertise in this field dating back to the 18th Century [14,19,22]. The Garri's camel breeding expertise has earned them a reputation as renowned suppliers of camels to Somali and Oromo traders. These traders relied on their camels for long-distance caravan trade, establishing a solid demand for the Garri's camels. Despite the decline of caravans in the 1920s to 1940s, the Garri played a significant role in the camel trade [19].

During the late 19th Century, commercial activities in the region predominantly operated through barter systems. However, with the arrival of British colonial rule, which expanded to Moyale in 1905, the traditional trade paradigm experienced a significant transformation [14,16,23]. During the 1920s and 1930s, the government implemented policies intended to promote cash trading. These policies included introducing tax payments, supporting shopkeepers, and prohibiting peddling and bartering [45]. This marked a significant departure from traditional trading practices. In the post-World War II era, cash trading became increasingly prevalent, as observed by Turton [23]. Notably, the northern trade, primarily facilitated by Somali traders, diverges via Negele, while the northern trade through Yabelo is primarily conducted by Borana and Garri traders [19]. Somali and Garri traders, though, orchestrate both the eastern and southern trades. These trade routes indicate socio-economic interdependence and collaboration among diverse ethnic and cultural groups in the region. Though, Garri's commercial trade system has significantly influenced the regional economy.

The Garri economy comprises three distinct sectors: subsistence herders, traders engaged in livestock and goods exchange, and agro-pastoralism. Their exceptional ability to combine herding with trade sets them apart from neighboring communities. They integrate commercial activities into their livelihood system, unlike others who may solely focus on one aspect of livelihood. Sato [19], in his seminal work, advised against interpreting Garri's commercial herding merely as a compromise between two distinct lifestyles. Instead, he claimed it should be considered a unique and resilient livelihood. The Garri's involvement in commercial trade and their success in raising a large number of camels emphasize the commercialization of their livelihood. Livestock trade is central to them, shaping their livelihood system and contributing significantly to the regional economy. However, the commercial endeavors of the Garri people extend beyond individual efforts. They are strengthened by the formation of business networks and the establishment of marriage alliances between trading families. Accordingly, social networks played a pivotal role in driving the commercialization of the Garri community. These networks, strengthened by shared bonds of friendship and Islamic ties, often transcend ethnic identity. It is based on the mutual interests of families, facilitating the exchange of goods, resources, and knowledge, creating opportunities for trade and economic growth. Therefore, they can access a broader market and establish a more vigorous business landscape through collaboration.

In the face of severe natural calamities, drought, famine, or man-made crises such as conflict, the Garri community relies on their enduring networks to cross these challenging circumstances. Leveraging their unique commercialized livelihoods, they employed these networks as resilient mechanisms to overcome adversities. The experience of displacement during the Imperia and Derg regimes reshaped Garri's economic strategies and settlement pattern. While the virtue of commercialized livelihood remained unchanged, the experience of displacement caused significant disruption to Garri's long-established networks. However, upon their return from displacement, the Garri strategically positioned towns along main roads as crucial business hubs. The geographical placement of these towns is not arbitrary; it reflects a calculated response to historical experiences, underlining Garri's adeptness in the caravan trade. The appeal of urban living was not solely rooted in cultural adaptation but was further underscored by the pragmatic opportunities it offered for economic activities and income generation. Sato [19] stresses that the transformative process was not merely a result of cultural assimilation but a strategic response to the economic challenges posed by

displacement. Accordingly, establishing town life by the returnee can be considered an adaptive strategy, aligning with broader regional trends. As Getachew [9] similarly underlined, displaced populations are increasingly drawn to urban centers as hubs of economic opportunity and community rebuilding.

Fortunately, Garriland occupies a crucial strategic position within the tripartite border region, situated at the intersection of major trade towns in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. As Sato [19] claims, this prime geographical location allows Garri to capitalize on the economic opportunities arising from the convergence of trade routes and the movement of goods and services. The town's significance as a trading center further strengthens its role as a key player in the regional economy. At the heart of this active trading hub lies Moyale, a town that has emerged as a pivotal transit point. The historical growth of Moyale is closely linked to the expansion of the Ethiopian State in the late 19th Century. This expansion resulted in the establishment of administrative and military centers in newly conquered territories. Moyale, playing a vital role, facilitates the exchange of diverse merchandise between the North and South [37,45]. Despite the disputed claims over Moyale by the Garri, Borana, and Gabra communities, the area has gained notoriety as a hub for contraband, where various resources are readily available. On the Ethiopian side, Moyale serves as the capital for two competing woredas – Oromia-Moyale and Somali-Moyale. Apart from the Kenya Moyale, the ethnic or language identity-based federalism arrangement of post-1991 in Ethiopia led to dual authorities overseeing various government activities at the district level.

Despite administrative duality, Garriland remains a central hub in the tripartite border region. It is a focal point for multiple trading routes and facilitates economic interactions among diverse communities. The geographical centrality of Garriland underscores its strategic importance as a key node within the region's broader commercial landscape. Recently, Moyale's and Dawa zones' position on the western trade route has been solidified, particularly with the progress of the development of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor [30]. This strategic positioning enables the Garri to play a crucial role in trade and economic activities, connecting different communities and contributing to the overall socio-economic development of the tripartite border region. The anticipation of reaping the benefits of this project has played a pivotal role in motivating Garri leaders to make the significant decision to establish a town. The potential advantages of the project, such as improved infrastructure, economic opportunities, and enhanced social services, have served as compelling factors for the Garri leaders to embark on the endeavor.

5. Concluding Remark

The resilience mechanisms employed by the Garri communities exemplify their remarkable ability to navigate socio-economic challenges and establish stability in their post-return environment. Through a dynamic interplay of historical experiences, cultural adaptations, and strategic responses, Garri has transitioned from reactive to proactive resilience. This shift underscores their commitment to finding enduring solutions amidst recurring displacement and regional instability. A notable side of their resilience lies in the transformative trajectory of *town-making*, *Somalization*, and the strategic adoption of proactive strategies like the *commercialization* of livelihood through combining camel herding, livestock market, and agro-pastoralism.

Furthermore, the Garri communities exhibit a proactive and enterprising spirit in their involvement in various local, regional, and international trade networks and commercial activities. They have astutely established expansive business networks and forged strategic

marriage alliances, showcase their collaborative approach to boost economic growth and development. By leveraging their available resources, knowledge, and skills, the Garri communities play a significant role in regional economic interactions, particularly due to their advantageous central position within the tripartite border region. Their active participation in trade networks enables them to tap into diverse markets, facilitating the exchange of goods, services, and ideas. This not only fosters economic prosperity within their communities but also contributes to the overall development and interconnectedness of the region. The Garri communities' strategic location at the crossroads of various trade routes positions them as key players in the regional economic landscape. Their geographical proximity to multiple markets enables them to act as intermediaries, facilitating trade between regions and promoting economic integration efforts in the IGAD/Horn of Africa region and EAC. This central role benefits the Garri communities and enhances the economic ties and interdependence among neighboring communities and states. These evidenced that proactive resilience is irreversible, sequential, autonomous, and goal-oriented.

Moreover, the adaptations displayed by the Garri community showcase their flexibility and resilience. They actively respond to evolving circumstances and seek innovative methods to maintain collective continuity. The Garri community's choice to embrace Somalization and align themselves with the broader Somali national identity is a strategic move to ensure the continuity of their collective Garri identity. This decision also serves as a form of resistance against and reversal of the aggressive state-building efforts and Oromo ethnonationalism-driven assimilation policies. By adopting this pragmatic approach, the Garri community can ensure the preservation of their unique identity within the framework of the Somali national identity. The leadership of Garri figures such as Haji Mohammed H. Gababa played a vital role in making this decision. Their foresight and strategic thinking resulted in recognizing the Dawa zone, which is governed by the Garri community. This recognition grants the Garri community autonomy and control over their affairs, further solidifying their collective identity and enabling them to shape their destiny within the Somali national framework.

In conclusion, the resilience mechanisms utilized by the Garri communities reveal a multifaceted narrative of adaptation, transformation, and strategic response. Their ability to integrate historical knowledge with contemporary challenges highlights their resilience and emphasizes their crucial role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of the southern frontiers. Amidst continuing challenges, the resilience mechanisms of the Garri suggest valuable understandings of the complex dynamics of survival, adaptation, and community rebuilding within a dynamic environment.

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