



# Exploring the Influence of Local Politics on Cross Border Conflict between Turkana and Pokot Communities of Northern Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

For many decades conflict resolution between Turkana and Pokot communities in Northern Kenya has been very elusive. Understanding the local politics and their influence towards continuous cross border conflicts informs this study. The study examined major political factor influencing cross border conflict between Turkana and Pokot with the aim of determining the extent to which local politics influence conflict and potential interventions for durable conflict resolution. Cross border conflict has been evolving taking many forms currently manifested through regular cattle raids, highway banditry, and conflict over resources such as land, pasture and water. The study was conducted in two divisions; Kainuk in Turkana County and Sigor in West Pokot County. Data collection instruments used was questionnaires and focus group discussions. Data analysis was done with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences tool. Correlation and regression techniques were used in data analysis and based on the results of the data analysis, the study findings show that local politics influence conflict at the cross border. Respondents pointed out to local leaders' interference with peace building by incitements, disregard of the traditional governance systems, and lack of local communities to participate in development activities and implementation thus cross border conflict. The study concludes that tribal politics and unethical politician and entrepreneur are the main influencers of cross border conflict in Northern Kenya. Bad politics affects growth and development thus the study recommends that the Government should enforce laws that prohibit tribal politics and local politicians from interfering in peace building efforts.

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### 1.1 Introduction

Conflict is inevitable as every family or community always has friction. However, the magnitude of conflict varies from petty conflict to capital offences. Conflicts have been observed across many countries in the world and as a result governments, rebels, and warlords have made billions of dollars by selling conflict commodities and have used the money to arm themselves and line their own pockets (Janda *et al.*, 2013). The cost of these conflicts is extraordinary (Renner, 2002). Cross border conflicts have a global dimension taking a case study of Kashmir conflict which is a classic example of cross border tussle that has spanned over five decades (Najam & Yusuf, 2013). The Israeli Palestinian conflict is also a territorial cross-border conflict dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries. Israelis and Palestinians both claim ownership of what is referred to as "the Holy Land" currently occupied by Israel (Caplan, 2011; Chapman, 2015). In Africa, many conflicts have been waged over resources as

witnessed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Sudan and in many states in West Africa (Straus, 2012). Cattle rustling is a cross border conflict carried out by nomadic communities across Africa. In East Africa, the vice is rampant and as a result a protocol was established and signed by eleven regional states to prevent and eradicate cattle rustling (EAPCCO, 2008).

For many decades peace building between Turkana and Pokot communities in Northern Kenya has been very elusive. Cross border conflict has been evolving taking many forms currently manifested through regular cattle raids, highway banditry, and conflict over resources such as land, pasture and water (Kareithi, 2015). Violent conflicts involving pastoralists have become widespread and increasingly severe in the North Rift and North-Eastern regions of Kenya. The pastoralists in Turkana County and West Pokot under study are largely nomadic pastoralists. They live primarily in arid and semi-arid areas and depend on livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and camels)

for their livelihood. They move around searching for pasture and water for their livestock as such resources are scarce. A total of 164,457 people has been displaced by conflicts in pastoral North Frontier region of Kenya (Njiru, 2012). Women and children below 14 years displaced make 105,500 (70%) of 164,457. In addition to displacements, many women have also been widowed by the conflicts further increasing their vulnerabilities to poverty and human right abuses. In West Pokot County, 30,361 people have been displaced. Most of the displaced come from areas bordering Turkana, Marakwet and Uganda (Karamojong districts). Alale division that borders Turkana County and Uganda has 11,871 displaced people.

Turkana County has always had the highest number of displaced persons (Njiru, 2012). The figure by 2003 stood at 41,097 people. Most of the displaced are from Kainuk, Lomelo and Katilu divisions but Kakuma and Lokichoggio too recording high numbers (Pkalya, 2003).

Violent conflict among communities is a function of interlocking political differences, economic and structural factors (Njoka, 2011). Apart from competition over resources, livestock raiding and banditry; violent conflict among these groups is also caused by unresolved historical differences, negative attributes of some cultural practices and devastation of livelihoods (USAID, 2006). The major causes of conflict among the pastoralist include but not limited to intensified cattle rustling, proliferation of illicit arms, inadequate policing and state security arrangements, diminishing role of traditional governance systems, competition over control and access to natural resources such as pasture and water, land issues, political incitements, ethnocentrism, increasing levels of poverty and idleness amongst the youth.

Cattle rustling conflict has led to loss of human lives, property, displacements of large segments of the communities, disruption of socio-economic activities and livelihoods, increased hatred between communities, environmental degradation and threat to water catchments areas, increased economic hardships as a result of loss of livelihoods, high levels of starvation and malnutrition among the displaced groups and unprecedented dependency syndrome on relief food (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; Wamuyu, 2014). The cross-border zone between Turkana and Pokot is underdeveloped and marginal with poor infrastructure and extremely limited availability of basic social amenities. Pastoralist is the principal livelihood supplemented by small scale farming along river Turkwel. The cross-border conflicts manifest through incidents of livestock raids and thefts, revenge and counter revenge missions, rape and banditry (USAID, 2006).

Human killings as a result of cattle raids in pastoral areas (Wepundi, Ndung'u & Rynn, 2009). Cross border conflict resolution has therefore been a complex affair with no clear end on sight. This is attributed to a combination of factors that influence conflict resolution across the borders. Some of these factors include environmental, social-economic, cultural and political factors (Leff, 2009). This study therefore sought to examine closely the influence of these factors in cross border conflict resolution between Turkana and Pokot of northern Kenya.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Cross border conflict between Turkana and Pokot communities have become normal event where the political lobbying to agitate amongst the rival communities. Turkana and Pokot are nomadic pastoralist whose livelihood is dependent on herds of cattle they keep and move around with them searching for pasture. In their movement, they do cross border lines and thus a cause to the long-lasting conflict. Growing socio-economic and cultural interferences by ethnic politicisation to avert peace building at the cross border is on the increase. Many international aid organisations have had substantive interest in the region and they have invested in cross border conflict resolution; nevertheless, the dynamic of the conflict tend to take new faces such as highway banditry, cattle raids and resource based conflicts. Persistent conflicts lead to loss of live, livelihood, cause injuries and interruptions to education and trade at the cross border. Poor politics subjects the rival communities (Turkana and Pokot) into fear and uncertainty and hence denying them rights to association and free movement.

According to Wamuyu(2014), cross border raids have impacted negatively on the already fragile ecosystems, economic growth, and on the key social and livelihood. The study sought to look at the influence of local politics on cross border conflict and potential resolution therein.

### 1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of local politics on cross border conflict

### 1.4 Significance of the study

The study is crucial to has establishing local political factors influencing cross border conflict between Turkana and Pokot of Northern Kenya. The results of the study will ultimately benefit the local communities at cross border and international organisations, donors interested in funding peace building projects, the civil society, and the government sectors dealing with cross border conflict resolution.

### 1.5 Scope of the study

The study was conducted in two divisions of Turkana and Pokot counties across their borders where conflict is rampant. The study mainly focused on the residents living in Kainuk and Sigor in Pokot counties.

### 2.0 Literature Review

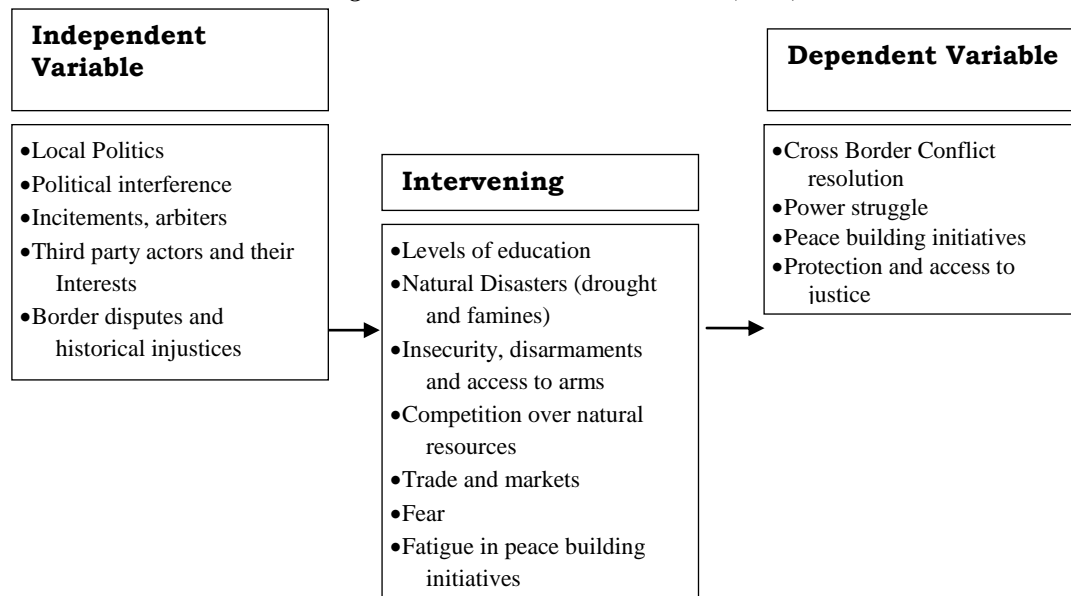
The border lands connecting Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda form a large portion of the East Africa drylands (Leff, 2009). The pastoral ethnic groups living in this part of the continent - northern Uganda, North-western Kenya, South-eastern Sudan, and South-western Ethiopia - share a common language, culture, and geographical location (Fage, 2013). For pastoralists, livestock serves as the primary asset and source of sustenance (Lesorogol, 2008). Their way of life has been dictated by severe weather patterns characterized by a climate where temperatures often exceed 40 degrees centigrade with little annual rainfall (Leff, 2009; Huho, Ngaira & Ogindo, 2010).

With limited access to water and competing rights to land, inter-tribal conflict arises when pastoralists from one tribe enter the territory of another (Leff, 2009). In addition, this phenomenon occurs among tribes within borders as well as with those across the border in neighbouring countries. The Turkana-Pokot conflict arose out of scarcity and competition over pasture and watering points and border disputes (Wamuyu, 2014). The Turkana-Pokot conflict occurs in a context of weak or non-existent structures and institutions for conflict prevention, mitigation, and response, particularly on the Pokot side and at the cross-border level (Huho, 2012). Politicians fail more often to advance interests of the local people as rights entrenched in legislations (Toulmin, 2009). In terms of security as a function advocated by higher political office, the national and district police and security services have lacked the capacity to provide security to pastoralist and other communities (Makori, 2011). This has increased insecurity and the tendency towards self-defence and retaliation.

### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

The study developed a conceptual framework as a guide towards exploring the political factors which influence cross border conflict between Turkana and Pokot communities. The Figure below illustrates the independent variables, intervening variable and dependent variables.

The figure shows that local politics, political interference, incitement and arbiters, third party interest and borderline disputes influence cross border conflict. Transformative local politics need to be adopted amongst Turkana and Pokot in order to aid in cross border conflict resolution



### 3.0 Research Methodology

Research methodology for the study covers research design and sampling strategy.

#### 3.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. Descriptive survey of conflict trends and the interventions was undertaken on the study samples of the population. The study covered two divisions, Sigor in West Pokot and Kainuk in Turkana counties respectively. These divisions lay along the border where cross border conflict is rampant. The target population comprised women leaders, prophets, middle aged men, elders, chiefs, divisional officers, representatives of NGOs and the youths.

#### 3.2 Sampling strategy

Stratified sampling was used to identify women, youth, the middle-aged men and elders for interviews and for administration of the questionnaires. Purposive sampling was used to target the prophets and chiefs for key informant interviews. A representative sample population was drawn for each of the study divisions. The total population of Kainuk Division was 11,799 and that of Sigor was 43,622 persons (CBSK, 2003). At 95% confidence level, and  $e$  (0.05) being the level of precision,  $N$  being the study population size; then the sample size  $n$  was computed as follows:

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$  (Glenn, 1992, Cochran 1963).

Kainuk division study sample:  $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2) = 80$

Sigor division study sample:  $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2) = 120$

Total study sample: 200 Households

The sample population was further stratified into three categories of youth, middle aged and the elders. They constituted 60%, 35% and 5% of the population respectively (CBSK, 2003). Strata target samples targeted were 120 youth, 70 middle aged persons and 10 elderly persons of over 60 years of age. These statistics is shown on the table below.

The study combined a variety of methodologies for data collection with a focus on structured and unstructured interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Content validity was done through review and approval of the instruments before administration for data collection. Pilot testing of the instruments in a small sample population was carried out. Improvements based on findings were initiated before final administration to obtain some degree of precision. The data collection instruments were pre-tested in a short pilot study to ascertain their reliability. The reliability of the research instruments (the questionnaire) was estimated through test/retest method where sample households were selected before the actual administration of

questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to these households at two separate times for each subject under the same conditions.

Both quantitative and qualitative were collected. The qualitative data were analysed through focus descriptive analysis. The information was categorized by identifying themes and patterns to bring the meaning to the text. The quantitative data was coded, summarised and analysed through descriptive statistics using measures of central tendency, measures of variability and percentages. The condensed and manageable data was further analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Regression and correlation techniques were employed in data analysis.

### 4.0 Results and Discussion

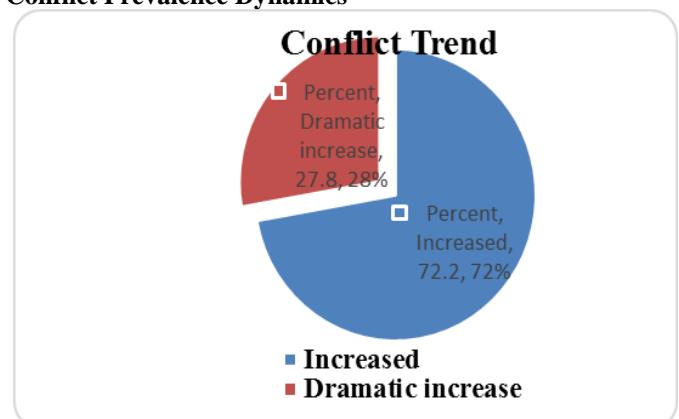
The study area captures Kainuk and Sigor divisions of Turkana and Pokot counties whose population of 11,799 and 43,622 respectively. To establish reliability of the study, literacy levels of the respondents were determined as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Respondents Level of Literacy.**

Literacy Levels	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	89	49.4
Literate	91	50.6
Total	180	100.0

On the literacy level of the respondents the study found out that majority 91 (50.6%) of the respondents were literate while 89 (49.4%) were illiterate. The fact that majority of the respondents were literate improved the reliability of the information given.

#### 4.1 Conflict Prevalence Dynamics



**Figure 4.1. Trend in Conflict Prevalence Dynamic.**

Table 3.1. Study Population and Sample size.

Name of the Division	Total Population	Study Populations Strata			Sample size studied		
		Youth (15-25yrs)	Middle Aged (25-45)	Elders(60+yrs)	Youth	Middle-aged	Elders
Kainuk	11799	7079	4130	554	48	28	4
	M=5781 F=6018	=3469 =3610	=2024 =2106	=272 =282	=23 =25	=13 =15	=2 =2
Sigor	43622	26173	15268	16679	72	42	6
	M=21,479 F=22143	=12825 =13348	=7481 =7787	=8053 =8626	=35 =37	=20 =22	=3 =3
					120	70	10

The dynamics of conflict change as time progresses. Technology and fire arms ease of access has changed the warring design of the rival nomadic tribes at the border line of Turkana County and West Pokot County. The study sought to find out what was the trend in conflict prevalence from 1980 to date as compared to 1950-1980 period which was often referred as "calm period". The findings of the results are as shown in Figure 4.1.

Majority of the respondents (72%) revealed that the trend in conflict prevalence had increased while 28% indicated that conflict had dramatically increased. The dynamic trend of conflict is on an increasing trajectory whose end is unknown. Since 1980 onward to date, conflicts at the cross border between Turkana County and West Pokot County has never reduced. This continuous conflict can be alluded to deepening poverty as the main reason for the increased trend in conflict prevalence (Mbadlanyana, 2009). Insecurity in those marginalised border areas is high. politicisation & commercialisation of cattle raids as the last priority or reason causing the increased trend in conflict prevalence.

#### 4.2 Cross border political influence to conflict

Politics is essential for any growing and developing society. Political influence on violence is inevitable while searching for power and influence. The study sought to investigate politic as a factor of cross border conflict between Turkana and Pokot. Figure 4.2 illustrates the findings.

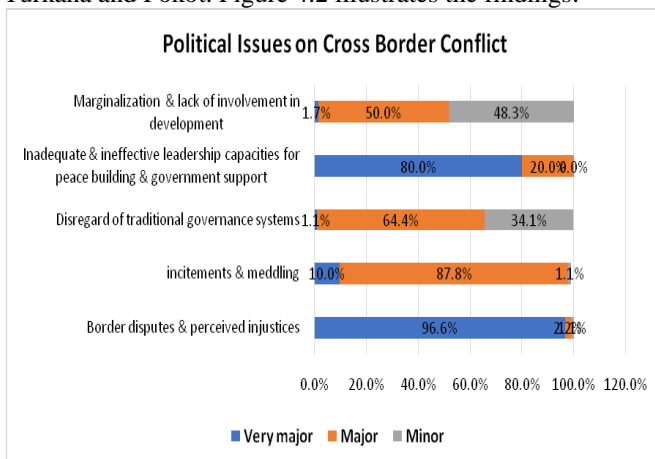


Figure 4.2. Political Influence over cross border conflict.

Majority of the respondents (98.3%) revealed that politics are major factors on cross border conflict regarding it having high influence. This was attributed to the incessant political meddling and incitements over border disputes and perceived historical injustices. The results shown reveal that majority of the respondents agreed to a very major extent that border disputes and perceived injustices and inadequate and ineffective leadership capacities for peace building and government support as the key political issues that affect peace building represented by 96% and 80% respectively.

A further 64% agreed to a major extent that disregard of traditional governance systems as the key element in political nature that affect peace building. According to studies done by Gakuo-Mwangi (2006) and Greiner (2013), conflicts in the northern part of Kenya are fuelled by politicians through incitements, and even to an extent commercialisation of cattle rustling. Nevertheless, continuous decline of the traditional governance systems is a sure cause of conflict proliferation in these marginalised regions of Northern Frontier in Kenya (Njiru, 2012).

#### 4.3 Correlation Analysis on Conflict Actors at the cross border

The study sought to establish the conflict actors at the cross border with a political inclination. A correlation analysis was done to find out the relationship between various actors in cross border conflict between Pokot and Turkana communities of Northern Kenya. Table 4.2 illustrates the findings of local politicians and local chiefs.

Table 4.2 .Correlations Local Politicians and Chiefs.

Conflict Actors	Pearson Correlation	Local politicians	Chiefs
Local politicians	Pearson Correlation	1	0.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.192
Chiefs	Pearson Correlation	0.098	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.192	.
	N	180	180

Table 4.2 shows that there is a weak positive correlation between local politicians and chiefs as shown by a coefficient of 0.098. The relationship is insignificant at 0.192 as shown by the p value (p=0.192). The positive aspects related to their administrative relations in peace building consultations. However, the relation is weak due to the fact that politicians tend to ignore chiefs in local peace building processes.

Table 4.3. Correlations between women leaders and Youth leaders.

Conflict Actors	Pearson Correlation	women leaders	youth leaders
Women leaders	Pearson Correlation	1	.395(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	180	180
Youth leaders	Pearson Correlation	.395(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	180	180

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There exists a correlation coefficient of 0.395 which signifies a medium positive relationship between the women leaders and youth leaders influencing cross border conflict. The relationship is significant at 0.01 level as shown by the p value (p<0.01). Youth tend to be closer to women leaders in sharing their issues and concerns.

This is therefore significant factor in peace building where the two players are under consideration.

#### 4.4 Cross Border Conflict Resolution Strategies

To enhance cross border conflict resolution drive for durable peace, respondents made suggestions on what could be done and the results were summarised as shown on the table below.

**Table 4.4. Cross Border Conflict Resolution Strategies.**

Conflict Resolution Strategies	Mean	Standard deviation
Building of peace capacities among local leaders	1.01	.075
Strengthening the local security systems, rule of law & enhancing access to justice	1.13	.357.
Awareness creation & sensitization on the need for peaceful co-existence	1.24	.428
Promoting participatory & all-inclusive peace building initiatives	1.24	.440
Strengthening of local governance systems	1.44	.498
Providing alternative means of livelihoods & integrating disaster management initiatives	1.86	.378
Reviving & strengthening traditional dispute resolution mechanisms	1.87	.335
Disarmaments & control of arms flow	1.91	.304
Outreach community education on rituals, traditions, prophecies, taboos, superstition	2.50	.584
Infrastructure development (construction of abattoirs, markets etc) & land demarcation initiatives	2.51	.534
Promotion of intercommunity activities e.g. sports	2.93	.328
Building of social networks & partnerships that enhance peace through intermarriages, economic & social support	2.94	.312
financial investments into local economic development sectors (health, education, water sanitation, food security)	2.95	.243

Strategies that resonated with the local communities were, building of peace capacities among local leaders, strengthening the local security systems, rule of law and enhancing access to justice, promoting participatory and all-inclusive peace building initiatives, awareness creation and sensitisation on the need for peaceful co-existence, strengthening of local governance systems, providing alternative means of livelihoods and integrating disaster management initiatives reviving and strengthening traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, disarmaments and control of arms flow was shown by low means of 1.01, 1.13, 1.24, 1.24, 1.44, 1.86, 1.87 and 1.91 respectively.

#### 4.5 Correlation and Regression of Data

In order to fully understand study variable factors on cross border conflict resolution, collected data were subjected to correlation and regression analysis.

**Table 4.4. Model Summary.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.838(a)	0.702	0.573	0.190

#### Predictors: (Constant), political factors

Table 4.4 above presents the regression model summary. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is called the coefficient of determination and tells us how cross border conflicts varied with political factors.

The study shows that the value of adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.702. This implies that, there was a variation of 70.2% of cross border conflict with political factors at a confidence level of 95%.

#### 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

##### 5.1 Conclusion

There is lack of government support which is a key element in political nature that would influence peace building in the region. Divisive politics created inability for warring communities to build local peace capacities which embolden local population and their leaders in preservation and creation of peace where conflict emerges. This blended well with the fact that traditional governance systems had been neglected and hence an urgent need for their resuscitation.

##### 5.2 Recommendation

The local politicians from the Turkana County and West Pokot County with the blessings of the elders from the two divides should foster peace and harmony for co-existence of their people (Turkana and Pokot). The county governments for Turkana and West Pokot need to create conjoined meeting at the borderlines which are hotbed for conflict on the importance of living peaceful with each other. There is need therefore to establish and enforce laws that bar or restrict politicians from engaging in incitements. The fact that monitoring of political activities and putting in place deterrence measures cannot be gainsaid, there is need to promote awareness and sensitize politicians on the need to promote harmonious living.

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