

Commandants research paper



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Cattle rustling is “ the stealing of grazing cattle” [1].

The term originated from the United States, where pioneer farmers grazed cattle on huge ranches that were difficult to patrol. [2] In Uganda, cattle rustling is rampant in North-eastern part of the country (Karamoja region), a semi-arid land area. The region has dominant pastoral ethnic groups which include the Dodoth, Jie, Bakora, Matheniko and the Pian all of whom are referred to generally as Karamojong. Traditionally, cattle rustling within the pastoral communities was sanctioned and controlled by elders as a means of testing a person’s personal bravery and prowess. In the recent past however, there has emerged a new system of predatory exploitation of economic resources in the form of cattle rustling and banditry. This problem is manifesting itself in various forms and is becoming endemic in north-eastern Uganda. There has been a tendency by scholars to trivialize the issue of cattle rustling as a mere cultural practice, yet over a period of time there have emerged new trends, tendencies and dynamics, leading to commercialization of the practice.

The phenomenon of cattle rustling has caused a breakdown in social order, economic hardships and insecurity in North-eastern Uganda. 2. During post colonial period, different Ugandan governments have adopted anti-pastoral policies leading to loss of land vital for the survival of the Karamajong herds. Today, the menace of cattle rustling in this area has reached unprecedented proportions in nature and scale due to a number of factors including; government policies, socio-political and ecological limitations. The subsequent intervention by government saw to it that disarmament programs were the most viable solution to cease and remove all illegal gun

usage by the Karamojong. To date however, all the disarmament programs initiated by government have not solved the problem. 3.

This paper is written for the commandant Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College as a partial fulfilment for the award of a Pass Staff Course (psc). It seeks to analyse the problems of cattle rustling and banditry activities in Uganda, by examining the historical background of the pastoralists, causes and effects of cattle rustling, attempts by government to address it and finally proposes solutions deemed appropriate. The paper relied mainly on written materials, which included articles, books, reports and journals. The findings could not be comprehensively expressed within the limits of 4, 000 words; consequently there was the constraint of space. AIM 4. The aim of this paper is to examine the problems of cattle rustling in Uganda with a view to recommending appropriate solution. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KARAMOJA PASTORALISTS 5.

Karamojong is a generic term that refers to a group of pastoralists from the Nilo-Hamite ethnic group living in North-eastern Uganda. The region is popularly known as Karamoja and their language is Akaramojong. The community comprises five ethnic groupings namely Dodoth, Jie, Bakora, Matheniko and the Pian totaling about 12% of Uganda's population of 24.7million. Their history and culture closely interlocks with that of their neighboring pastoralists, the Turkana in Northwestern Kenya. Cattle are crucial within this community not just for subsistence but also for the payment of bride price, which is the basis of establishing bond partnerships within the Karamojong community. [3] The history of the pastoralist

organized raids and predatory expansion predate European colonialism of the nineteenth century.

During pre-colonialism, pastoralists of the region had been accustomed to the independence and freedom of openly carrying firearms they had for many decades obtained from Arab slave traders and merchants from the East African coast. [4] Karamoja community had a thriving pastoral economy through trade in ironware and livestock with the Turkana of Kenya. They lived peacefully within the Rudolf Province of Uganda where they shared natural resources through a system of social reciprocity, before the colonial delimitation sliced through their grazing areas. 6. The redrawing of boundaries by Britain in 1926 transferred Uganda's Rudolf province to Kenya and created the present republics of Kenya and Uganda[5]. The colonialists wanted the pastoralists confined within the respective boundaries and to respect the invisible meridians that delineated the newly created states. Since ancient times however, pastoralism involved the protection of livestock from wild animals; later on protection against human thieves also became necessary.

These considerations made it prudent for pastoralists to be armed, which was viewed as a threat by the colonial authority. On account of this, each pastoral ethnic community was ordered to surrender to the colonialists the guns they acquired in the mid 19th century. The pastoralists refused to surrender guns peacefully, forcing colonialists to conduct a disarmament operation which was unsuccessful in that the pastoralists simply re-located to rugged mountainous terrain out of reach of the colonial patrols. 7.

Nevertheless, Karamoja and Turkana regions were declared closed districts,

where movement within and outside was restricted without a valid pass. 6]

By the late nineteenth century the Karamojong adopted a settled form of pastoralism through which only animals are moved in search of pasture while the families settle permanently in given locations. Consequently, the restriction of movement limited free access to grazing land and water and further increased the social conflict among the pastoralists over the little available grazing area.

The redrawing of boundaries and restrictions on movement affected the pastoralists whose mode of nomadism results from ecological demands necessitating mobility. 8. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Britain recruited the Karamojong into the army in recognition of their ethno-military culture and existing dexterity with firearms and knowledge of harsh physical terrain. Karamojong also served with distinction as soldiers for the Kings African Rifles (KAR) during military campaigns conducted in Africa and Asia. After political independence from Britain in 1962, the government of Uganda continued to exclude the Karamoja region from the socio-economic and political developments that were taking place in other areas of the country. The community lacked roadcommunicationand infrastructures that could generate local employment. Karamoja region therefore remained economically deprived hence failed to gravitate to the rhythm of statehood and instead strengthened their primordial identity.

9. In 1979, the Karamojong acquired large quantities of automatic rifles following the routing of President Idi Amin from Uganda by an alliance of Tanzanian People's Defence Force and Ugandan exiles. One major source was the Moroto barracks which the fleeing soldiers abandoned intact thus

allowing the Karamojong to help themselves to unlimited quantity of small arms and ammunition. 7] Hence, the Karamojong strengthened their raiding capacity using the skills gained in the colonial wars and the modern automatic rifles looted from Moroto barracks to revitalize the tradition of dynastic raids and predatory expansion. The long time exclusion of the Karamojong from the socio-economic development by the government also accounts as a cause of the new form of banditry. CAUSES OF CATTLE

RUSTLING IN UGANDA 10. Cattle rustling phenomenon has undergone fundamental transformation from a cultural practice of testing a person's personal bravery and prowess to banditry and bloody warfare between various groups.

Cattle raids within the pastoral communities often constitute a communal response to natural calamities, although it is a primitive survival strategy, on the overall, raiding has the impact of creating a desperate cycle of continuous raids as each group in the region sees it as a means for re-stocking. Thus the social dilemmas created by frequent natural disasters appear to be the major catalysts of the cattle-rustling phenomenon in the borderlands. Cattle rustling activities in Uganda is therefore, as a result of; ecological limitations, government policies, external political and economic factors. 8] 11. Ecological Limitations. The Karamoja area has an ecological feature of a semi-arid savannah, bush and mountains with varying rain pattern. In pre-colonial times, pastoral societies used migrations as a panacea[9] for droughts, but the impositions of boundaries and restrictions on movement destroyed this possibility, and were totally at variance with the

understanding of boundaries by the pastoralists who responded to ecological demands.

These measures greatly affected the grazing patterns by the pastoralists from their long time experience with ecological hardships. Ecological limitations further forced pastoralists to choose breeds which may not necessarily be profitable in milk, blood, and meat yield but can endure extreme drought and survive long distances. The fixed boundaries as a result of government policies were drawn with little regard to seasonal variations and the need of the pastoral community for pasture. Consequently, massive deaths of cattle resulting from droughts and limited grazing area led to raids as one of the options for replenishing the depleted stocks. 12. Government Policies. As a result of colonial and post colonial government policies, the Karamajong lost a considerable portion of land through the redrawing of national boundaries of Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, gazettement of national parks and the establishment of Moroto barracks that left much of their grazing areas outside Uganda.

They were also expelled from the newly created Game park of Kidepo, and protected forests. From then, the pastoral community developed a highly sophisticated approach to sharing scarce grazing land and water in an unstable ecological system. The adoption of a settled form of pastoralism through which only animals are moved in search of pasture and water while the families settle permanently in given locations entailed the development of hostilities among the various groups over grazing grounds and water spots. They often abandon their homes to temporary encampments in search of pasture, occasionally crossing to neighbouring districts including the

border to Turkana land in North-western Kenya[10]. Consequently, the alienation of the Karamajong communities from the resources they once used set the stage for them to seek survival strategies through mobile pastoralism. The high rate of illiteracy and unemployment among the youth who view cattle rustling and banditry as the only way to livelihood is another factor contributing to the banditry activities in the region coupled with external political factors. 13.

External Political Factors. External political factors have increased the instability of pastoralist groups inhabiting remote regions of Northeastern Uganda and Northwestern Kenya. In particular, political fragmentation and civil wars have had domino effect on the Karamojong and Turkana. They have played host or been caught up in armed conflicts between various factions and in the event lost livestock in big numbers. The pastoralists have from time to time had heavy clashes with the rebels who come to loot livestock. Specifically, the civil war in Southern Sudan between the government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) and the sporadic rebel movements of the Lords Resistance Movement (LRA) in Northeastern Uganda. The Uganda, Kenya and Sudan border region is so awash with small arms that one ethnic pastoral group will use guns for part payment of dowry when taking a bride from the other.

Whereas cattle have a symbolic role in marriage and in the social-political and economic life of herders, their substitution with modern firearms indicates that arms bearing has acquired a significant role in the spiritual and material culture of the pastoral community of Uganda. 14. Economic Factors. Another cause of cattle rustling which has become more entrenched

in the last few decades is that of economic self-acquisition motives. Raids motivated by such tendencies do not occur as a response to ecological or natural calamities. Such raids occur at any time with the aim of acquiring animals for commercial purposes and individual gain. While the first category of raids hinges on communal interests and is monitored by the community through social norms, the latter is based entirely on private interests and controlled by armed kraal leaders.

This has led to the emergence of cattle warlords. [11] Consequently, cattle rustling have emerged into a new system of predatory exploitation of economic resources in the form of banditry and raids intended to accumulate wealth resulting into adverse effects in the region. EFFECTS OF CATTLE RUSTLING 15. Traditionally, cattle rustling were a cultural practice that was regarded as a kind of sports to test a person's bravery among the astoralists and was sanctioned by elders. Today, however, new forms of banditry and cattle rustling have emerged, over which the elders have no control. In the last three decades, a number of pastoral societies have become militarized and increasingly rely on firearms. A few randomly selected incidents will illustrate the severity of the problem.

In September 1997, fifty Bakora ethnic communities were killed in a 4 a. m. raid by Pokot cattle raiders numbering about one thousand. The Pokot were armed with AK 47 assault rifles and about stole 7, 000 cattle. In March 1999, Pokot gunmen again attacked a Matheniko village killing 30 people before escaping with 2, 000 heads of cattle. However, what was most disturbing was the fact that the rustlers burned food crops; gang raped women and set huts on fire. Later, an attack in February 2000 by the Ugandan Karamojong

on Kenyan Pokot killed over hundred people and stole about 1, 800 cattle and 5, 000 sheep.

Cosequently, cattle raiding in north-eastern Uganda have undergone fundamental changes in terms of nature and scale, effects of which can be viewed from the level of insecurity, socio-political and economic impacts in the region. 6. Socio - Political and Economic Impact. Cattle rustling have caused untold suffering in the Karamoja region which has led to loss of many human lives and displacement of various population and groups within Karamoja and its neighbouring districts. The twin phenomena of banditry and cattle rustling have become endemic in the region, affecting a big population of the area with kraal leaders having a field day in this environment of lawlessness. The idle and impoverished youths are easily manipulated by the kraal heads to join their private raiding armies to conduct raids. 12] Karamojong youth seems to be happy in enlisting into these banditry and cattle raiding armies, which they feel, is synonymous to defending societal interest against an enemy, the State.

Because of the state of anarchy and lawlessness in the region, it is very difficult to implement any economic developmental projects; hence people live in abject poverty. Government officers, NGOs and the business community based in the area live in constant fear of the bandits. The social dilemmas created by frequent natural disasters such as drought also appear to be a major catalyst of the cattle-rustling phenomenon within the pastoral community. Subsequently, the often wanton destruction of life and property and the use of terror by the rustlers have in all its manifestations undermined the sense of value, dignity and harmony hence, a major source

of insecurity and undevelopment in the region. 17. Insecurity. The new form of banditry activities in northeastern Uganda has resulted in the emergence of cattle warlords with armed militia to protect their interests.

The violence, chaos and insecurity have become the dominant feature in the region. Cattle warlordism is a new phenomenon which has emerged among the Karamojong since the 1980s, the warlords have created strong and heavily armed private armies which, apart from providing them local security, also go on cattle raids, near and far. Violence and warfare in the process of cattle raiding and looting of other property have created an environment of insecurity and tension in the region extending to neighbouring districts. State officials, especially security forces, involved in the disarmament operation are also perpetrating acts of violence and insecurity in the region, for example; in 1984, a joint disarmament exercise involving Ugandan military and Kenyan paramilitary police flopped when the soldiers involved in the program indiscriminately killed Karamojong and looted thousands of cattle. Since the post colonial period, the State has also been implicated in the confiscation of livestock recovered after raids. [13] The warlords have very many retainers whom they send on raids, while they maintain and supervise the raiding party. They have therefore; become the final authority on cattle relations, overriding the traditional powers of the elders.

Consequently, the insecurity in the region is perpetuated by both State operatives involved in the disarmament operations and the warlords.

GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO STOP CATTLE RUSTLING 18. Efforts to pacify Karamoja have been the concern of successive regimes in the colonial

times through to post colonial period. During the colonial time, Britain declared Karamoja a closed district where movement within and outside was restricted without a valid pass. In a bid to restrict transhumance, the policy had the impact of pauperizing the Karamoja community who previously had a thriving pastoral economy through trade in ironware and livestock with the Turkana of Kenya. After independence in 1962, Uganda perpetuated British policies which included gun control laws, but pastoralists across the borders to the North and East had access to modern firearms, which facilitated raids. During the 1980s at the height of cattle rustling, government initiated another attempt to disarm the Karamojong which efforts were forcefully repelled.

In 1984, a joint disarmament exercise with the Kenya paramilitary police flopped when the military involved in the program indiscriminately killed Karamojong and stole cattle. [14] Consequently, the conduct of the military involved in the disarmament operation partly caused the failure of the earlier disarmament attempts. 19. In 1986, a program to re-establish authority of the state in Karamoja region was initiated to control cattle rustling, and consolidate the security in the region. The state's opinion was that, the pastoral communities were conservative, slow to adapt to change and in many respects actually against change. In view of that, several units of the army were deployed in Karamoja, unfortunately, the army itself became the source of insecurity in the region; use of force to disarm the Karamajong warriors meant declaring war against them, hence, the high handedness with which the army dealt with security issues alienated the pastoral communities even more. [15] Efforts by government to fight cattle

rustling are laudable, but its strategy seem short-term and unlikely to succeed without fully grasping the significance of ethno-military identity of the Karamojong and their agro-pastoral neighbours, the Turkana of Kenya.

Consequently, government have not achieved enduring peace in Karamoja region because of the inability to address the root causes of cattle rustling in the area and the factors that have led to failure of the previous disarmament and pacification attempts. SOLUTIONS DEEMED APPROPRIATE 20. Grass root planning approach involving all stake holders in the disarmament programmes and messages should be designed, with emphasis on assuaging the pastoralist's personal fears about their security through deliberate confidence-building and provision of security. The surrender of guns should be preceded by intensive and extensive sensitisation programmes through meetings; media programmes, churches, NGOs, seminars and community based programmes. Kraal leaders should be the core of mobilization, sensitisation and concretisation programmes and efforts-targeting the youth. Properly planned, simultaneous and coordinated approach to disarmament programme should be initiated to involve all stake holders. 21.

Simultaneous and Coordinated Disarmament. Government should plan and conduct a peaceful disarmament operation and closely monitor it through the establishment of disarmament committees at all levels. Adoption of standardised disarmament operational procedures and developing strategies aimed at eradicating trafficking in small arms. Appointing a regional disarmament committee composed of both the military and civic leaders in the region. Liaison Officers should be appointed in the affected areas of Kenya and Uganda at regional and local levels to coordinate the

disarmament operation. Government should undertake joint planning of disarmament operations between Kenya and Uganda and establish civil military coordination centre with appropriate humanitarian and civic action programmes. Government should conduct human rights training and sensitisation to the armed forces that will undertake forceful disarmament.

There should be plans to improve on the existing social and physical structures and construction of new ones. 22. Social and Physical Infrastructure. Government should improve on the existing roads and drainage structures in the region and invest in water provision for livestock. Developing appropriate rain water harvesting technologies would make surface water run-off available for small-scale irrigated agriculture and watering livestock. Government should undertake improvement of the existing roads and construct new ones as prioritised for easy communication. It should construct more boreholes and collaborate with development partners in the region to undertake labour-based rehabilitation of existing valley dams and construct new ones.

All these activities should be coupled with mass mobilization and sensitization of the local population within the pastoral community. 23. Mobilisation and Sensitization. There should be regular planning for community mobilisation, sensitisation and education campaigns which should target the whole community. Integration of traditional institutions of elders, kraal leaders, youth and women in the decision making regarding containment of insecurity and implementation of integrated disarmament activities should be first on the pacification agenda. Specifically, this should target the youth in the community who are vibrant in banditry activities.

Mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns for voluntary disarmament and establishment of a system of co-ordination with the military at sub-county level through Liaison should be established.

The kraal leaders should be encouraged to plan and execute grazing movements with local military commanders and emphasize the use of communal grazing grounds. There should be regular joint security meetings between Kenya and Uganda to coordinate civil military activities and identify arms markets with a view to total closure and arrest of those involved in order to establish law and order in the region. 4. Establishment of Law and Order. There is need for government to strengthen the capacity of the police to maintain law and order during and after disarmament operation. This could be achieved by the establishment of mobile courts to expedite trials of those persons found with illegal weapons and recruitment of the indigenous who qualify into the regular civil police force to serve in the region.

Government should undertake further study on the traditional justice administration systems of the pastoralists to find best ways to integrate positive aspects in the modern system.

Government should initiate methods of easy identification of cattle within the pastoral community. 25. Branding Animals. Government should enforce branding of livestock as a security measure to stem livestock thefts and for purposes of census and identity. Train livestock owners to maintain proper records regarding their herds, for example the colours of their cattle. Provide and improve services like veterinary for branding exercise in Karamoja region and the neighbouring. 26.

Improved Services. Government should provide support for education in the region through the establishment of free government-aided boarding primary and secondary schools to effect attitude change against the gun, cow and cattle rustling, hence reduce recruitment of the youth into warrior-hood. Compulsory primary education for all children of school-going age should be introduced and civic education enhanced for adults. Peace and conflict resolution subjects should be incorporated as a unit in the curriculum at primary and secondary school levels. Government should support and intensify livestock disease control by undertaking mass vaccination of livestock against common diseases. It should enhance an appropriate agricultural extension service delivery system which takes into account the specific constraints in the area. Healthcare facilities and services should be extended to the region to reach all the communities and efforts put to strengthen and improve water and sanitation, rehabilitate dilapidated health facilities and services in the region.

27. Rewards/Recognition. There should be resettlement packages that benefit the community and the gun-owners surrendering guns. This could be in monetary and other items like iron sheets, ox-ploughs etc to change the livelihood of the pastoralists. Award of certificates and or medals for recognition would also be appropriate. CONCLUSION 28. The twin phenomena of banditry and cattle rustling in north-eastern Uganda have had adverse effects on the people of the region by creating an environment of violence and insecurity.

Cattle rustling have undergone fundamental transformation from a cultural practice to a commercial venture organized and bankrolled by cattle

warlords. There is therefore, a significant connection between environmental conflict and the insecurity created by cattle rustling and banditry in north-eastern-Uganda. The redrawing of national boundaries and restrictions on movement affected the pastoralists since their mode of nomadism results from ecological demands necessitating mobility. (Para 6, 7, and 11) 29.

Cattle raiding have the impact of creating a desperate cycle of continuous raids as each group in the region sees it as a means for re-stocking. Raiding has been portrayed as a factor that is embedded in the pastoralists' mentality and that can only be eradicated by the discontinuation of pastoralism, however, the social dilemmas created by frequent natural disasters appear to be the major catalysts of the cattle-rustling phenomenon in the pastoralist community. State officials, especially security forces involved in the region are also perpetrating acts of violence and insecurity; they have been implicated in the confiscation of livestock recovered after raids.

Cattle warlordism is a new phenomenon which has emerged among the Karamojong since the 1980s and is also responsible for the current violence and warfare. (Para 15 and 16). 30. Various attempts have been made by the Ugandan government to exercise a strong level of control over the pastoralists and to stop cattle rustling. The aim of which has been to pacify the pastoralists and to ensure peace and order in the region. The methods used has had several implications which has tended to present the pastoralists as unreliable people and prone to violence. Important decisions and policies affecting the mode of existence of the pastoralists should

therefore not just be forced down their throats without their active involvement from the initial stages to the implementation process.

Pastoralism cannot be simply dismissed; they have demonstrated economic and social acumen in the exploitation of their arid homelands, which are too arid for anything but nomadic. Government appear to have failed to achieve enduring peace in Karamoja because of the inability to address the root causes of cattle rustling in the area and the factors that have led to failure of the previous disarmament attempts. Para 17 and 18). RECOMMENDATIONS

31. Government policy makers must take cognisance of the root causes of cattle rustling and identify how the ecologically related threat to peace can be contained, lessened or eradicated. Sustainable development requires grassroots support, and therefore important decisions and policies affecting the mode of existence of the pastoralists should not be simply imposed on them without their active participation from the beginning. 32.

There is need for government to initiate people focused economic reforms to involve land tenure that could minimize resource conflicts and open up rural based agro-pastoral industries to improve livestock productivity to create local employment. 33. There is need for government to strengthen the capacity to maintain law and order in the region, most importantly disarmament should be calculated to win the hearts and minds. Services like compulsory education, health centres and hospitals, construction of roads, provision of clean water for human consumption and sinking of valley dams for livestock should be provided to the region.