The Multi-factoral Nature of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in North- Rift Frontier Border Lands, Kenya: Implications on Pastoralists welfare and Livelihoods

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Abstract

Pastoral societies in Kenya's North Rift frontier regions have engaged in livestock raiding and related conflict as a cultural tradition and as a form of ecological adaptation to an otherwise difficult environment. However, the form the conflict has taken in recent years in terms of the magnitude, the level of destruction and plunder and the norms governing it goes beyond the traditional cultural norms and motivation. Regional instability and the spread of illegal small arms has led to changes in the scale and organization of inter- ethnic conflicts, while a shift in the traditional political authority at the local level has limited the ability of the class of elders to control the aggressive tendencies of the young warriors. At the national level the politics of ethnicity and politicized discontent in the multi-party era has led to the re-invention and use of conflicts not just for resource competition but also as a strategy to settle economic and political scores. This paper focuses on the multiplicity of factors in the inter-ethnic conflicts in the North rift frontier region and the impact of the conflict on livelihoods. The paper is largely limited to the conflict in Turkana, West Pokot, Marakwet district's in Kenya and their neighbouring societies in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. The paper specifically, discusses the ethnicisation of politics, poverty, governance and the warrior culture as key ingredients to the conflicts.

Keywords: North Rift, conflict, pastoralist, ethnicity, livelihoods, Kenya

1.0 Introduction

The incidences of livestock rustling and banditry in pastoral regions particularly in North Rift region of Kenya has increased in recent years with far reaching consequences on livelihood and general welfare of the people.

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Furthermore, while raiding has always been part and parcel of the culture of pastoral societies and, therefore, has not attracted serious attention as a threat to livelihood, modern raids have changed in their dynamics and magnitude, and recently have acquired political dimensions. This has not only made rustling a real constraint to production, but also has contributed to livelihood crisis and development problems in pastoral societies. The viability of subsistence economies like traditional pastoralism is dependent on the relationship between households as units of production, and their interaction with the natural environment. Additionally, for producers who are prone to vagaries of nature, like is the case with arid-zone pastoralism, inter-society relationships of reciprocity in resource utilisation is an important aspect for survival. The reciprocity as traditionally practised links the people to the natural (environment) resources, as well as groups of people to each other in a diverse and complex exchange relations that enhance survival and welfare of families, individuals, and whole societies.

Historically, reciprocal relations between pastoral societies also encompass conflicts over control and use of resources. Under the subsistence conditions of East Africa pastoralists, conflict has historically manifested itself in the form of mutual and reciprocal raids, used as mechanisms of economic and ecological adaptation. Conflict in such circumstances has customarily been bounded by rules. For example, almost all pastoral societies recognise that raids should not be too frequent, the booty should not be excessive, destruction of food reserves should be avoided, and fatalities should be kept to a minimum or avoided altogether (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). The importance of such rules in the context of conflicts is to ensure relations between societies or sections of a society are not completely severed; thus the possibility for future mutual assistance is not jeopardised. In pre-colonial East Africa, warriors were ordinary productive young men with various other socio- economic and political roles, responsibilities and duties in the society. They were, therefore, well integrated in the society and acted in accordance to rules and to the interest of their society which had an impact on the nature of conflict (Ocaya-Lakidi 1977:148-149). In a raid, the conflict had to be brief and was not to be allowed to interfere with the major economic activities of the society. Warriors therefore had to observe strict rules, norms and discipline when they staged raids. The traditional motivations for raiding among East African pastoralists have been noted to include: desire to acquire animals to expand herds, desire for prestige that comes with livestock holdings and bravery associated with successful raids, and retaliation among others (Fleisher, 1998:548). All these constitute social and ecological adaptations of the society.

These motivations have changed and the raiding is now more for the purposes of individual social, economic and political gain, which has altered the conduct, ethics and styles in modern raids. The changes observed have been occasioned by a multiplicity of factors in these regions over time and have severely interfered with the livelihood strategies in the region.

1.1 Isolation, Governance and Resource Competition in the Borderlands

Pastoral regions in North Rift by virtue of their location in peripheral and frontier areas often lack a strong presence of the government authority as they are loosely linked to other regions of the nation and to the central authority. This is a condition that results from the poor development of communication infrastructure, and the current political and moral economy of rustling and banditry. These circumstances have provided an environment for deviant behaviour including general banditry and livestock rustling.

The process of isolation of the pastoral regions from the other regions of Kenya started in the colonial period. According to Lamphear (1992:88), at the turn of the century, Turkana district for example, was perceived as "the wildest and most worthless district in Kenya", while the inhabitants were in a similar vein dismissed as a most untruthful and dishonest lot. West Pokot on the other hand was regarded as a buffer zone from the Turkana and Karamojong against areas that hosted the colonial settlers in the North rift (Kasait 2007:73). Thus,, from the early phase of colonialism, the British lacked sympathy for the pastoralists and had little economic interest in the production activities in these regions. These regions were, therefore, largely used as a buffer zone to keep foreign powers and hostile tribes away from the White highland where the British settlers had their interests, and had developed an infrastructure to exploit the resources (Schlee 1994:44). The presence of the colonial authorities was, however, attracted to these regions to deal with the perennial problem of inter-societal conflicts over livestock raids and in competition for pastures. The establishment of governmental authority was, therefore, largely geared toward the pacification of pastoral societies supposedly in an attempt to restore law and order.

The real reason given the contempt with which the colonial authorities held the pastoral way of life was actually to pre-empt the over spill of such hostilities to areas where they had economic interests.

In Turkana district in particular, at around 1912 when a colonial outpost was established in the area, it was in response to raiding which was subsequently prohibited, and harsh punitive expeditions launched to enforce compliance (Lamphear, 1994:81). Henceforth, the administration enforced boundaries between the various ethnic groups to keep the societies separate in order to end hostilities. The measures introduced by the colonial administration to stop inter-societal hostilities had a number of direct and indirect negative impacts on production. First, the periodic "punitive expeditions" carried out through military operations traumatized the society through loss of human life and seizure of livestock. The "labur patrol" of 1918, for example, was especially harsh to the Turkana (Lamphear 1994:85).

In this expedition the British assembled the largest and best-equipped expeditions ever to be sent against an East African society (Lamphear 1994). By the end of it, the society had suffered heavy human casualties and debilitating livestock losses. The disarming that took place then left the society exposed to raids from neighbouring pastoral societies, which further depleted their herds. Second, the enforcement of boundaries between the pastoral societies meant loss of grazing and erosion of the mutual self-help that existed between the various societies in livestock management. This was particularly harmful to those societies that occupied a harsher environment like that of Turkana. Fortunately, the administrators did not fully succeed to keep such societies separate in livestock grazing because, while the authorities used biological characteristics to create boundaries, the societies on their part used sociological descent labels as masquerades to ensure their herds grazed wherever pastures were greenest (Schlee, 1989:47-48). Lastly, the government on various occasions disarmed the pastoral groups in southwestern Kenya assuming that they were the aggressors and, thus, the move would end the inter- societal conflicts. While the pastoral groups in Kenya were cooperative in handing over their arms, the same was not the case for other neighbouring societies (Kenya colony, 1949:2). As a consequence of the unilateral disarmament, in the 1950's the Turkana were described as "the worst armed" of the tribes in the region (Kenya colony, 1950:2). This resulted in the vulnerability of the society to attacks in a region where by then the use of guns was already established and the practice of mutual raiding for livestock well entrenched.

In response to the increasing onslaught from both hostile neighbours and colonial military operations, the Turkana evolved a semi- permanent force of well-armed men for defence (Lamphear 1994:85).

These armed men operated in the highland areas in northern Turkana beyond the reach of the administration. The initially small group swelled over time as men who lost their family members and livestock through British expeditions acquired firearms and joined the group as an alternative survival strategy. In the post-colonial period, the inadequate provision of security in the North Rift region has led to a continuation of the activities of self- appointed defense force operating along the Kenya, Uganda and Sudan border (Lamphear 1994.). Unlike their predecessors in the colonial period, the composition and activities of the present groups operates as bandits (*ngoroko*). They extract tribute from fellow Turkana in exchange for 'protections' and also act in a brutal manner. Overtime the initial "social bandits" have become better armed and more confident in handling sophisticated weapons that have come from Uganda and Sudan. Consequently, the group has become transformed into dangerous outlaws who terrorise not only their own communities for livestock, but also engage in general criminal activities in trading centres and on the highways for cash.

It has become difficult for the 'war leaders' to control and discipline the large number of warriors as they are scattered and in some cases they have ended up terrorizing their own communities. In addition some of the raid parties have a mixture of men from different communities and who may therefore not strictly adhere to the general norms governing raids. The widespread insecurity in North Rift region in the post-colonial period in general can be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, since the 1970's unstable governments in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia have created conditions under which control of arms in the Eastern Africa region is ineffective leading to illegal acquisition of automatic firearms by pastoral societies (The East African March 17-23, 1997; Mkutu 2004). For example, in 1979 during the ousting of Idi Amin, a former president of Uganda, it is estimated that the karamojong looted 15,000 modern assault rifles and two million rounds of ammunition from the army barracks at Moroto (=Abraham 1997). For the pastoral societies in southern Sudan, the civil war in the region especially since 1983 has led to a history of firearms possession, a thriving market for illegal weapons, and widespread access and use of guns by peasants and herders (Salih 1994). The pastoralists in the North Rift who border these regions have acquired limited guns through barter exchange with such societies. However, guns are expensive, hence, difficult to acquire for the economically weak groups.

For example, among the Turkana, in order to acquire weapons, one goat is exchanged for one hundred bullets, while for ten heads of cattle a herder can get a sophisticated rifle (Kareithi 2000). Since few individuals are in a position to raise the required animals, and yet a gun has become a necessary tool for survival in the region, there is often the pooling of livestock to purchase a gun for self-defense particularly at the level of the herding association (adakar). Alternatively, home made guns, which are cheaper but less efficient are acquired from societies with a longer tradition of handling guns and gun improvisation in the region. For some herdsmen, aware of the dangers in their grazing fields and lacking the means to possess a gun, they improvise the shapes of their herding stuff to resemble a rifle particularly when viewed from a distance placed on the shoulder. This reflects the extent of the insecurity and the level of desperation in the society on one hand and on the other hand, the extent of innovativeness in a life full of uncertainties and many dangers.

Secondly, alongside the proliferation of illegal arms, governments in the region have allowed some people within pastoral societies, to keep guns supposedly for self-defense against external raiders from neighbouring countries. For example at the start of the civil war, the Sudan government armed the pastoralists in the south with the hope that they would give support in the war against Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) (Salih 1994) Societies in southern parts of Ethiopia particularly the Merille pastoralists acquired firearms from Mengistu Haile Mariam's government and also the Boran who in turn acquired them from Somalia.

Although pastoral societies in East Africa have a long history of firearm possession and use, the situation has become more volatile since the 1980's when heavy firearms became available to them and the rules of their use changed.In Uganda the karamojong were allowed to keep guns by the government for self defence. Vigilante groups were formed among the Karamojong through the initiatives of the local politicians. In 1997 there were about 8,000 men enlisted as vigilantes in the area, who received a salary, uniform and basic military training from the government (Abraham, 1997).The vigilantes were meant to track down stolen animals and to encourage errant members of the community and potential raiders to register their guns and join them. In 1986 Karamojong youths were recruited into the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) to fight for the Obote II regime. When this regime was defeated by the National Resistance Army (NRA) the Karamojong fled with their weapons back home (Abraham 1997).

The Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and the Toposa militia have also been involved in movement and sale of fire arms (Mkutu 2004). In the North Rift region of Kenya the government has occasionally provided arms to Kenya Police Reservists (KPR) to supplement the security forces in their societies. It is estimated that there are around 2000 in the North Rift region and North Eastern province (Mkutu 2004). Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that such arms provided by governments are used for aggression within the country and in external societies rather than just for self-defense. The problem is compounded by the fact that the monitoring of how such weapons are used is not properly done leading to abuse.

Thirdly, for the Kenyan pastoralists in the North Rift region, particularly the Pokot and Turkana, disarmament campaigns have been carried out severally during the colonial and in the post-colonial period. While the idea is well intentioned, the exercise itself has drawbacks. The exercise is often selective and, therefore, leave some societies armed which makes those disarmed vulnerable to attacks. This other wise well meant exercise is bedeviled by political machinations in attempts by different pastoral societies to compete for control of political and economic power in the region through firearm possession. This explains the long-standing conflict between the Pokot and the Marakwet societies. Moreover, disarming Kenyan pastoralists in the borderlands without an intensification of security in the region leaves them exposed and defenseless against external raiders who remain armed. In such situations the disarmament destabilizes the balance of power between societies to the disadvantage of some societies who in the process suffer human and livestock losses. It is not just the failure to provide adequate security that fuels inter-ethnic conflicts in the North Rift frontier region. Resource competition, in particular, pastures, water, and salt licks are an equally important trigger of conflict. For example, in the dry season there is often some conflict between the Pokot and the Turkana over water points on the border between the two communities. In northern Turkana, the mountain ranges (Lorit, Lotaruk, Kaamurok) are important dry season grazing areas (Little 1985: 4).

However, these are conflict prone areas over resources between pastoral groups in Kenya and Sudan. The water points in Loima and lorengippi hills borders Uganda, Sudan, Turkana and West Pokot and are therefore also points of conflict over water resources. The Pokot and Marakwet also frequently clash over Kerio Valley dry season pastures and water resources. Related to resource competition is the issue of boundaries between communities.

In 1995, when Kapedo division in Turkana district was revealed, on the border of Turkana and Baringo District, there were territorial claims between the bordering communities over the rights of the resources in the region which sparked inter-ethnic conflicts. This territorial claims has persisted and in 2014 led to the slaying of 21 Administration Police officers by bandits. Herder/ farmer clashes over land are often witnessed in the Kanyarkwat (West Pokot) and Kwanza (Trans-Nzoia) border particularly in the dry season (Khaemba 2014). According to the Pokot, they have a right to graze in the area because historically the land belonged to them before it was alienated by the colonialists and later the Luhya were settled by the postcolonial government as a settlement scheme (Khaemba 2014; Lokira 2007). These feelings of historical marginalization by some ethnic groups in the North Rift are used by politicians to ignite inter-ethnic violence.

Fisheries resources in Lake Turkana have sparked conflicts between the Merille of Ethiopia and the Turkana. (Ruto et al 2003). For some sections of the Turkana and the Merille, fisheries resources constitute a significant part of their resources and the competition has even resulted in fatalities. The grazing rights in the pasture rich Elemi triangle has often led to conflicts between the Turkana (Kenya), Toposa (Sudan) and the Merille (Ethiopia). In 1997 general elections two wards in the Turkana county council were not contested due to insecurity as no candidates presented themselves for nominations and the electorate had fled the region (Kareithi 2000:173). The common property in land as is the case in pastoral societies does not mean open access since the customary tenure regimes provide for a hierarchy of rights divided between ownership groups ranging form the individual to the ethnic group (Lenaola et al 1996: 237). This creates circumstances for potential intra-ethnic conflict in case an 'outsider' encroaches on the grazing resources of an 'ownership group'. In the North Rift region, this scenario is seen among the Pokot in Chepareria and Kongelai division group ranches over grazing land (Matui 2007 et al:55) where some non- group ranch herders forcefully occupy group ranch land leading to conflicts with the members.

1.2 Socio-Cultural Transformations

The direct consequence of the widespread use of firearms in livestock rustling is that the traditional weapons are little used in raids and general inter-societal conflict. While in the past the gun was largely used as a symbol of prestige confined to the powerful and the wealthy, and in some communities used for gun salutes rather than warfare, today, it has become an indispensable part of everyday herdsman's gear frequently used for aggression and self-defense. It appears that the modernisation of weaponry amongst Eastern Africa pastoralists has narrowed the distinction between war and raiding (Salih 1994). This occurrence has created a climate of endemic violence due to gun confidence with widespread devastation to the general life of these societies. Modern style raiding among pastoral societies is more of a war than rustling, which has led to widespread conflict and insecurity. One direct result of this warfare is a widespread loss of livestock as a means of livelihood, and of human lives as well. The losses in some cases have led to complete destitution of whole villages and a breakdown of the normal functioning of the affected families. The result is displacement of large numbers of people from their economic activities and, consequently, their dependence on relief food that is often not adequate or sustainable. Within pastoral societies there has occurred a shift in the traditional economic and political authority, which has made it difficult to employ traditional mechanisms of social control to curb aggressive behaviour of the young raiders. Traditionally, most pastoral societies in Kenya and in the neighbouring countries are accephalous.

However, the age set system characteristic of these societies provide a gerontocratic basis for the exercise of power by the elders, who as a class have authority to direct and control political and economic affairs including raiding (Baxter and Almagor, 1978). Under such a system elders stand in opposition to the aggressive tendencies of the younger men and exert their authority to impose moderation on warfare and conflict. In recent times diviners have taken a more central role in the decision on raids than the elders. The diviners/ medicine men unlike the elders are entitled to some share of the captured animals as a 'fee' for blessing and directing successful raids (Fukui 1994:74). They therefore do not have misgiving on the regularity of the raids or the escalation of conflicts as they stand to gain. In the past elders played this role effectively since as the livestock wealthy class they stood to loose more from raids and conflicts between societies.

Although women and girls are not directly involved in raids and related conflicts, they nonetheless contribute to them as catalysts. They instigate raids by composing songs for successful raiders. The older women openly encourage the girls to marry the brave young men who successfully participate in raids. Women have also been good conduits for arms trafficking as they do not attract a lot of searching by the security forces, while women brewers in some cases accumulate bullets which they barter with brew and thereafter exchange them for goats or a cow from the warriors (Mkutu 2004; Khaemba 2014). The practice of bride wealth payment in the marriage process invariably paid in livestock among Pastoral societies has encouraged raids and the related conflicts in society. Large herds of livestock are lost from the household herds through bride wealth payment (Dombrowski 1993: 27). Since bride wealth payments are quite high among pastoral groups in the North Rift region animals have to be solicited from a large number of kinsmen which affects a wide range of households. The need to accumulate livestock for bride wealth becomes a motivation for raids and the conflict it engenders.

Modern economic forces have transformed the old relations between generations in favour of the younger men. Although gerontocracy as a principle still persists, in practice actual economic and political power has shifted away from traditional lines of the class of elders to the younger men. In the new configuration, some locally influential persons among the younger generation rise up to positions of power and leadership as recognition of their activities in raiding and other acts of aggression against the societies perceived as enemies. Such persons then come up as "war leaders" who often provide tactical direction, strategic coordination and logistical support in acts of aggression in other societies including raiding activities. Unlike the traditional class of elders, these new leaders do not have misgivings about the escalation of conflict, which customarily has acted as a powerful restraint on the frequency, and magnitude of raiding and general conflicts between societies. According to Muller (1989:62), today raiding is as much a conflict between generations as it is between ethnic groups. This is in the sense that young raiders who traditionally do not own animals have nothing to lose and can only gain from raiding. The elders who are the herd owners face the possibility of losing part or all their animals and, therefore, are concerned in the control of raiding. In addition, unlike in the past where the class of elders had a final say in the planning and organization of raids, currently the warriors defy the directives of the elders and carry out raids sometimes without their blessings (Lokira 2007).

1.3 Identity, Poverty and Glorification of Violence

Generally, livestock wealth among Eastern Africa pastoralists has greatly diminished due to the high loses occasioned by droughts, disease epidemics, and a decline of the grazing fields. Since there are few alternative economic opportunities (outside pastoralism) practicable in some of the pastoral regions in the North Rift, a higher proportion of the younger men are turning more frequently to raiding for survival than before. At the same time the low level of livestock population, coupled with the demand for purchased goods and services has led to situations where raids are intense and frequent as a source for commercial herds and for subsistence purposes.

Due to the large numbers of youths involved in the raiding in the context of generally diminished herds, larger raid groups and higher frequency of raids is being experienced in the region. This unconventional arrangement has been necessitated by the lower success rates in the conventional organization and execution of livestock raids. It has been alleged that there are some influential people behind the raids in the North Rift who control the lucrative livestock market (Daily Nation 14/2/1996). Cattle traders and butchers have also gained control of the livestock marketing which has implications on raiding. Some influential people have also gained control of raiding for commercial purposes (Mkutu 2004).

Stolen animals are sold in parallel hidden markets at a lower price(Ibid), with Bumula market being associated with stolen livestock from pokot, Marakwet ,Turkana and Trans- Nzoia districts (Ruto etal 2003). Available evidence shows a higher frequency of raids during festive months when livestock prices are usually good in the major urban centres. There is also a change in the execution of raids where stolen animals are transported in lorries to distant urban markets by commercially motivated raiders. A major incentive for the young men to engage in rustling activities is the cultural recognition of the practice in pastoral societies as an indicator of bravado .The raiders are largely portrayed as role models and heroes in the society and therefore in socialisation of the young men (Lokira 2007). Songs are composed for the successful raiders and occasionally some feasts held to honour them. Raids are thus used to buy honours for an age group, which encourages each age group to intensify raiding to gain recognition in society.

For example, '*ngoroko*' age group among the Turkana is recognized for the many raids they staged in the late 1970's and early 1980's and are still recognized as heroes and role models. The raided animals are shared widely in the society where many people beyond the raiders themselves benefit directly or indirectly. In such circumstances, the ambition of the young men to take up the practice is propagated as an avenue to gain a reputation and a social recognition in the society, while the practice is condoned by the society for the benefits derived from it. The social control mechanisms against this behaviour at the society, age set, and family level are, therefore inadequate or severely limited.

Equally significant is the open praise of the aggression of the young men by national political leaders and their occasional issue of threats that they would unleash "warriors" to counter those with opposed political views. At the national political level the use of violence for political ends became increasingly and widely used in the multi-party period in the 1990's with the formation of youth and militant wings of political parties to counter opposition. The youth wingers have often been used to terrorise the opponents and defend regions deemed to be dominated by a particular political party from encroachment by opponents. In the circumstances violence has come to be painted as a "normal" way to settle disputes and to resolve differences. This open recognition of aggression and its overt use at the national level to the youth becomes a confirmation that violence is a valuable asset that they ought to maintain. Since political party support in Kenya is drawn largely from ethnic membership of their officials, conflict between political party supporters have often resembled and manifested itself as a clash not of political ideologies but ethnic groups, which has engendered animosities and intolerance between different groups.

1.4 Ethnicisation of Politics

In the 1990's and especially with the advent of plural politics in Kenya, ethnicity has been used overtly as a tactical and bargaining tool in economic and political competition at the national level (Chelanga, Ndege and Singo 2009:25-26; Wanyande 2006:70). In this context of politics of ethnicity, politicians use cultural differences in two negative ways. Firstly, they have portrayed "other" communities as the cause of the "underdevelopment" of the predominantly pastoral and former pastoral regions, which creates mistrust and escalates inter-societal conflicts.

In this regard some politicians have argued that non-pastoral societies have disproportionately benefited from state resources at the expense and neglect of the pastoral societies. The pastoral societies have been made to expect that it is now time to correct the relative deprivation by a deliberate targeting of resources to their regions, which has raised the "value expectations" in these societies. Although communities have been made to expect better conditions of life, the economic situation since the late 1980's has made it extremely difficult for that to happen. This has whipped up feelings of deprivation and discontent among pastoral societies leading to aggression against societies perceived as the beneficiaries of state development programs.

According to Uchendu (1977:101-103) political violence can develop as a result of politicised discontent arising out of unmet "value expectations" in a society. In Kenya the political environment has affected "value expectations" of societies without increasing the economic capabilities to achieve the goals and therefore has heightened the intensity of discontent. In addition, in the use of ethnicity as informal interest group in political and economic competition, the issue of the neglect of pastoral societies and districts and marginalization of this population has been politicised. Politicians have made a lot of political capital in their claims to champion the "rights and interests" of their communities but, unfortunately, at the expense of national integration. For political expediency pastoral and former pastoral societies in the North Rift have adopted the label of "small" ethnic groups as a strategy of political mobilisation to counter what is regarded as political and economic domination in post-colonial Kenya blamed on the predominantly agricultural societies.

The 'pastoral' identity has in this case been used as a marker of mobilization and for exclusion in the construction of identity for the benefit of the societies in the same way it is discussed by Schlee for some other contexts (Schlee 2004) .This has in effect dichotomized the population into "we" versus "them" and created a climate of mistrust and animosity. Within pastoral societies even though they recognised their differences of ethnic identities, in the past this tended to be downplayed in favour of projection of a common identity as livestock keepers, at least in their self perception in relation to other categories such as cultivators.

Non-pastoral populations in the North Rift settled among pastoral (or former) societies or in their neighbourhoods have in the context of politics of ethnicity and politicised discontent been blamed wholesale for the "underdevelopment" and neglect of pastoral societies. As a reaction to these, physical violence and destruction of property have been directed to such groups in protest against this state of affairs. This has been manifested in tribal clashes that have been periodically experienced in various parts of the Rift Valley province since 1991 and the post-election violence in 2007/2008 whose epicenter was the rift valley. In the post election violence in 2007/2008 in Kenya although the trigger appears to be the allegations of election rigging in favour of Party of National Unity (PNU) against Orange Democratic Party (ODM) the violence that followed and the evictions of mostly the kikuyu and Kisii in parts of the Rift Valley was largely driven by the idea that it was time to correct the 'historical injustices' (Lynch 2008). This was in the sense that the Kalenjin felt that the Kikuyu under President Kenyatta had disproportionately benefited in the settlement scheme programme in the Rift valley to the exclusion of the local communities. This created the feeling in the local community of the need for the expulsion of non-indigenous communities, mainly the kikuyu 'as a means to 'right' historical 'wrongs' and as a means of economic and political empowerment' (Lynch 2008). For example, there were demands on Moi University management from the surrounding local community that they should have their local people employed if the animosities and conflict witnessed during the post election violence were to be resolved and for the university to reopen and continue its normal operations.

Secondly, within the category of pastoral societies, perceived imbalances in state benefits, broadly defined as "development", has created the perception that some societies are more favoured and receive more attention than others. This has given rise to an underlying tension in relationships between such societies. In such circumstances any small differences or misunderstanding between families or even individuals from different ethnic groups quickly escalates into an inter-societal conflict. In case of livestock raids, raiders are not only interested in stealing animals but to inflict maximum damage to the 'enemy' to settle economic and political scores. It can be argued that this is not entirely for the raiders' benefits, but also for their local political elite. In a peace meeting between the Pokot and the Turkana on 27/10/1997, the then member of parliament for Turkana and West Pokot Member of Parliament traded accusations and ended up inciting their respective groups against one another.

The law enforcement officers are helpless when it comes to dealing with such influential personalities. There is also the perception that local leaders and politicians are aware in advance where and when raids and related conflicts will be executed by their communities and they give tacit approval and blessings. In the multiparty politics, where the politicians appeal for ethnic sentiments in elections, the once solid Kalenjin group conglomeration in the North Rift region have shown some tendency towards sub-ethnic consciousness. In the first multiparty elections in 1992, the larger Kalenjin community was in KANU, while the Marakwet sub-group leant towards the opposition politics which angered the Kalenjin block and generated some tension and conflict especially between the Pokot and the Marakwet (Ruto et al 2003:24; Chelanga, Ndege and Singo 2009:42). Indeed the ethnic clashes triggered by the multiparty politics in 1992 were due to inflammatory political statements in political meetings with open threats to non-kalenjins settled in the Rift Valley particularly the Luo, Luhya and Kisii (Oyugi 1998: 293).These communities were in the opposition politics hence the appeals by the Kalenjn politicians for the ethnic emotions of their group in the political contest. Within the pastoral and agro-pastoral groups in the North Rift, there is an underlying accusation and counter accusations of political bias and disproportionate benefit from the state during the Moi regime and thereafter. For example, in the intensive raids and counter raids between the pokot and the Turkana in 1995, the Turkana alleged that when the Turkana raided the Pokot, the tracking and recovery of the stolen animals would involve the use of helicopters. The vice versa would not elicit similar intensity. The implication is that the pokot being a sub-group of the larger Kalenjin group received favourable treatment from the Moi regime on ethnic grounds.

1.5 Management of the Conflict

The ethnic conflict in the North Rift is compounded by the tendency by the government until recently to treat cattle raiding and related conflicts as a cultural practice and not as a serious criminal activity. However, those who practice raiding presently no longer view it as a cultural practice perse, but as a political and economic under taking, while the managers of the problem want to continue to portray it as cultural. When perceived this way, the problem does not attract attention as an impediment to peaceful co-existence. Consequently, raiding has often not been accorded the attention it seriously deserves.

In instances where security personnel is deployed to tackle the problem, the activity is often hampered by their inadequate numbers relative to the raiders, poor infrastructure in the region which affects the effective pursuit of the raiders, and insufficient facilities including transport and food rations for the security personnel. The result is little success in their activities. The poor results from the security personnel make affected pastoralists suspicious and distrustful of the capability of the government to provide and maintain adequate security. Consequently, the affected societies have depended largely on self-defense through traditional weapons as well as both illegal and licensed guns. A common response to the problem of illegal arms has been to disarm pastoralists. While the idea is good, the exercise has some drawbacks. The exercise is, for example, often not thorough and, therefore, leaves some societies still armed which makes disarmed societies vulnerable to attacks.

In some cases the local politicians incite their groups not to surrender the arms and those who do surrender the old guns while they retain the modern sophisticated ones. A politician is quoted as telling his ethnic group in a public rally (Khaemba 2014:90), "Never surrender your guns to anybody, by doing so you will be surrendering your wealth (livestock) to your enemies like Karamojong, Marakwet, Turkana and Sebei. With guns your livestock are safe. Without them you are no more. Instead of surrendering guns buy more guns for your safety. There are no police officers to take care of your security. Nobody should ask you to surrender your walking stick and if you do, he will use it to beat you up." Besides, disarming Kenyan pastoralists without the intensification of security in the region leaves them exposed and defenseless against external raiders who remain armed. The collection of illegal arms and the provision of licensed firearms to these communities do not always guarantee security. Part of the problem is that the firearms provided are the less efficient old types; secondly, such guns can be used for aggression rather than for self-defense as intended. It is indeed a misnomer to expect armed ordinary citizens to handle security duties in a disciplined way a task that is best performed by the trained police personnel.

The methods used in the interrogation of communities suspected to harbour raiders are punitive and include physical, economic, and psychological torture such as beatings and confiscation of animals to force confessions. In the process the societies come to fear and lose confidence in their own government. Additionally, some corrupt administrators keep some of the recovered animals and later sell them, thereby adding to the society's suspicions.

The government has on various occasions encouraged and organised for reconciliation meetings between hostile Kenyan pastoralists and their neighbours both within the country and in the neighbouring countries. Such peace meetings have in some cases led to temporary peaceful coexistence while there are instances of raids taking place in the area as the peace meetings are going on as a show of the futility of the exercise. Unfortunately, agreements in such meetings are not permanent and they are often broken and hostilities resumed. In order for traditional peace agreements to be binding and respected there is need for a broader involvement of all stake holders and not just selected elders in the community. This way good will and change of attitude may be achieved. The failure of the government's efforts to achieve lasting peace and reconciliation in the region and the general failure in political and socio-economic fronts (Oyugi ,2004:23) has created room for the entry of NGOs in what Eaton (2008: 243) has referred to as "big business along the Kenya-Uganda border". The 'peace NGOs' have attracted generous funding from various donors. Although NGO's have brought a slightly different approach from that of the government and have tried to gain the confidence of the local communities their actual impact on the ground is negligible given that long after their entry and the large expenditures conflict has continued unabated.

According to Eaton (2008:243-259) the NGO's have failed in their work due to corruption where donor funds are mismanaged or misappropriated and a conflict of interest among the peace workers where aspiring politicians are also at the same time personnel in peace NGO's. This becomes problematic for peace work as these individuals are expected to speak for and defend their people against the same communities they are to reconcile them with. Although the failure of both the government and the NGO's to bring lasting peace in the North Rift creates a picture of hopelessness, meaningful and lasting peace can be achieved with a change of attitude and approach in processing peace. The various government's and local leaders in the region ought to agree on a common approach rather than as it is sometimes the case where each of the government's or local leaders pay lip service while underlying their actions they seem to believe it is the society on the other side of the border that is to blame for the conflict. In the circumstances there is a tendency to look the other way as the community launches counter attacks in the name of retaliation which further fuels the conflicts.

1.6 Impacts of Conflict on Livelihoods and Welfare of Pastoralists

One direct result of ethnic conflict in the North Rift is a widespread loss of livestock as a means of subsistence, and of human lives as well. Indeed the conflict has made the fragile environment to turn into an endemic food insecurity region. While the inter-and intra-ethnic conflict is not the direct cause of food insecurity it has made it difficult for the societies in the North Rift frontier region to engage in their traditional coping strategies which made it easy to mitigate the effects of droughts and famines and made recovery easier. Conflicts have led to complete destitution of whole villages and a breakdown of normal functions of the affected families.

This results in the displacement of large numbers of people from their economic activities and, consequently, their dependence on relief food (Kareithi 2000). The insecurity has altered grazing and settlement patterns with negative effects on the economy and environment. Livestock mobility, which is an important aspect of non- destructive pastoralism, is restricted and herds have to be confined in areas that are considered safe while good grazing lands are avoided. The traditional settlement pattern of isolated individual or small groups of households' characteristic of pastoral societies is abandoned in preference for large congregation of households/homesteads in restricted regions for security reasons (Kareithi 2000). As a consequence the social arena of the pastoralist's resource use, control and management is breaking down resulting into overgrazing and land degradation in localised regions. The insecurity has disrupted economic activities in adjacent regions. Business activities, for example, die out as people move away from insecure trading centres and businessmen and entrepreneurs relocate to other places.

In Turkana district, for example, the insecurity from raiders in the Southern regions has led to the abandonment of irrigation cultivation in some schemes as people migrate out of this area. Livestock traders have also kept away from livestock markets in these regions with significant effects on both commerce and economic activities. The provision of essential services in the region has been hampered by the unwillingness of both public and private sector personnel to risk working under the state of insecurity. Overall, the conflict situation slows down welfare and development initiatives. Paradoxically, the combatants engage in raids and counter raids partly for their own development and partly for their leader's political development which ends up in a cyclical zero sum game.

Under conflict situation the vulnerability of societies to food insecurity has increased. Firstly, raiding has led to significant loses of livestock wealth leading to overall diminished herds and an inability to provide adequate sustenance to the societies. Secondly, raiding has created hostility and mutual suspicion between societies leading to a gradual truncation of relationships and a narrowing of access to resources in land use, labour and livestock networks. The possibility of the use of resources (pasture, water and salt licks) in neighbouring societies used traditionally as a mechanism to cope with droughts is impracticable under conflict situations and the tension this creates. In the circumstances important aspects of peoples' coping strategies have become less practicable leading to severe food insecurity for resource poor households (Duffield, 1990). Thirdly, widespread dispersal of human population and livestock, which is important in tracking the limited resources, is thwarted and this affects the quality and productivity of herds. Lastly, animals acquired through raids have often been a source of livestock disease outbreaks (Cullis and Pacey 1992:14) which affects effective control of livestock disease in these societies, a situation that poses significant risks to livestock herds and livelihood. In sum, the raiding tradition has many knock- on effect, which make the pastoral economies already weakened by periodic droughts and famines quite insecure.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the multi-dimensional nature of the conflict in the North Rift frontier region of Kenya. The conflict has led to loss of lives, income, and livelihood opportunities that in the long-term will change the socio-economic situation of the area negatively. To address the problem, a strong government presence is required in the form of adequate security provision for the people and their property for normal economic activities and life to be maintained. To effectively provide security and to deliver other essential services, the infrastructure in the region requires improvement. The inter-ethnic conflict in the form it has currently taken in recent times is not only a national problem but a regional one as well. Therefore, there is need for inter- governmental cooperation and coordination in dealing with the problem. To address livestock rustling as an activity especially as it involves the young men, there is need to focus on providing economic opportunities to create alternative avenues for such groups to earn an honest livelihood.

Additionally, the livestock sector should be strengthened in terms of veterinary services and diseases controls as well as rapid de-stocking whenever there is a drought to avoid the destitution of the societies. Education campaigns should be launched to discuss the problem and with a view to discourage the livestock rustling and the conflict it engenders. These campaigns should involve all the stakeholders including women and not just the young men and the elders who it is assumed are the key players in the execution of the raids and the conflicts this engenders. The aim of the exercise should be to change people's attitude, behaviour and the general perceptions about life.

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