Factors in Pastoral Conflict in Kenya: A political ecology approach
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Introduction

- September 2005: Killing of 76 people by armed bandits in a fight over resources in Marsabit district, Northern Kenya
- Woke the country to the famine in the area.
- State appealed for food.
- 2007: 1.2 people again affected, projected to rise to 2.5 million
- Again state appealed for food.
- Recurring pattern, with a notable lack of planning for a sustainable solution.
Introduction

• Yet Western Kenya had a bumper harvest and maize was exported to Southern Sudan.
Introduction

• Pastoralism often viewed as a primitive way of life,
• Complex form of natural resource management (Pratt, 1997)
• Symbiotic relationship between local ecology, domesticated livestock and people in regions of scarce resources and climatic variability.
• Only sustainable economic activity that can be carried out in ASAL areas.
• Rain may be abundant for decades in one region, then fail entirely and without warning in another.
Pastoralism and the Horn

- Horn of Africa contains the largest groupings of pastoralists in the world.
- In Kenya, ASALs constitute 80% of total land area.
- Supports 25% of the population and half of its livestock.
- Climatic variability has always been a problem in pastoral areas.
- An important cause of conflict.
Pastoral areas: Characteristics

- Peripheral
- Mobile population with migratory roots dictated by water and pasture.
- Insecurity creates no-go zones, and dissuades development
- State has no incentive to invest in security beyond the small towns. However, oil issue and Southern Sudan set to change this.
- Areas vast and population spread out. Turkana covers an area of 77,000 sq km. The size of Scotland.
- Provision of security is therefore scanty and under-resourced
- No RR exists
Arguments

• Pastoral livelihood has always been exposed to the vagaries of climate and harsh environmental conditions.
• However, in recent years, pastoralists have faced a myriad of new problems,
  – Competition for water and pasture in the context of decreased access to land;
  – More explicit political and economical marginalisation;
  – Lack of appropriate responses to the deteriorating security situation;
  – The proliferation of weapons across the region.
Study Area: Turkana

• ASAL, peripheral county which borders Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia.
• Borders are long and porous.
• Arms flows across the borders are common
• Constant intra and inter-communal conflict across the borders.
• Cattle raiding
• Estimated one in every three Turkana men are armed.
• Faced with recurrent droughts and many people are now dependent on food aid.
Study Area: Turkana

- Huge number of NGOs
- In the past two weeks, oil has been discovered in Southern Turkana at Kodekode, Lokichar and this will be expected to bring different conflict dynamics.
- It’s location is in the general path of the proposed pipe line from South Sudan to Lamu.
- Threat of displacement of many pastoralists.
- Land is currently designated as communal and this could lead to conflict
- Intra, inter and regional conflict
Study Area: Laikipia

- ASAL, Located near Mt. Kenya
- Multi ethnic county with some areas suitable for arable farming
- Largest wildlife habitat outside government protected areas
- Conservancies have been created in the last 6 years
- Europeans coming in and large homes are being built in the area
- Population pressure on scarce resources
- Inter-communal pastoral conflict and conflict between pastoralists and other land users
- Human-wildlife conflict
- SALW proliferation
Methodology

• In-depth interviews: with security, different ministries in government and among them KWS, Agriculture and livestock but also CDF.
• Interviews with CSOs and FBOs
• FGDs with local people especially women and elders, and warriors.
• Observation
• Triangulation of information
Topography mountains and valleys.- area is vast
Raids resulted into no animals, people now burning charcoal which leads to environmental degradation.
Overview of factors in pastoral conflict

• Several factors involved
• Complex and inter-related
• The following figure is a simplification
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Pastoral Conflict

Pastoral Conflict
Climate

- During pre-colonial times and continuing until today, pastoralists have faced major challenges from drought, causing shortage of pasture and water.
- This leads to competition for grazing, and stock theft (cattle raiding).
- Organised drought coping mechanisms have been documented among many groups,
- Through the customary institution of the elders.
- Cyclical droughts are a defining feature of pastoralists’ way of life in this region, and ‘local livelihoods are sensitively adapted to the certainty that drought will come and can be overcome’
Climate

• Experiences in Laikipia and Turkana and similar counties have shown that there is a high risk of conflict over scarce water and pasture unless special arrangements are made to ensure emergency access.
Land alienation and boundaries

• In Laikipia, water sources once available to pastoralists have been depleted by upstream irrigation to feed flower farms.
• Boundaries arbitrary and insensitive to local need
• In terms of security, have created inherently porous international borders which are difficult to police.
• Laikipia, land was alienated by colonial regime. The post colonial elites have continued the process.
• Land grabbing on a massive scale to create private ranches and large farms and wildlife parks has further limited pastoral access and led to conflicts between pastoralists and land owners
Land Tenure and Conflict

• Majority of pastoral land resources are held under a controlled access system which is communal in form.
• ‘Communal' land tenure relates to that system of tenure in which the tribe or clan or a group has access to land.
• Introduction of private land tenure introduces conflict.
Marginalisation

• Focus on agriculturalists and urban dwellers.
• Policies pursued based on containment, pacification and sedenterisation of pastoralists.
• Speech by Kikwete
  – Mr. Speaker, we must modernize animal husbandry. We will have no alternative. We must abandon altogether nomadic pastoralism which makes the whole country pastureland… the cattle are bonny and pastoralists are skeletons. (Hansard, December 30, 2005).
• Marginalization, politically, economically and socially, is a major cause of inequality
• Hence a factor in resource based conflict in pastoral areas
• Example: Turkana school children
Cultural factors in conflict

- Raiding (now commercialised raiding)
- Bride wealth
Security and pastoralists

• The law in Turkana and Laikipia is different from the law in urban areas.
• Managed according to Customary traditional system.
• There is inadequate or no security in some places.
SALW proliferation

• Pastoralist communities now provide the largest market for small arms from local circulation and from areas in the region undergoing civil war (Mkutu 2003, 2007, 2008, 2011).
• The relative ease of acquisition and low cost of these illegal guns enable the pastoral communities to guarantee a sustained market.
• Arming because
  – Weapons used to defend animals.
  – Used for raiding
  – Convertible currency- buy beer
  – Survival
• Response by state is
  – Slow
  – Ineffective,
  – Overly forceful,
  – Or non-existent
Specific conflicts in Turkana and Laikipia

- Conservancies
- Horticulture in Laikipia
- Human Wildlife Conflict in Laikipia
- Turkana Elites
- Oil in Turkana
Conclusion

• Pastoralists have historically maintained a variety of social, cultural and economic practices to constantly ensure their survival and social stability.
• Now overwhelmed by modern changes
Conclusion

• During colonial periods there was less pressure on resources, and conflict and scarcity were to some extent managed by the colonial government with some collaboration with the customary governance structures.

• In the post-colonial regime, pressure on resources has intensified and attention to pastoralists’ needs has fallen by the wayside while land grabbing continues
Conclusion

• Drought is not the main cause of the current catastrophe in Kenya.
• Drought intensifies existing competition for resources and magnifies social inequalities.
• Since colonial times no alternative economic opportunities that are compatible with the climate and socio-cultural conditions of the region have been introduced.
Conclusion

• Backdrop of climatic variability
• Governance failures
• Non responsive and unaccountable institutions
• Misplaced priorities
• Lack of the political will to raise the issues of pastoralists in national and international policy
• These are some of the most important factors in pastoral resource based conflict
Conclusion

- Climatic variability is one of the important factors in pastoral conflict.
- However our cases demonstrate the interplay between climatic and political factors.
- In particular the marginalisation of pastoralists both politically and economically.
- A national policy could be established aimed at putting the resources in arid and semi arid lands into more productive use.
Conclusion

• Currently there is anecdotal agricultural research investment in ASAL. More significant research into dryland farming systems and appropriate (applied) technology, including food processing and storage, to bolster regional food security systems could be carried out.

• In conclusion, drought, famine and conflict are national problems in Kenya and should be the subject of more serious thinking, anticipation and action than previously.
Conclusion

• The issue of the oil companies and conservancies raises the issue of communal land tenure.
• Communities under such land system in Kenya who are mainly pastoralists are vulnerable to land grabbing.
• Environmental impact of private-public partnership could create more resource based conflict between the state, companies and communities.
Conclusion

• To reduce the cost of drought and famine Kenya must include pastoral areas in national development.

• If pastoral land management system is the best way to manage land, why not strengthen these traditional rules and regulation in pastoral management?
Conclusion

• Most governments in the Horn treat pastoralists as a problem second class citizens.
• Governments need to change their policy attitude and see pastoralists as assets.
• They should be understood, economically developed, supported and assisted in marketing cattle.
• Protein rich foods are nutritionally necessary and many Kenyans lack sufficient protein.
• Pastoralists are experts in cattle production, and if given assistance the economy of Kenya will grow, with more nyama choma available!