

Depiction of Cattle Raiding and Rustling in Egara Kabaji's 'Mourning Glory': An Analysis of Causes, Consequences, and Socio-Cultural Implications in Northern Kenya

Edward Mooka, Sheila Kirotna

Multimedia University of Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya have posed persistent security challenges and hindered the region's development and social cohesion. This qualitative study delves into the multifaceted factors contributing to the perpetuation of these criminal activities, drawing insights from a purposive sampling of the Kenyan fictional novel "*Mourning Glory*" (2022) by Egara Kabaji and related research. The study was guided by Shaw's and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory. The analysis reveals a complex web of issues, including government reluctance, cultural practices, greed-driven commercialization, and cross-border arms trade. The study found that the government's lack of resolve in addressing insecurity has eroded public trust, and past efforts have yielded little tangible results. On the other hand, cultural norms, influenced by traditional nomadic lifestyles and territorial competition, continue to fuel the practice of cattle raiding and banditry. For instance, the commercialization of raids for monetary gain, involving political leaders and organized crime syndicates, has escalated the violence and transformed it into a lucrative enterprise. Therefore, to combat these challenges and achieve lasting peace, this study suggests a comprehensive approach involving multi-stakeholder collaboration, community engagement, and conflict resolution. Finally, the study's findings emphasize the need for Kenya to adopt a holistic and sensitive approach to address the complexities of banditry and cattle rustling in northern regions.

Keywords: Kenya, Banditry, Cattle rustling, Mourning Glory

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of banditry and cattle rustling in the northern part of Kenya has been a long standing internal security concern, leading to significant socio-economic impacts. With the escalation and persistence of these incidents, the Kenyan government has taken measures to tackle the menace, deploying the Kenya Defence Forces to confront the issue head-on. However, the situation remains complex and challenging, with hundreds of people being injured or killed, thousands displaced, and substantial losses of livestock and property. In response to this crisis, this qualitative study delves into the fictional representation of the problem as depicted in Egara Kabaji's novel "*Mourning Glory*" (2022). The novel was selected purposively due to its focused portrayal of the issues and is authored by a reputable Kenyan writer. It serves as the primary data source, allowing an in-depth exploration of the underlying factors contributing to banditry and cattle rustling.

It is imperative to note that Egara Kabaji is a renowned Novelist, children's writer, and literary critic born in Kenya. His latest novel is *Mourning Glory* (2022), in which he concerns himself with happenings in the

northern part of Kenya, where he lived for about two years. In the novel, he not only criticizes and denounces the endemic vice of cattle rustling and banditry, which explains the poverty and underdevelopment in the affected counties, but he also suggests ways out of the problem in northern Kenya where guns do not fall silent.

Kabaji's *Mourning Glory* was written when, as the principal of Turkana University College, he keenly observed his society. He expounds on the painful experiences of the Turkana and the Pokot and affirms Carrol's (1990) observation that African writers are re-educating their society. An African writer uses their art for social reformation (Ngugi, 1972). In the text, Kabaji treats one of the most burning issues in northern Kenya: cattle rustling and banditry. The book tells the story of an impoverished Turkana man, Mzee Lelma, who once owned "one thousand goats, eight hundred and fifty cows, and three hundred camels" (Kabaji, 2022, p. 2) but lost all in one night to Pokot cattle raiders. He miserably mourns his glory after the raiders steal his animals. The Pokot raiders also kill "twelve people: seven men, three women, and two children" (2022, p. 11); however, the raiders also lose three of their men (p. 13). Lelma's magnificent house is also razed to the ground by the raiders (p. 14). Moreover, the locals suffer injustice, torture, displacement, and relocation "to camps where living conditions were deplorable" (p. 71); schools are closed (p. 73), and locals rely on relief food (p. 76). The novel portrays factors responsible for cattle rustling and ways of solving this age-long problem.

Banditry and cattle raiding have resulted in the loss of lives, livestock, and property. Rutto (2023) reported that since July 2021, more than 200 people have been killed, and thousands of livestock stolen in the death-infested Kerio Valley belt alone during the deadly raids. Between January 2023 and February 2023, in a spate of insecurity, more than 20 people were killed, hundreds of livestock stolen, people displaced, and property destroyed in the Kerio Valley (Nation Team, 2023, p. 8). The daring armed bandits killed three police officers hours after the Cabinet Secretary for Interior, Kithure Kindiki, had wound up his tour of the troubled North Rift region (Standard team, 2023). Investing in the development of the region, promoting livelihood diversification, and empowering women and youth are crucial steps to alleviate the drivers of violence. Enhancing security measures, coupled with addressing root causes such as historical neglect and resource management, can contribute to long-term peacebuilding. Transparent governance and accountability are essential to counter corruption and prevent the exploitation of insecurity for personal gains. By implementing these strategies, the country can work towards unraveling the menace, fostering peace, and realizing sustainable development and prosperity for all communities involved.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive understanding of banditry and cattle rustling in Kenya. Using a sociological lens to analyze the fictionalized portrayal in "*Mourning Glory*," the research contributes to a deeper comprehension of the underlying factors driving these criminal activities. The study's findings can inform policymakers and stakeholders in devising more targeted and compassionate strategies to combat cattle rustling and banditry, fostering sustainable peace and security in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Banditry and cattle rustling in the northern part of Kenya have persisted as a longstanding security concern, resulting in numerous human casualties, displacement, loss of livestock, and property destruction. Egara Kabaji's novel, "*Mourning Glory*," provides a fictionalized account of these criminal activities in the region, shedding light on their intricate causes, consequences, and socio-cultural implications. However, limited research has comprehensively explored the novel's depiction of cattle raiding and rustling and its alignment with historical perspectives. Therefore, this research aims to address this gap by examining the depiction of cattle raiding and rustling in Egara Kabaji's "*Mourning Glory*" and its relevance to the real-world context of northern Kenya.

Objectives

1. To assess the novel's contribution to the understanding of the complexities of banditry and livestock-related conflicts in northern Kenya and its potential relevance in informing policy and interventions to address these challenges.
2. To contribute to the literary analysis of "*Mourning Glory*" and its significance in shedding light on the broader socio-cultural and historical context of banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya.

Theoretical approach

Social Disorganization Theory

This is a sociological perspective theory that examines how specific social structures and factors can lead to the breakdown of social cohesion and order within communities. It emphasizes the impact of a community's characteristics, such as poverty, inequality, ethnic tensions, and weak social institutions, on crime and deviant behavior. In the context of the study, the Social Disorganization Theory helps explain the root causes of banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya by analyzing the social conditions prevalent in the region. The theory posits that specific environments with high levels of social disorganization are more likely to experience criminal activities due to weakened social bonds and limited social control mechanisms. Therefore, by applying this theoretical framework to the analysis of "*Mourning Glory*," the researchers explored how the novel's characters and communities are influenced by the social disorganization present in the region. The theory sheds light on how factors like poverty, marginalization, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate governance contribute to the emergence of banditry and cattle rustling as coping mechanisms or acts of resistance.

Moreover, the Social Disorganization Theory helped us understand the consequences of these criminal activities on the affected communities. It allowed the researchers to investigate how banditry and cattle rustling disrupt social norms, displace people, and create a cycle of violence and fear, thus reinforcing social disorganization. Regarding interventions and proposed solutions, the theory offers valuable insights into the importance of community-based approaches. Addressing the underlying social disorganization by strengthening social ties, fostering community empowerment, and improving access to resources can be instrumental in reducing criminal behavior and promoting sustainable peace. Ideally, the Social Disorganization Theory served as an effective lens to examine the complex dynamics of banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya as fictionalized in "*Mourning Glory*." Its emphasis on social structures and community-level factors will allow researchers to understand the multifaceted nature of the issue and propose more effective and humane ways of combating these criminal activities in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the underlying causes, consequences, interventions, and proposed solutions related to banditry and cattle rustling. A literary analysis approach was used, focusing on the content and context of the selected novel to gain insights into the fictionalized representation of the issue. The novel "*Mourning Glory*" was purposively sampled as it directly addresses the subject matter of interest and provides a comprehensive portrayal of the problem. To complement the analysis, related literature on banditry, cattle rustling, and social issues in northern Kenya was also reviewed.

The primary data source was the novel "*Mourning Glory*," a close reading technique employed to analyze its narrative, characters, and themes thoroughly. Relevant excerpts, passages, and events in the novel are selected for in-depth analysis.

The study also involved a comprehensive review of existing literature, academic articles, reports, and historical records to provide a broader understanding of the context and previous research on the subject. The analysis involved a thematic approach, where emerging themes and patterns from the novel and related literature are identified and categorized. The codes and themes were derived from the data, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the factors contributing to banditry and cattle rustling in the region.

It is imperative to note that the data analysis was guided by Shaw's and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory, which helps understand how social structures and community factors influence criminal activities in northern Kenya. The theoretical framework assisted in linking the findings to broader sociological perspectives and explaining the social dynamics underlying the issue. The primary ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study, ensuring the protection of the novel's author, participants, and any individuals or communities represented in the fictional work. Furthermore, in all the cases of related literature, proper citation and acknowledgment of sources are maintained.

The study presents the findings from the novel analysis and related literature, highlighting the key themes and insights. Finally, the conclusions were drawn based on the research, and recommendations for more effective and humane ways to combat banditry and cattle rustling in Kenya are provided. However, the study acknowledges potential limitations, such as the reliance on fictionalized data and the subjective interpretation of the novel's content in deriving its findings and conclusions. The researchers finally gave suggestions for future research avenues and areas of improvement.

ANALYSIS

The complexities of banditry and livestock-related conflicts in northern Kenya

The analysis of the novel "*Mourning Glory*" (2022) provides a glimpse into the possible causes of banditry and cattle rustling in the northern part of Kenya. The excerpts reveal two significant contributing factors: the government's reluctance to address the issue effectively and the involvement of both political and spiritual leaders in perpetuating the cycle of raids.

- **Government Reluctance**

The novel depicts a recurring pattern of meetings and promises by government officials to address the problem of banditry and cattle rustling. However, these gatherings often result in "empty rhetoric," leaving the affected communities skeptical and disillusioned. The lack of concrete actions and results leads to a loss of trust in the government's ability to protect its citizens and resolve the ongoing crisis.

The narrator says,

Though [government officials] were invited, the meeting organizers knew that the officials attended to give the impression that the National Government cared about the people, as to whether this time they had plans to stop the menace remained to be seen. That was not the first time such a meeting had been held. The locals were used to what Mzee Lelma called empty rhetoric (Kabaji, 2022, p. 16).

The Regional Commander's statement that the government "will not relent until we recover the stolen animals" is met with disapproval from some of the crowd. This reaction highlights the growing frustration with the lack of progress in combating the menace. Past instances of failed promises and the continuation of raids after assurances from government officials further fuel the perception of the government's inadequacy in dealing with the issue. This recurring cycle contributes to vulnerability and insecurity among the affected

communities.

- **Involvement of Political Leaders:**

The novel reveals that confident political leaders in the region have been implicated in promoting or sponsoring lawless activities, including banditry and cattle raids. Hon. Tembeta, an elected member of the County Assembly, is portrayed as having a significant role in organizing warriors for counter-attacks and recovering stolen livestock. His involvement in orchestrating raids on neighboring communities showcases the dangerous interplay between political power and criminal activities. The historical records of other political leaders, such as Francis Lotodo, Samuel Poghio, and William Kamket, who have faced legal consequences related to lawlessness in the Rift region, suggest a troubling pattern of leaders engaging in or supporting violent activities. The fact that political leaders play a role in mobilizing warriors for attacks and raids perpetuates a culture of violence and conflict, further complicating efforts to resolve the crisis.

Similar meetings had been convened in the past but with no tangible results. It is no wonder that when the Regional Commander told the gathering that the government “will not relent until we recover the stolen animals a section of the crowd loudly disapproved of his sentiments” (p. 21). Mzee Lelma also recounts a time, two years before, when government officials promised they would never allow raids to happen again, yet six months after, more animals were taken (p. 22).

In addition to the government’s reluctance to stop the menace, political leaders contributed to the cycle of raids. History records a few leaders who have had run-ins with the law over lawlessness in the Rift region. Francis Lotodo and Samuel Poghio, for example, were arrested and detained in 1990 for allegedly promoting warlike activities in West Pokot. They were even expelled from KANU, the ruling party then. William Kamket was charged with inciting violence in Laikipia in 2021; his colleague parliamentarians repeatedly accused him of allegedly sponsoring banditry. The narrator in the selected novel says that Hon. Tembeta, the MCA, “was elected to his position partly because he was instrumental in mobilizing warriors for counter-attacks and recovery of stolen livestock. It was an open secret that he had organized several raids to steal animals from the neighboring community” (p. 16). The reader further learns that “in the previous skirmishes between the two communities, he [Tembeta] had commanded the Turkana warriors that laid siege on the Pokot” (p. 19). The narrator says that the victory in that battle is still celebrated. The leaders’ involvement in the raids is also evident in the Regional Commander’s speech to the citizens after the last attack; he asks “fellow leaders not to mobilize wananchi in lawless activities” (Kabaji, 2022, p. 22).

- **Involvement of Spiritual Leaders:**

The novel also suggests that spiritual leaders contribute to the cycle of raids by blessing bandits before they set out on their criminal activities (Chepkwony, 2023). The involvement of spiritual leaders in supporting such violent actions raises concerns about the misuse of religious influence to justify and perpetuate criminal behavior. This aspect of the analysis highlights how traditional belief systems and spiritual guidance may be manipulated to endorse violence, adding another layer of complexity to the issue of banditry and cattle rustling in the region.

The analysis points to a complex web of factors contributing to banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya. The government’s reluctance to address the issue effectively, coupled with the involvement of political and spiritual leaders in promoting or supporting violent activities, underscores the multifaceted nature of the problem. To effectively combat the menace, it becomes imperative to address these underlying factors and work towards community-based solutions that involve collaboration with all stakeholders, including the government, political leaders, and spiritual authorities.

From the analysis, political leaders quickly acquire firearms from neighboring countries. The narrator notes that the “security apparatus had confiscated a cache of arms from South Sudan. The cache of arms included heavy artillery, never used in ethnic conflicts” (Kabaji, 2022, p. 67). The protagonist, Mzee Lelma, also observes that while Kenya has taken a strong stance against the proliferation of small arms in the East African region, the neighboring countries have maintained “lenient laws and policies on trade in weapons” (p. 114). While the narrator suggests the futility of disarming all the pastoral communities, today’s political leaders from the region still call for urgent total disarmament in all the warring communities (Nation team, 2023, p. 8), which begs the question: Is it possible to mop up all illegal guns from the region when people can easily acquire arms from the neighboring countries? Dolan (2023) also wrote against the curfew and enforced disarmament, as such action sends thousands into the interior lacking food, water, and shelter.

The persistent banditry can be explained by the neglect of the northern Kenya region by successive governments. The narrator says that some helpful posts popped up in the WhatsApp group of the Turkana Young Professionals:

During the colonial period, infrastructure and other investments by the colonialists were skewed towards central Kenya and the so-called White Highlands. This resulted in infrastructural and economic inequities across Kenya’s regions. The colonial focus of investing in social and physical infrastructure in the White Highlands, in critical sectors such as education, health, and water supply, was the beginning of inequalities. These measures set the stage for perpetuating inequity, which persists to date. Our region needs to be addressed. Are we children of a lesser god?” (Kabaji, 2022, p. 48).

Unfortunately, even after attaining independence, the northern region, the arid and semi-arid parts of the country, was still locked out of the development agenda. The narrator adds that “no significant development project was undertaken over fifty years” (p. 49). Instead, the government directed its energies to maintaining law and order in the region using coercive means. “The net result is that our region is one of the most underdeveloped and marginalized in Kenya today” (p. 50). The exclusion, thus, explains the primitive activities such as cattle rustling among the pastoralist communities. The successive governments still need to provide watering points over which communities struggle. Dolan (2023) observed that banditry and cattle rustling in the bandit-prone region is the end product of 60 years of negligence and indifference from the central government, which kept the area closed to benefits of security, education, and community development (p. 17). Respective marginalized communities, thus, acquired arms to protect themselves.

- **Easy Acquisition of Firearms:**

The novel highlights that political leaders in the region can easily acquire firearms from neighboring countries, such as South Sudan. The presence of heavy artillery, not typically used in ethnic conflicts, indicates the seriousness of the arms trade in the area. The lenient laws and policies on the work of weapons in some neighboring countries enable the flow of arms into northern Kenya, fueling the conflicts and escalating violence. The challenge of disarming all pastoral communities is further complicated by the ease with which people can acquire arms from these neighboring countries, making total disarmament a complex and challenging goal.

- **Neglect of the Northern Kenya Region:**

The novel underscores the neglect of the northern region by successive governments, both during the colonial period and after independence. During the colonial era, investments in infrastructure and development were heavily skewed towards central Kenya and the White Highlands, leading to significant economic and infrastructural inequities across the country. Even after independence, the northern region, including the arid and semi-arid parts of the country, remained marginalized, with little to no significant

development projects undertaken for decades. The lack of essential services, such as water supply, education, and health facilities, further perpetuated inequalities and marginalized the communities living in the region.

Historical context of banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya.

The neglect and exclusion of the northern region from development initiatives have resulted in a sense of marginalization and frustration among the communities living there. The lack of access to necessities, such as water and grazing lands, has contributed to conflicts over resources, such as cattle rustling, as communities struggle for survival and livelihood. The acquisition of arms by marginalized communities to protect themselves can be seen as a response to the neglect and the absence of government support in providing security and development opportunities.

- **Government's Lack of Resolve:**

The government's reluctance to effectively tackle the long-running menace of banditry and cattle rustling is evident from the cited statement by George Natembeya, a former Rift Valley regional commissioner. The lack of funds and low morale among police officers confronting the bandits hinder effective security operations. This lack of resolve on the part of the government contributes to the perpetuation of insecurity and the continued vulnerability of communities in the region. Tied to the idea of neglect of the North Rift region is the government's lack of resolve to snuff out the insecurity, Mshindi (2023) asserted that the government is reluctant to wipe out the long-running menace. He cited George Natembeya, a former Rift Valley regional commissioner, who decried the lack of funds to mount an operation. Natembeya talked of low morale among the police officers who had to confront the bandits.

- **Cultural Practices:**

The novel portrays how the cultural practice of raiding and stealing each other's livestock has been deeply ingrained in the Turkana and Pokot communities for many years. The traditional nomadic existence of these communities, where they migrate with their herds in search of water and grazing lands, contributes to the competition over limited resources, especially land. Cattle rustling is seen as a means of resource expansion and a way to assert territorial control, with the historical context indicating that the stolen livestock was sometimes paid as bride price.

The persistence of nomadic lifestyles and cultural norms has perpetuated raiding and banditry as part of traditional livelihood strategies. Additionally, culture accounts for the persistent practice of cattle rustling and raiding. While addressing young professionals drawn from the Turkana and Pokot communities, Mzee Lelma confesses that "Our culture of raiding and stealing each other's livestock is detrimental to our development. It is the main source of our conflict. This has been the situation for many years" (Kabaji, 2022, p. 112). Lelma further observes that the two communities "have, all along, built our societies around nomadic existence. We migrate with our respective herds in search of water and land for our animals to graze" (p. 112). Mzee Lelma wonders whether nomadic existence is tenable in the 21st Century. According to Mzee Lelma, the two communities engage in cattle rustling "as a tool for resource expansion, especially land" (p. 112). Moreover, the weapons used in war were rungus and wooden clubs, with laws that prohibited the killing of women and children. He opines that "previously, the stolen livestock was paid as the bride price (p. 113). Moreover, being pastoralist, the Turkana and Pokot fight "because of limited resources" (p. 115)

- **Greed for More Wealth and Commercialization:**

The incentive for raiding has evolved from traditional reasons to monetary gain in the present day. The

commercialization of cattle raiding has turned it into an organized crime, with proceeds from captured cattle being sold in markets outside the region. Political leaders and individuals with vested interests in continued insecurity reportedly support large-scale raids for individual financial gains, leading to the militarization of conflicts. The involvement of influential individuals, organized crime syndicates, and the targeting of businesses and property indicate the growing greed-driven nature of raids, making them more brutal and violent.

According to the novel, cattle raiding persists because of greed for more wealth. Mzee Lelma claims that the raids have since been commercialized. “Today, the incentive for raiding livestock is monetary gain. The animals are taken across borders or slaughtered, and the meat is sold. This has led to organized crime syndicates. Clashes between communities have become increasingly politicized” (p. 113). Mzee Lelma adds that proceeds from captured cattle are used to buy weapons, resulting in “the militarization of the raid and conflict with local elders and political leaders as patrons. They support large-scale raids and assaults for individual benefits” (p. 114). Rutto (2023) reported that the bandits (also called Ngoroko) “were initially a group of cattle rustlers who never harmed innocent children and women. However, they started receiving funding and arms from powerful individuals, and they became more brutal and encouraged to kill, maim, and steal livestock for sale in markets outside the region” (p. 12).

- **Exploitation by Political Class:**

The political class is reported to benefit from the ongoing insecurity, with some politicians allegedly funding and arming the bandits for their gain. The transportation of stolen livestock through police checkpoints to ready markets further implicates the involvement of influential individuals in perpetuating the violence and profiting from the plunder. A few political leaders and buccaneers with vested interests in continued insecurity conspire to fan the violence for lucrative money-making opportunities. Bii and K’ Onyango (2023) reported that “the attacks are no longer about cattle raids or banditry activities; they are targeting businesses and looting property” (p. 14). Dolan (2023) noted that some politicians from the region ventured into the new culture of transporting stolen livestock through police checkpoints to ready markets of Kariokor and Dagoretti. The political class reaps benefits from the plunder.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the causes of banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya are multifaceted, involving government neglect, cultural practices, greed for wealth, and exploitation by the political class. To effectively address these challenges, a comprehensive approach is required, strengthening security measures, promoting community-based conflict resolution, addressing cultural norms that perpetuate violence, and combating corruption and illicit activities linked to insecurity. Additionally, long-term development initiatives that address marginalization and inequality in the region are crucial in fostering lasting peace and security.

Suggestions for the solutions in the novel

- **The complexities of banditry and livestock-related conflicts in northern Kenya**

The novelist proffers solutions to the banditry and cattle rustling problem. He suggests that intermarriages between the warring communities can solve the incessant fights. Mzee Lelma is Turkana but married a Pokot woman called Leleve, and they live happily with grown-up children. However, Mzee Lelma recalls “how difficult it had been for him to convince his father and clan elders that he could marry a Pokot girl” (Kabaji, 2022, p. 37). The suspicion between the two hostile communities was reminiscent of the story of Lwanda Magere (Luo), who married a Nandi woman who later spied on the Luo. However, while Mzee Lelma married a Pokot woman, their son Alu, who studies in the USA, does not believe inter-tribal marriages “enhance peaceful existence” because the Pokot raiders did not stop invading and targeting his father, Mzee

Lelma, despite his having married a Pokot.

Furthermore, the protagonist suggests that to resolve the problem of limited resources among pastoralist communities as a source of persistent conflicts, “make a larger ‘pie’ to satisfy both communities” (p. 115). Both communities should equally access consistent water sources, grazing lands, and oil revenues. The government should recognize and demarcate communal lands. Moreover, the two communities could form unions or business coalitions to “champion cattle herding, agricultural trade, and establishment of markets for cattle trade” (p. 115). The unity between the two communities will help reduce cattle rustling.

Furthermore, the pastoralist communities should be encouraged to do “dry-land farming” (p. 129) along rivers. Boreholes and dams should be dug for irrigation purposes. Farming would consequently reduce reliance on food aid.

Another issue is dialogue, a peaceful solution to banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya. Mzee Lelma says that “the solution to our problem does not lie in high-sounding statements from the government. It does not lie in arms and heavy artillery but in dialogue” (Kabaji, 2022, p. 68). He recalls when he helped build a good relationship between the Turkana and the Pokot. The narrator says that Lelma, as a teacher, “and other peace-loving leaders had built a strong relationship for many years. This resulted in the Mbuku Declaration, which restored relative peace. The Mbuku Declaration established clear conflict resolution mechanisms. Elders from both sides took an oath to uphold peace. He was so upset when things started falling apart. He recalled how they would peacefully negotiate and recover stolen animals from the Pokot” (p. 79). Farah Maalim, the Mbalambala MP, is reported to have called for a soft power approach to dealing with the killings and banditry. Maalim proposed that the government consider using elders from all affected communities for pacification (Kikechi, 2023, p. 18).

- **Historical context of banditry and cattle rustling in northern Kenya.**

The government should be deliberate about taking development projects to north Kenya. Rutto (2023) parallels Uganda and notes that the Ugandan government ended banditry among the Karamojong by disarming bandits in a ruthless but effective operation. The Ugandan army recovered more than 40,000 illegal arms between 2001 and 2010. Meanwhile, as the operation continued, President Yoweri Museveni appointed his wife Janet to be the Minister for Karamoja Affairs, a move that drastically changed the area as well-equipped schools were opened, roads developed, and health centers spread across the region. Kenya could borrow a leaf.

Lastly, political and national leaders should lead citizens to “build character” (Kabaji, 2022, p. 116). There is a need to “nurture honest and courageous leaders” who do the right thing. Leaders should not “discuss insecurity in boardrooms while some hide dangerous cards underneath the table” (p. 116). Additionally, corruption tendencies must be exorcised from our midst. For example, to interview applicants and then recruit the least qualified and incompetent persons to manage institutions exemplifies flawed character. Leaders who profess religion among us should shun negative ethnicity. Society should return to good virtues if we are to progress. Children should be taught that integrity is critical to success. Our religious leaders should fight the new culture of materialism and should refuse to be compromised. (p. 119).

CONCLUSION

Banditry and cattle rustling in the northern part of Kenya have been longstanding issues that have posed significant challenges to the region’s security, development, and social cohesion. The analysis of the novel “*Mourning Glory*” (2022) and related research reveals a multifaceted interplay of factors contributing to the

persistence of these criminal activities. Furthermore, the government's reluctance and lack of resolve in effectively addressing insecurity have fueled a sense of disillusionment and mistrust among the affected communities. Promises and meetings have often led to empty rhetoric, leaving the people with unnecessary actions to combat the menace.

Cultural practices, including traditional nomadic lifestyles and territorial competition, have perpetuated the practice of cattle raiding and banditry. The historical context of cattle raiding as a means of resource expansion and the influence of cultural norms further complicate efforts to resolve the conflict. Moreover, the commercialization of raids driven by greed for wealth and the involvement of political leaders and organized crime syndicates have escalated the violence and transformed it into a lucrative enterprise. The easy acquisition of firearms from neighboring countries also contributes to the perpetuation of armed conflict in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. One recommendation is to promote and facilitate dialogue between the warring communities, involving respected community leaders, elders, and representatives from both sides to build trust, establish conflict resolution mechanisms, and reduce tensions.
2. The government should invest in development projects in the north of Kenya, similar to the approach taken by the Ugandan government in the Karamoja region. Such comprehensive development initiatives can help improve living conditions, create economic opportunities, and reduce the conditions often leading to banditry and insecurity in these areas.

Suggestions for further research

1. **Community Engagement and Conflict Resolution:** Foster community-based conflict resolution mechanisms that involve local leaders, elders, and community members. These mechanisms should aim to resolve disputes peacefully and discourage resorting to violence as a means of conflict resolution. This can be done by establishing dialogue forums and peacebuilding initiatives that unite ethnic groups and pastoral communities to promote understanding, trust, and reconciliation. It can also be done by encouraging intercommunity dialogue and cooperation to find common ground and shared solutions for resource management and peaceful coexistence.
2. **Government Investment and Development:** Increasing government investment in the development of the northern Kenya region, including critical infrastructure, education, healthcare, and water supply projects. These investments can help address the historical neglect and marginalization of the area through implementation programs that focus on sustainable livelihoods, economic diversification, and alternative income sources to reduce dependency on traditional cattle herding and raiding activities. It can also be done by supporting agriculture and modern livestock farming practices that can enhance food security and improve livelihoods for pastoralist communities.
3. **Enhanced Security Measures:** Strengthen security operations in the region to curb the easy acquisition and circulation of illegal firearms. Intensify efforts to track and intercept arms smuggling across borders. The increase of the presence of law enforcement agencies in areas prone to banditry and cattle rustling to deter criminal activities and provide a sense of security for communities. It can also be through improving the working conditions and morale of security personnel to enhance their effectiveness in combating criminal elements.

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