ABSTRACT

A majority of the people living in the arid and semi-arid parts of the world are pastoralists whose livelihoods are dictated by the upkeep and size of their herds. During the dry season, the harsh environmental condition forces them to migrate in search of pasture and water. With limited access to water and competing rights to pasture, inter-community conflicts often arise particularly when one community crosses over to others’ territory to share these valuable resources. This case has persisted between the Pokot and Karamojong despite the existence of formal and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, security policies, disarmament programmes and structured ways of sharing resources across the border. The choice of this study area was based on the fact that all other communities along the same border enjoyed mutual and symbiotic relations. The purpose of this study was to find out why the conflict still persists. The objectives of this study were to:Account for the nature of the Pokot and Karamojong relations in the pre-colonial period; analyze the arrival of British colonialism and the creation of the Kenya-Uganda boundary in the Pokot and Karamojong conflict persistence; assess the causes and impacts of the conflict persistence on the two communities and finally examine the appropriate measures in the mitigation and prevention mechanisms of the conflict persistence. The study used historical descriptive research design. It employed purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. The study area was Kenya’s West Pokot County and Uganda’s Karamoja district whose total population is 1,244,142 people. The target population was 384 respondents. Primary data was collected using Key Informant Interview (18), In-depth Interviews (9), and Focus Group Discussions (37) while secondary data was collected from library research and reports. Conflict theory by Oberschall (1973) and Ubuntu African philosophy by Mbingi (1987) were adopted as the theories of the study. Data analysis involved document and content analysis as well as the corroboration and validation of the results from both secondary and primary data during collection and write up. This study found that the conflict is spasmodic, covert and a reprisal arising from adherence to traditional norms, climate change, and proliferation of arms and commercialization of cattle raids as its major causes. It has also revealed loss of property, human deaths, insecurity and under development as its impacts. It is recommended that insecurity can be eradicated if Kenya and Uganda governments work together in the sectors of education, health, livestock and infrastructural development. They should be more proactive than reactive to the impasse, involve warriors and women in their hybrid approach of conflict resolution, and consider buying Boeing quadracopter Scan Eagle for surveillance across the border. They should also use Certificate of Transhumance and a micro computer chip with an electronic code number for each animal to help track rustlers within and across national borders. The study has concluded that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are the major contributors to this conflict. The study is important in strengthening policies on peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution between neighboring communities, boundary survey and political administration.