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# External Conflict Escalation Among the Nilotic Pastoral Communities of Northern Kenya

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## Abstract

This article discusses the external dynamics that resulted in the proliferation of arms into Kenya in general and Northern Kenya in specific. The paper has two major arguments. First, during the cold war, there was an arms race in the region because of its strategic position. This resulted in the two superpowers, USA and USSR, to arm specific countries that were considered to be friendly to them. Second, the paper argues that beginning in the early '70s into the '80s and early 90s, a number of countries in the Horn of Africa experienced turmoil or civil strife. Political instability in Somalia made Kenyan Somalis able to obtain guns by volunteering to join the fight for the Ogaden in Ethiopia and then slipped back into Kenya. The current study found that the conflict in North Eastern Kenya is caused by scarcity of resources, economic and political marginalization, active resistance by pastoralist communities to assimilation, resource depletion, and demographic changes, and the growing availability of small arms and light weapons. Livestock has become the triggers and the medium for sustaining conflicts through cattle raiding for wealth accumulation and also for dowry payments. Modern technology has also become a clear instrument of conflict escalation. Pastoral communities in northern Kenya provide an excellent market for firearms. The study concludes that political instability in Somalia made Kenyan Somalis able to obtain guns by volunteering to join the fight for the Ogaden in Ethiopia and then slipped back into Kenya. The rivalry between Ethiopia and Eritrea led to an arms race between the two nations, where each country is involved in the massive acquisition of arms.

**Keywords:** Clan, Conflict, Nilotic Pastoral Communities, Northern Kenya, Cold War

## 1.1. Introduction

After 1990, there were serious external dynamics that took place in the Horn of Africa (HOA), which have had a direct influence on the escalation of conflict in Northern Kenya. These external dynamics indirectly resulted in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons into the arms of pastoralists in northern Kenya, aiding in the transformation of traditional conflict into all-out warfare in pastoralist regions.

This paper discusses the external dynamics that resulted in the proliferation of arms into Kenya in general and Northern Kenya in specific. The paper has two major arguments. First, during the cold war, there was an arms race in the region because of its strategic position. This resulted in the two superpowers, USA and USSR, to arm specific countries that were considered to be friendly to them. Once the cold war ended, these arms were flooded in the market as they were no longer controlled by the superpowers. Eventually, they got into the arms of civilians, particularly the pastoralist communities, and exacerbated already existing conflict.

Secondly, the paper argues that beginning in the early '70s into the '80s and early 90s, a number of countries in the Horn of Africa experienced turmoil or civil strife. Such incidents resulted in many citizens of such countries being armed. These arms eventually found their way to pastoral communities in Northern Kenya, which precipitated the conflict. The specific country upheavals discussed in this chapter are: political instability in Somalia; Ethiopian-Eritrean rivalry; instability in Uganda; and, the conflicts in Sudan.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Michael (1998) opines that for over a century, the Horn has been a theatre for strategic power struggles and the Cold War confrontation when each of the principal countries of the Horn of Africa switched sides at crucial junctures. According to Schwab (1978), the USA increased its presence through the control of the Mediterranean Sea route, the Suez Canal channel further restraining the possibility of a Soviet blockade of oil lanes mainly located in Sudan. Additionally, the United States intended to keep the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean opens for international trade as well as for Israeli shipping. The United States' alignment to Ethiopia changed when conflict erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The decision by the Soviet Union to support Ethiopia against Somalia insurgency during the Ogaden war, which led to the eventual defeat of Siad Barre in his quest, angered Somalia who decided to terminate its military treaty with the Soviet Union.

By taking into consideration these situations, it is clear that the rivalry between the superpowers had its effect on today's conflict in Northern Kenya because the states around the Horn were systematically thrown into a Cold War that has been raging in spite of assumed *détente*. This premise is supported by Schwab (1978), who observed that when the Soviet Union and the United States started to internationalize regional conflicts on the Horn of Africa, the whole region automatically turned into a serious flashpoint. According to Baxter and Hogg (1990), livestock rustling has been commercialized in the recent past, and as a result, economic entrepreneurs have proved to be both arms dealers and livestock traders. Baven (2008) and Boutwell (1999) argued that several factors account for this flow of small arms. Un-manned Porous borders pastoralists groups across the common borders, conflicts in the Horn of Africa; and, middlemen and brokers. The unstable states in the Horn of Africa are one of the principal sources of small arms and light weapons to Northern Kenya. Kenya stands at the crossroads between the conflict areas of South Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, and Ethiopia. The modern technology has become a catalyst in conflict escalation, as observed by Villanueva (2009). The current study, therefore, attempted to determine the external dynamics of conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.

### **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.2.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the study was to determine the external dynamics of conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.

#### **1.2.2. Specific Objectives**

- i. Examine the influence of commercial entrepreneurs on conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.

- ii. Establish how the availability of small arms and light weapons contribute to conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.
- iii. Establish how the introduction of modern ways can lead to conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.

### 1.3. Hypothesis of the Study

- i. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Commercial entrepreneurs have no significant influence on conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: Commercial entrepreneurs has a significant influence on conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.
- ii. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Availability of small arms and light weapons does not significantly contribute to conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: Availability of small arms and light weapons significantly contributes to conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.
- iii. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Introduction of modern ways does not significantly lead to conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: Introduction of modern ways significantly leads to conflict escalation among the Nilotic pastoral communities of northern Kenya.

## 2.1. Literature Review

### 2.0.1. Cold War and Instability among Political Regimes in the HOA

The Horn of Africa is one of the most complex and conflicted regions of the world. For over a century, the Horn has been a theatre for strategic power struggles and the Cold War confrontation when each of the principal countries of the Horn of Africa switched sides at crucial junctures (Michael 1998). Cold War was generally driven by material interests or ideological controversy, and the Horn of Africa as a strategic location was turned into a pawn during the Cold War (Mohamed, 2009). Its strategic location which is directly at the southern end of the Red Sea, across the Arabian Peninsula thus located close to major oil-lines constituted a prime spot for the United States and Soviet Union and their allies to project power, control politics, and provide advanced military support to their Middle East and Persian Gulf allies (Lefebvre, 1991). Aware of this strategic location, United States embarked on increasing its presence in the region which among others was necessitated by the need to support and stabilize pro-Western governments, control of the sea route, and ensure the economic security of the West thereby restraining the possibility of a Soviet Union's attempt at influencing post-colonial societies into joining the communist camp.

According to Schwab (1978), the USA began to increase its presence through the control of the Mediterranean Sea route, the Suez Canal channel further restraining the possibility of a Soviet blockade of oil lanes mainly located in Sudan. Additionally, the United States intended to keep the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean open for international trade as well as for Israeli shipping. The control of the strategic ports in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean were critical for both superpowers, mainly the Kismayu, Berbera, Boossaso in Somalia, Masswa in Ethiopia, and Port Sudan in Sudan. Their strategic influence of these ports enabled them to control the political activities in the Horn of Africa

The Soviet Union's foothold in Somalia was strengthened following the overthrow of Siad Barre's government, who thereafter established what he called scientific socialism (Birnbbaum, 2002; Mohamed, 2009). Through sheer blackmail, both Somalia and Ethiopian governments being anxious to benefit from this international political situation, threatened their newly found allies to change sides in case of inadequate support. While the United States was aware of these schemes, the Soviet Union fell into the trap and went a head to sign a Friendship and Cooperation agreement with Somalia in 1974, thereby making Somalia as one of the most heavily militarized

countries in the continent (Parsons, 1995). Through this Friendship and Cooperation agreement, Somalia received heavy arsenal from the Soviet Union.

The United States' alignment to Ethiopia changed when conflict erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea. United States' advised Ethiopia's leadership against using an untrained peasant militia in Eritrea. In a subsequent slaughter of Eritreans, Ethiopia was rendered by the United States ineligible for military aid when it was listed as among the human rights violators. However, United States' suspension of military aid to Ethiopia occurred not only when the country was running out of essential military hardware but was also facing Eritrean and Somali insurgents. To overcome the twin problems, Ethiopia turned to the Soviet Union for military aid. The Soviet Union's recognition of the benefits of allying with Ethiopia brokered a \$1 billion arms deal and signed a treaty of friendship with Ethiopia while simultaneously continuing their presence in Somalia.

The decision by the Soviet Union to support Ethiopia against Somalia insurgency during the Ogaden war, which led to the eventual defeat of Siad Barre in his quest, angered Somalia who decided to terminate its military treaty with the Soviet Union. Siad Barre then welcomed the United States' military and economic aid leading to the swapping of an alliance between Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Cold War superpowers. The new-found alliance remained until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the end of the polarization of the world. As the sole superpower, the United States did not have any real need or interest in Somalia any more.

The strategic importance of Somalia vanished following this collapse, leading to the suspension of all financial and military aid. Starved of much needed financial and military aid, Somalia's regime became extremely vulnerable, leading to its collapse. Somalia did not have the chance or ability to establish a functional political system because it benefited from the ideological rivalry for a long time. Due to huge amounts of both Soviet and American military hardware, Somalia became the most militarized state per capita in the Horn of Africa (Parsons, 1995). The precarious situation, that was more than welcome to the Somali warlords who saw their chance to step into the huge vacuum of power. When the Soviet Union and the United States started to internationalize regional conflicts on the Horn of Africa, the whole region automatically turned into a serious flashpoint (Schwab, 1978).

### **2.0.2. Political Instability among Regimes in the Horn of Africa**

Somalia has had less than ten years of relative peace since its independence in 1960. Conflicts in the country arose following the assassination of its second president in 1969. This occasioned power struggle among competing for political forces. The ensuing leadership and political vacuum were exploited by the military, who, through a coup-installed, its military chief-Siad Barre- as the country's new president. The new president established a governing council called the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) to steer the country until new elections of a civilian president. Barre's attempts to consolidate and have a firmer grip of power led him to embark on a systematic exclusion of clans and civil society from the government. However, he did these on the pretext of promoting a stronger sense of nationalism in the government. With that enemy fallen, Mohamed (2009) observed that their ideals began to clash, and each clan hungered to establish itself superior over the others. Warlords emerged from the ranks of the former military and also through the endorsement of clan elders and sub-clan leaders. These groups are but not limited to Somali National Alliance (SNA), Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali Peoples Movement (SPM), Somali Salvation National Movement (SSNM), Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU) and Somali National Front (SNF).

Baxter (1993) asserts that the disintegration and indiscipline in the ranks of rebel movements was also a mechanism through which the militarization of the civilian populations has occurred. Many armed political movements experience schism within their organizations. This situation resulted in splits, massive recruitment of new fighters, who are usually civilians. For instance, the quarrel between Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi that arose as a result of political differences led to the split of the Somali National Alliance. Such factional groupings appealed to members of their respective clans for political support and recruitment. This occasioned the proliferation of clan-

based political movements with armed militia wings. The disintegration and subsequent indiscipline in these militia movements saw the systematic mobilization and arming of civilian populations resulting in a high number of arms in civilian hands.

One of the most bizarre developments in Barre's led Somalia was when the government decided to release arms to the public to scare off a determined opposition. This was seen as a colonial tactic of 'divide and rule' to ward off opposition forces. However, despite these dirty tactics, Barre was deposed in 1991 by Farah Aidede. Aidede's government was not internationally recognized, and his leadership was fiercely contested, particularly by Ali Mahdi Muhammad. However, Aidede and Mahdi were not the only figures vying for power. With an absence of established government, a power vacuum emerged, and all political and military leaders from Barre's fallen regime took up arms that made available through the millions of dollars' worth of weaponry provided by the Soviet Union and the United States. Further, other clan leaders questioned the legitimacy of Aidede's government, leading to the eruption of total chaos and disorder in entire Somalia. Since then, Somalia has become one of the sources and transit points of small arms and light weapons, which unfortunately have been pilfered into Kenya. It is today estimated that about 15 out of 100 civilian populations in Somalia own firearms (Knighton, 2003).

Many Kenyan Somalis were able to obtain guns by volunteering to join the fight for the Ogaden in Ethiopia and then slipped back into Kenya. In some cases, renegade Somali soldiers did the same. The establishment of the Daadab Refugee camp in Northern Kenya to offer sanctuary to Somalis escaping from the conflict in their country also fueled the availability of arms in the region. Although the majority of the refugees were ordinary citizens afflicted by protracted wars in their country, a significant number of the refugees comprised of the former soldiers of the ousted Siad Bare's government with others coming from the numerous armed groups that emerged after the fall of the military government under Siad Bare. A number of these refugees could not be easily accommodated in the camps while in possession of arms, thus prompting the sale of weapons cheaply to the locals. Pastoralists in Northern Kenya were the immediate beneficiary of these arms, making Northern Kenya saturated with automatic guns from the Kenyan Somalis. Pastoralists replaced their spears with guns. At the height of the conflict in unconfirmed estimates for the volume of arms entering Kenya from Somalia ranged as high as 5,000 automatic rifles per month, with recovered weapons reportedly showing Chinese, Soviet Union, U.S., and Bulgarian markings (Muggah & Breman, 2001)

### **2.0.3. Ethiopia-Eritrea Rivalry**

Apart from the conflicts in Somalia, the rivalry between Ethiopia and Eritrea also contributed to the militarization of civilians in the region. This rivalry is traceable to the late 1990s. The regimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea were the product of an alliance between rebel movements to overthrow the dictatorial regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Ethiopia was partitioned by mutual consent of the new rebel governments. Bilateral relations were normal between the two countries until the border war broke out in 1998. It is after this period that the warring neighbors sought an alliance with Sudan and perhaps other neighbors to destabilize each other. Eritrea urged the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) to accelerate armed action against Ethiopia. In return, Ethiopia played an active role in the creation of the Eritrean Jihad Movement (EJM) and Eritrean Forces Alliance (ENFA) to weaken Eritrea. The two countries have continued to fight proxy wars through providing military and other forms of support to various warring groups (Assefa, 1998).

The Ethiopian government provided broad and vital support to the Transitional Federation Government of Somalia (TFG) and friendly Somali clans, which included materials, training, and troops even before it invaded it in late 2006. While the amount of support that Ethiopia has provided to date is difficult to verify, successive U.N. reports have pointed to substantial support from Addis Ababa to the TFG and authorities in Puntland and Somaliland. The UN Monitoring Group (2005) reported that Eritrea had supported and armed groups in Somalia fighting the TFG. The Monitoring Group's report in 2010 also reports that Eritrea was providing significant and sustained political, financial, and material support, including arms, ammunition, and training, to armed opposition groups in Somalia

since at least 2007. Eritrea's involvement, as noted by the report, an attempt to counter Ethiopian influence in Somalia, especially because it perceives the TFG as a proxy for the Ethiopian Government (Straight, 2009).

The rivalry between Ethiopia and Eritrea has led to an arms race between the two nations, where each country is involved in the massive acquisition of arms. Eritrea, for instance, purchased weapons from Belarus, Bulgaria, and France between 2006 and 2009 worth over 15 million pounds, the majority of which were small arms and light weapons. In the same period, Ethiopia purchased weapons from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and France worth over 25 million pounds. Although these purchases are done in readiness for war between the two nations, some of these weapons are diverted and used to fuel wars in Somalia. While not training their guns at each other, the two countries find themselves supporting proxy wars in the horn of Africa, with Somalia being a particular concern. The danger of the unregulated arms supply to Somalia and other militia groups in the Horn of Africa is that other than fueling protracted conflicts in Somalia, there is an escalation of arms availability and access to other areas, including Northern Kenya (Osamba, 2000).

#### **2.0.4. Instability in Uganda**

An ideological paradox has been played out in Uganda under its most enduring presidents: Milton Obote, Idi Amin, and Yoweri Museveni. In the First Republic under Obote, the country flirted with socialism at home while remaining basically part of the Western camp. In the so-called 'Second Republic' under Idi Amin, the country flirted with the Soviet Union in foreign policy, while trying to Africanize capitalism. Under Museveni, capitalism at home and pro-Westernism in foreign policy converged (Lefebvre, 1991).

Uganda plunged into conflict just about four years after independence. The conflict was triggered by the invasion of Kabaka's palace in 1966 by Ugandan soldiers under the command of newly appointed army commander Idi Amin. Prior to this, the country experienced strained relations between the state, led by President Obote and the Baganda Kingdom led by Kabaka Mutesa. Subsequently, the state, through the introduction of a new constitution, abolished both the hereditary kingdoms and nation's federal structure and in their place, established the position of an executive president, with Obote doubling both as the president and the prime minister. Aware of the disapproval of his action by several Ugandans, especially the proponents of traditional kingdoms, Obote enlisted the services of the military and the police to silence any dissent arising from his actions. Despite of the conflicts between Obote and Mutesa (1966) Obote and Amin, (1971), Obote and Museveni (1985), the small arms acquired by these factions were mainly confined to the domestic problems in Uganda, and limited supply to the neighboring countries including Kenya (Irin 2005, Irin 2006).

Obote's reign in Uganda came to an abrupt end while on an official visit abroad. He was deposed by the army chief Idi Amin in 1971. Obote decided to settle in neighbouring Tanzania, where he maintained a small army of Ugandan exiles under the command of Tito Okello. Amin's tragic decision to invade Tanzania in 1978 without provocation offered Julius Nyerere, the Tanzanian president, the opportunity to not only repel Uganda's invasion but also to topple Amin's government. Therefore Obote was once installed as the president with Tito Okello as the army chief. Obote's second assumption of power lasted between 1979 and 1985, during which time the country was turned into a police state, the economy deteriorated, and ethnic conflicts reached new heights. The ensuing disorder led to the ascension of Tito Okello into power, but whose rule lasted for only a year. Yoweri Museveni, once Uganda's defense minister, with the assistance of guerrilla army-National Resistance Movement- toppled Tito Okello in 1986, and has to date remained Uganda's head of state. However, most parts of Uganda still remain volatile following consistent attacks by armed rebellions, with the most notable one being Lord's Resistance Army, under Kony (Tornay, 1979).

The military assault on Kabaka's palace by government forces and the ensuing resistance marked the first known avenue through which arms in Uganda began to pilfer into civilian hands. Although Kabaka's forces were no match for Amin's troops, Kabaka managed to escape alongside some of his forces, who were also heavily armed. While Kabaka eventually sought political asylum in London, most of his forces retreated into the civilian population.

Further, Kabaka's palace after the assault remained unguarded, leading to arms looting by both members of the public and renegade soldiers both from the government and the defeated kingdom (Österle, 2007).

The Special Forces and the GSU were largely dominated by individuals from Obote's own district of Lango and were favoured in terms of arms, equipment, and budgetary allowance. This drew the fury of the regular police and army. This behaviour drew an equal reaction from Amin, who mobilized his own ethnic affiliates from West Nile to counterbalance the inflated numbers of Langi and Acholi in the army. The disarmament of the Obote's forces--following his ouster in 1971--without appropriate disarmament program meant that most of the soldiers left the barracks with arms, most of which were sold to the civilian population while others used for criminal activities by the former soldiers. The fact that soldiers lacked a common command structure further implied that monitoring their activities and enforcing appropriate discipline became a bit cumbersome. The result of this was the flooding of the civilian population with illegal firearms (Mace & Houston, 1989).

The dramatic and unexpected fall of Amin's government in 1979 led to soldiers at Moroto and Kotido Barracks flee, leaving behind huge stoke piles of firearms unprotected. It is estimated that 15,000 guns, and approximately two million rounds of ammunition were stolen (Human Rights Watch Report, 1999). These barracks were situated in the larger Karamoja cluster, which is not far away from the Kenyan border. The development allowed Dodoth, Karamojong, and Jie morans to loot arms from the barracks. These developments have led to the proliferation of arms in the Karamoja cluster. It is today estimated that nearly half of the illegally held firearms in Uganda are found within the Karamoja cluster. Dodoth and Karamojong have, over the years, used these arms to launch massive cattle raids throughout the neighbouring districts. Cattle rustling was contained briefly until rifts developed between the Acholi and the Langi, which led to the July 1985 overthrow of the Obote II government. However, with such massive firepower, the Dodoth and Karamojong extended their raids into neighbouring Kenya, with Turkana and Pokot communities being their greatest target (Kimaiyo, 2009).

Dodoth's and Karamojong's initial incursion into the Turkana community seemed to have caught Turkana community unawares, leading to heavy casualties and livestock losses. The Government of Kenya intervened by providing ammunition to the Turkana community for self-defense. Although the government's intervention was welcome, the Turkana community felt that they needed to arm themselves for self-defense. The Turkana exploited the ethnic rivalry between their foremost enemy in Uganda--the Dodoth and their Ugandan cousins, the Jie to get arms supplies from the latter. Similar tactics were used by the Turkana community to obtain arms from Sudan, where they purchased arms from Didinga, who happened to be the traditional enemy of the Toposa, who coincidentally has over the years been the Turkana's foremost challengers from the Sudan side (Boutwell, 2002). The Turkana armed warriors extended their cattle raids to their Kenyan neighbours, the Pokot and Samburu. During the cattle raids, Samburu and Pokot Morans benefited from the guns of the killed Turkana morans.

### **2.0.5. Conflicts in the Sudan**

The administration perceives the 60-year-old regime in Khartoum as among the most heinous in the world. It is accused of sponsoring terrorist groups in at least a dozen countries, housing would-be assassins, human rights violations, denial of food aid to starving people, and complicity toward an active slave trade within its borders. Moreover, Khartoum has imposed strict Islamic laws over the people in the non-Muslim south (Eller & Coughlan, 1993).

The complex factors that divide the people of the Sudan (north and south) have given rise to two prolonged wars during most of the second half of this century. The first war (1955-1972) ended in a negotiated settlement. The next phase of the civil war, started in 1983, and is primarily between the radical Arab-Islamic northern government in Khartoum and southern rebels (SPLA --Sudan People's Liberation Army) who are primarily Christian and animist Africans. Many, including some American officials, had hoped that the United States could be part of a new negotiated agreement to bring the war to a less divisive end (Schlee, 1989).



In the early 1980s, a personal agreement between president Moi, and the SPLA leader, John Garang, allowed for the creation of a relatively small SPLA base in Kenya. The station, named Key Base, was situated about 3km to the north of Lokichoggio. The base offered the SPLA a rearward base of operations and a convenient resupply location for military materiel shipped overland from Mombasa and Nairobi, or by air to the airstrip at Lokichoggio. However, this base soon became an important nexus of Lokichoggio's arms trade throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The implication of this was the beginning of the transformation of conflict in Northern Kenya (Collins, 2006).

## 2.2. Empirical Literature

### 2.3. Economic Entrepreneurs

Economic entrepreneurs are mostly arms dealers and livestock traders. They often supply weapons to livestock keepers, traders 'bandits, and even mercenaries. The political transformation in Somalia after 1991 generated a change of shifta 'banditry towards financed and well-connected trade barons who recruit from retired army personnel; and school leavers to form a new class of professional and sophisticated highwaymen. To a certain extent, all raids are "commercial," not just those usually referred to by the term, in which the promoters and paymasters are businessmen, officers or administrators. The so-called "commercial raids," do not represent a separate category in which "external" interests interfere with the pastoral economy. They are probably better understood as an aspect of the wider integration of pastoralists within a market economy. It is usually overlooked that the early 1980s not only saw an upswing in the marketing of light weapons, but was also a turning point in Kenyan development policy for pastoral districts. The adoption of a neoliberal perspective in which the introduction of a market economy had first priority, was seen as the instrument and not, as before, the objective of development (Evangelou, 1984).

The marketing of livestock has always been part of the East Pokot landscape. All along, they were the suppliers of livestock at the Nginyang River market every Saturday. The longtime and established buyers were the Tugen and Kikuyu from Marigat, Mogotio, and Nakuru, and they enjoyed a monopolistic position on livestock pricing. According to the FGD participants of Nginyang and Chemolingot, in particular, indigenous livestock traders at Nginyang, the Tugen, and Kikuyu traders would form a cartel and agree beforehand on the maximum prices for particular livestock irrespective of size. Alternatively, they would deliberately arrive at Nginyang Market late, find desperate livestock sellers afraid that they would go back with their livestock, and, out of desperation, the sellers would dispose of their livestock at appallingly low prices. The study by Hjort (1981) captures this scenario and argues that the purchasing trick of the main buyers of livestock favoured them, thereby decreasing the profit of small producers and manipulating the timing of sales and auctions.

According to Baxter and Hogg (1990), livestock rustling has been commercialized in the recent past. Cases of well-organized raiding missions to gather spoils for the market have been reported in Turkana, Marakwet, West Pokot and Samburu districts. Commercialization of cattle enables people who are not herders to profit from livestock raiding. It also enables the herders themselves to raid independently from the actual availability of land or labor for livestock management and excludes reciprocity as marketed cattle cannot be raided back. As in livestock, both relations of property/exchange and social boundaries overlap, changes in the patterns of ownership affect inter and intra-ethnic relations as well as values associated with sociality. Together with mercenaries (group of hired fighters), commercial and political raids are increasing, organized around wage labor. Mercenaries and guns are used by other clans or groups to counter raids or help such groups acquire pasture and grazing territory for them. In recent times nomadic pastoralists are defended or spear headed by hired groups well-armed to enable them graze and water livestock in hostile territories.

According to the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (2009), Kenya will have a beef deficit of about 4,500 tons in 2014 due to high local consumption and export demands. The Kenya Meat Commission estimates that some 500 tons of beef are exported from Kenya each week to the Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait,

Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) and Africa (Egypt, Tanzania, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan). In many areas, an intensifying shift from a 'breeding herd' (rearing for prestige) to a 'trading herd' (rearing for sale) in part to take advantage of the growing markets for animals and livestock products in urban areas as well as export markets. There is an emergence of commercialized cattle-rustling where wealthy businessmen, politicians, traders, or local people pursuing economic objectives finance raids among the pastoral communities. The meat-loving urbanite Kenyans are the unsuspecting accomplices of these unscrupulous businessmen.

#### 2.4. Proliferation of Small Arms in Northern Kenya

Baven (2008) and Boutwell (1999) argue that several factors account for this flow of small arms. Un-manned Porous borders pastoralists groups across the common borders, conflicts in the Horn of Africa; and, middlemen and brokers. The unstable states in the Horn of Africa are one of the principal sources of small arms and light weapons to Northern Kenya before 1990. Kenya stands at the crossroads between the conflict areas of South Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, and Ethiopia.

It is also important to note that while the proliferation of small arms is generally associated with conflict and post-conflict situations. The long and porous nature of Kenya's borders and the relative ease of concealing small arms make it difficult to control the movement of weapons into Northern Kenya. Moreover, the agencies responsible for border control are underfunded and ineffective. The map in Figure 2.1 is an illustration of small arms inflow into Northern Kenya.

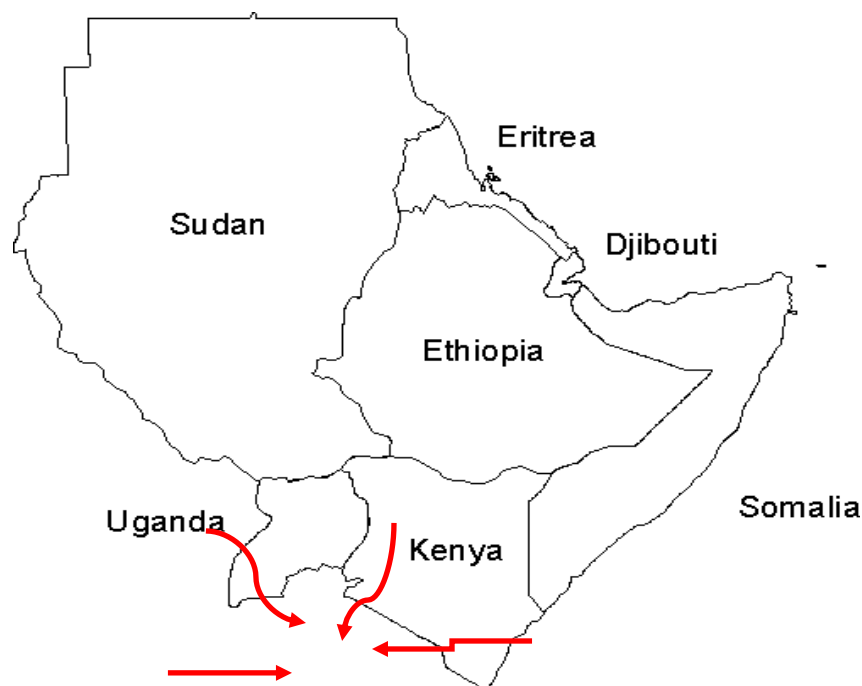


Figure 2.1: Map of the HOA and the flow of SALW to Northern Kenya.

Source: Author, 2017.

The map shows the routes and the flow of small arms to Kenya and specifically to the Northern Kenya. South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Somalia are the main sources of small arms and light weapons to the region. The movement of arms to the region is a very gradual process taking several years before guns reach their intended destination, this is because these guns are illegal and could only be sold through a black market or commercial brokers.

The Karamojong during dry spells crosses the Kenyan border in search of pasture and water. Naturally, this creates conflict between the Karamojong and the two pastoralists group in Kenya, namely the Turkana and the Pokot. The Karamojong had superior guns than the Turkana and Pokot of Kenya, and every time the Karamojong cross the

Kenyan border, they raid the Turkana and Pokot and push them away from the common border. Consequently, the Turkana and the Pokot turn to the less armed Samburu in order to restock from the losses occasioned by the Karamojong raiders. A continuous fighting between the Karamojong and the Kenyan groups, enabled the Pokot and Turkana to access guns. Though the Karamojong did not sell their guns to the Kenyan groups, serious cattle rustling episodes are one way in which Pastoralist groups armed themselves (Irin 2003).

Turkana and Pokot continued to attack the Samburu since they remained a soft target for these groups. The Samburu could not resist these groups because they possess guns that were superior to the Samburu spears and swords. To continue attacking the Samburu, the Pokot and the Turkana formed a rugged group of cattle rustlers called the Ngoroko, who became mercenaries for hire. The Ngoroko were members of these two communities, and their main role was to raid cows from the Samburu in order to feed the militant elements from the Turkana and Pokot communities. The Ngoroko mercenaries could occasion raids at will since they possessed guns against the Samburu Morans who had traditional spears. All the time the Samburu Morans remained victims since they could not match the power of the gun from the Turkana, the Pokot and the Ngoroko (Irin 2003).

Several decades of regional instability have adversely affected Kenya. According to Mkutu and Wandera (2013), there are sustained arms flows across Turkana's long, porous borders, such that the Turkana community has become the most militarized in Kenya. They also explain that Turkana has a small government presence, and is heavily dependent on the KPR force as its first line of security. This has led to more arms in the hands of civilians, especially in Pokot and Turkana and Samburu regions, where KPRs are the first option for security.

In an FGD held in Lokichar, it was reported that the Turkana used homemade guns, which they used to raid the Pokot and other neighboring communities. Then, raiding was not as frequent as it is now. But with the advent of merchants bringing arms for sale from Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda, they only needed to give 3-5 cows for a gun depending on its cost. This cost has considerably dropped to around 2 cows for a gun now. This is probably due to the ongoing conflicts in neighboring countries sustaining arms flow into Northern Kenya. Presently, pastoralists spend cash instead of cattle because the guns have become cheaper and easier to access. At the moment, one AK-47 would go for Ksh.60, 000 while a G3 would go for 30, 000. With the cheapness and abundance of guns in the region, there is a constant supply throughout, sustaining and escalating the conflict in the region (Mtuku & Mandera, 2013).

### **2.0.1. Introduction of modern ways or technology**

The modern technology has become a catalyst in conflict escalation. Villanueva (2009) found that vernacular radios can play important roles in conflicts. They can be the channel of communication between the parties to the conflict, provide information about the parties to the conflict and issues at hand, and offer education on the different ways to peaceful resolution of the conflict. They can also help in building trust among parties to the conflict and the public, counteract misinformation, analyze the conflict, help identify the underlying interests of issues, allow parties to express their emotions, empower the parties like marginalized groups and help in consensus building.

Osamba (2011) suggests the abuse of ethnic competitions through sending money through M-pesa between local political leaders prompt groups into ethnic viciousness all together for self-protection in control. Likewise, Krätli and Swift (2010) claim the involvement of legislators in backing attacks to increase political mileage among the voters and to have the edge over contenders. Cottle (2006) writes that conflicts provide the raw material for strong human interest stories where people use cellphones to find pathos and tragedy, heroism and camaraderie's, acts of selfishness, and personalized experiences of suffering. Galtung (1993) says that not only do cellphones have a perverse fascination with war and violence, they also neglect the peace forces at work.

Furthermore, Brown (2001) in Yanacopulos & Hanlon (2006) argues that many ethnic and internal conflicts are triggered by selfish leaders who will do anything to get to power. They often incite ethnic violence. Youths in

these areas have been supplied with trucks which they use in carrying out attacks, as well as carry the raided animals to the markets in towns and cities. As such, humanity's failure to prevent, mitigate, and resolve ethnopolitical conflicts suggests that those seeking to end them may be missing certain insights or new alternative perspectives and dynamics involved in the conflict.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Population

The estimated population of Samburu West, Turkana South, and Tiaty sub-counties is approximately 347,000 people based on the 2009 census of Kenya. (KNBS, 2009). The proposed study focused on persons aged 18 years and above, which was estimated to be 164,825 people translating to 47.5% of the entire population.

#### 3.2. Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design because of its capacity to fuse both quantitative and qualitative data in the study (a mixed design). The fundamental concern in descriptive research is to highlight the conditions, practices, structures, differences, or relationships of variables evident in the study. The characteristics enabled the study to take a multifaceted approach towards data collection to capture and give a detailed description of the factors contributing to the escalation of conflict in Northern Kenya.

#### 3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

The researcher interviewed key informants from each of the identified counties in the region. These Key informants were categorized as: security experts; elected leaders; Morans; county officials; local traditional elders; representatives of women groups and CBOs (specifically Oxfam, World Vision and the Peace Caravan).

The sample size for the study was calculated using the formulae as proposed by (Yamane, 1973).

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

**n = sample size**

**N = population**

**e = error of sampling method = 0.05**

$$n = \frac{164,825}{1+ 164,825 (0.05)^2}$$

$$= 399 \text{ respondents}$$

#### 3.4. Sampling Procedures

The study adopted the Afro-barometer Methodology in carrying out the survey. The researcher divided each county (Samburu, Turkana and Baringo) into sample Sub- counties, Administrative Divisions and locations. The researcher gave each location a number and used random sampling to select location 1 marked (X), skipped one location and picked the 3<sup>rd</sup> (X) and continued in that order for the rest of the sample frame. In each of the randomly sampled locations, he interviewed 133 respondents from each sub-county selected.

Within each location, the researcher randomly selected a sampling start point. This practice was essential since it helped the researcher and his assistants could know where to start the interview within the location. Starting as near as possible to the sampling start point, the researcher chose any random point (like a church, school, water point). From this point, the researcher and his 3 assistants followed a strict walk pattern. Research Assistant (RA), 1 walked towards the East, 2<sup>nd</sup> walked to the West, 3<sup>rd</sup> to the South and 4<sup>th</sup> to the North. Each RA used a 3-interval pattern (i.e., an interval of three households for the entire exercise, using the Manyattas as the main point

of random sampling). Once a household has been selected, the RA identified themselves and requested to conduct the interview with preferably the head of the household, taking into account a realistic gender balance.

### 3.5. Focus Group Discussions

The researcher aimed at collecting data from specific groups in the community who, in one way or another, had been involved or affected by the escalation and perpetuation of conflict in the region. The groups targets were; elders, women, morans, security officers, Peace Committees, County Government officials, and NGO s and/CBOs officials. One FGDs was composed of a minimum of 10 persons but with a maximum of 18. A homogeneous group could be 10, this is a situation where only one group is interviewed, for example, Morans, Elders, or Women. Non- homogeneous consisted of 18 people. Consequently, this situation drew up mixed membership from various groups, three members from each of the above groups made up the composition.

## 4. Results

The study sought to determine the external triggers that account for the intermittent escalation of conflict among the Nilotic Pastoralists of Northern Kenya, between 1990 and 2017. The study sought information on the influence of commercial entrepreneurs, availability of small arms and light weapons and introduction of modern ways of conflict escalation, on the escalation of conflict in Northern Kenya.

### 4.1. Influence of Commercial Entrepreneurs

The study sought to find out the Influence of Business People/Economic Entrepreneurs in the escalation of crime/cattle raiding in Northern Kenya. Figure 4.1 shows the findings.

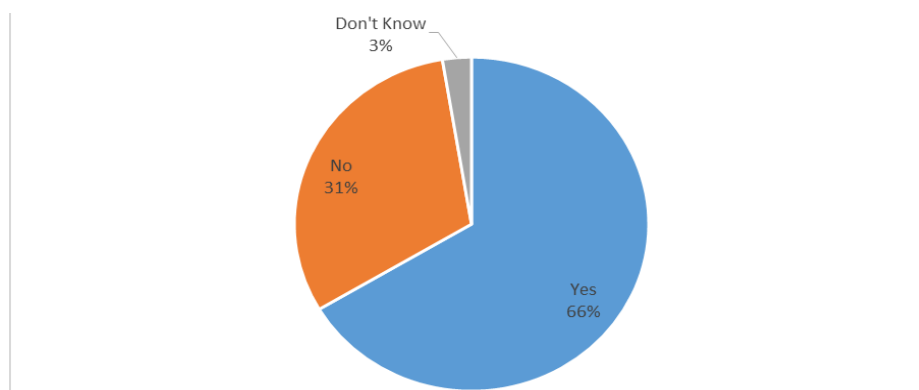


Figure 4.1: Influence Business People/Economic Entrepreneurs on conflict

From the findings, majority of the respondents (66%) were in agreement that business people/economic entrepreneurs had influenced the rise of crime in Northern Kenya. However, 31% of the respondents were of the contrary opinion, while 3% were not aware of any influence from business people/economic entrepreneurs. This shows that the emergence of economic (warlords) entrepreneurs in Nilotic pastoralist of Northern Kenya has led to the rise of conflict.

The study further sought information on the contribution of people outside Samburu, Pokot and Turkana in the escalation of cattle raiding in the regions. The findings are presented in Figure 4.2.

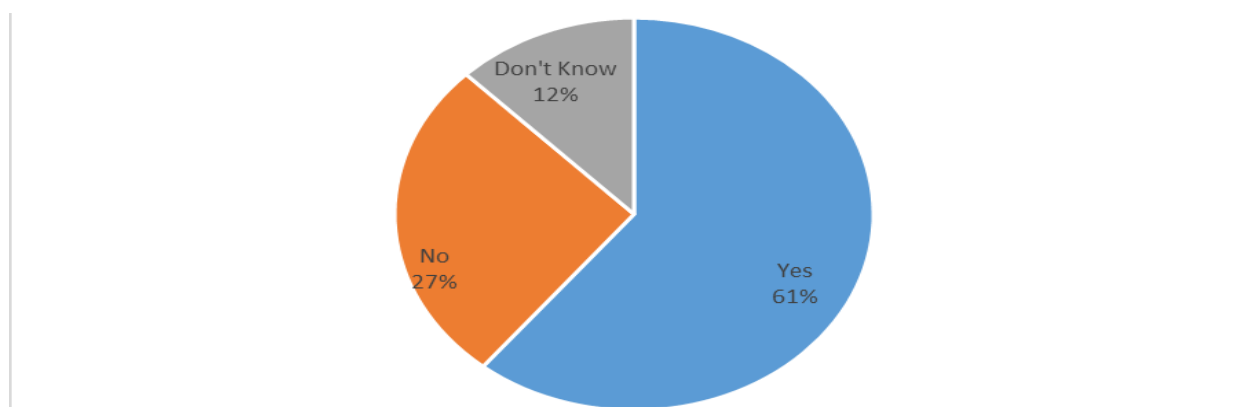


Figure 4.2: Contribution of Conflict by People outside Samburu, Pokot and Turkana Communities

From the findings in Figure 3.2, majority of the respondents (61%) were in agreement that there is contribution of people outside Samburu, Pokot and Turkana in ethnic conflict. However, 27% of the respondents stated that there is no contribution of people outside the three communities.

The study further sought information on the explanation to the contribution of people outside Samburu, Pokot and Turkana. Table 3.1 presents the findings.

Table 4.1: Contribution of conflict by People outside Samburu, Pokot and Turkana Communities

	Frequency	Percent
Supply sophisticated weapons	149	37
Provide ready market	145	36
Participate in raids	22	6
Political reasons	41	10
Acquisition of local land and resources	42	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

People outside Samburu, Pokot and Turkana supply sophisticated weapons, provide ready market for the animals and participate in the raids as shown in Table 4.1.

The study further sought information on where commercial entrepreneurs took raided animals. The findings are shown in Figure 4.3.

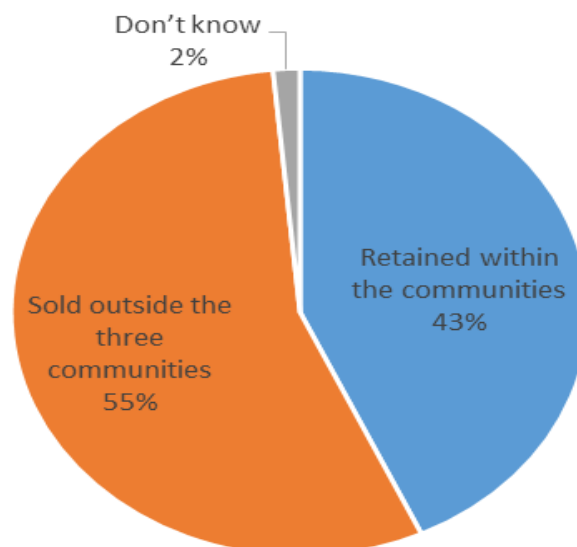


Figure 4.3: Location of Raided Cattle

The raided cattle, as shown in Figure 4.3, are sold outside Pokot, Samburu and Turkana based on the response of the 55% of the respondents. However, 43% of the respondents indicated that the raided cattle are retained within the communities. People outside Samburu, Pokot, and Turkana who are the beneficiaries of the cattle from the regions also contributed to the escalation of conflict in the region.

The study sought to know the markets set by commercial enterprises for raided cattle. Figure 4.4 presents the summary of the findings.

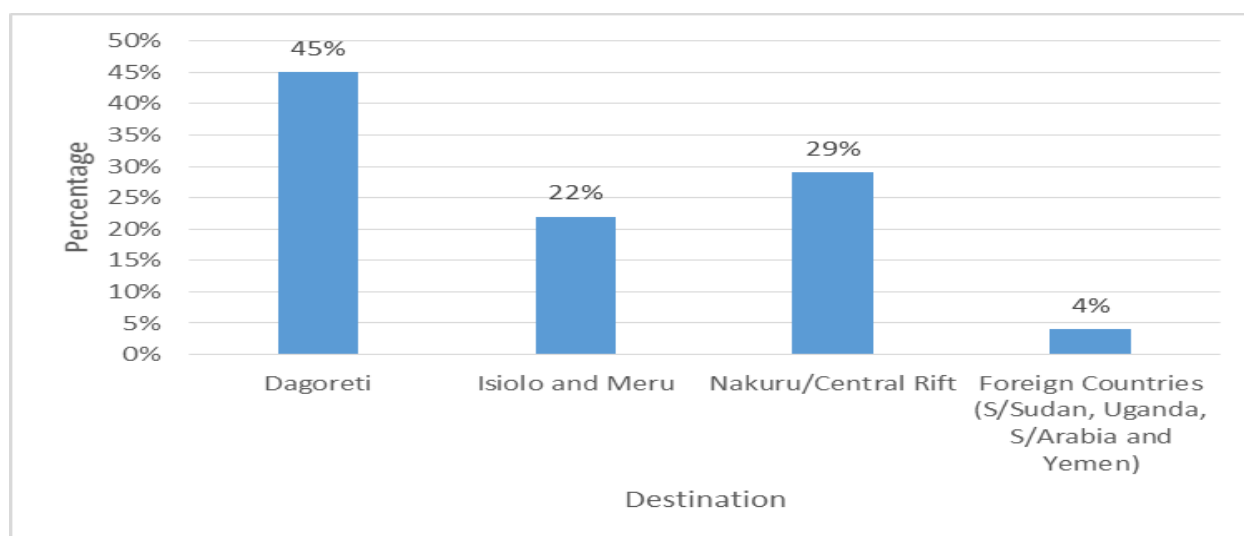


Figure 4.4: Raided Animals' Final Destination

From the findings, 45% of the respondents identified Dagoreti Market as the major destination where raided animals are identified but never recovered. Dagoreti market is known to have the biggest slaughter house in Nairobi, justifying why raided animals are not recovered once they reach there. Other destinations are Isiolo/Meru, Nakuru/Central Rift, and Foreign countries like S/Sudan, Uganda, S/Arabia and Yemen. In Samburu, it was discovered that many of the raided cattle ended up for sale in Dagoretti or Isiolo.

#### 4.2. Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The unstable states in the Horn of Africa are one of the principal sources of small arms and lights weapons to Northern Kenya before 1990. Kenya stands at the crossroads between the conflict areas of South Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Ethiopia. For the last 50 years, these countries have been embroiled in a series of civil wars and unending strife as political ambition has overtaken common sense, resulting in violent changes of government and the release of more tools of violence into society (Boutwell 1999).

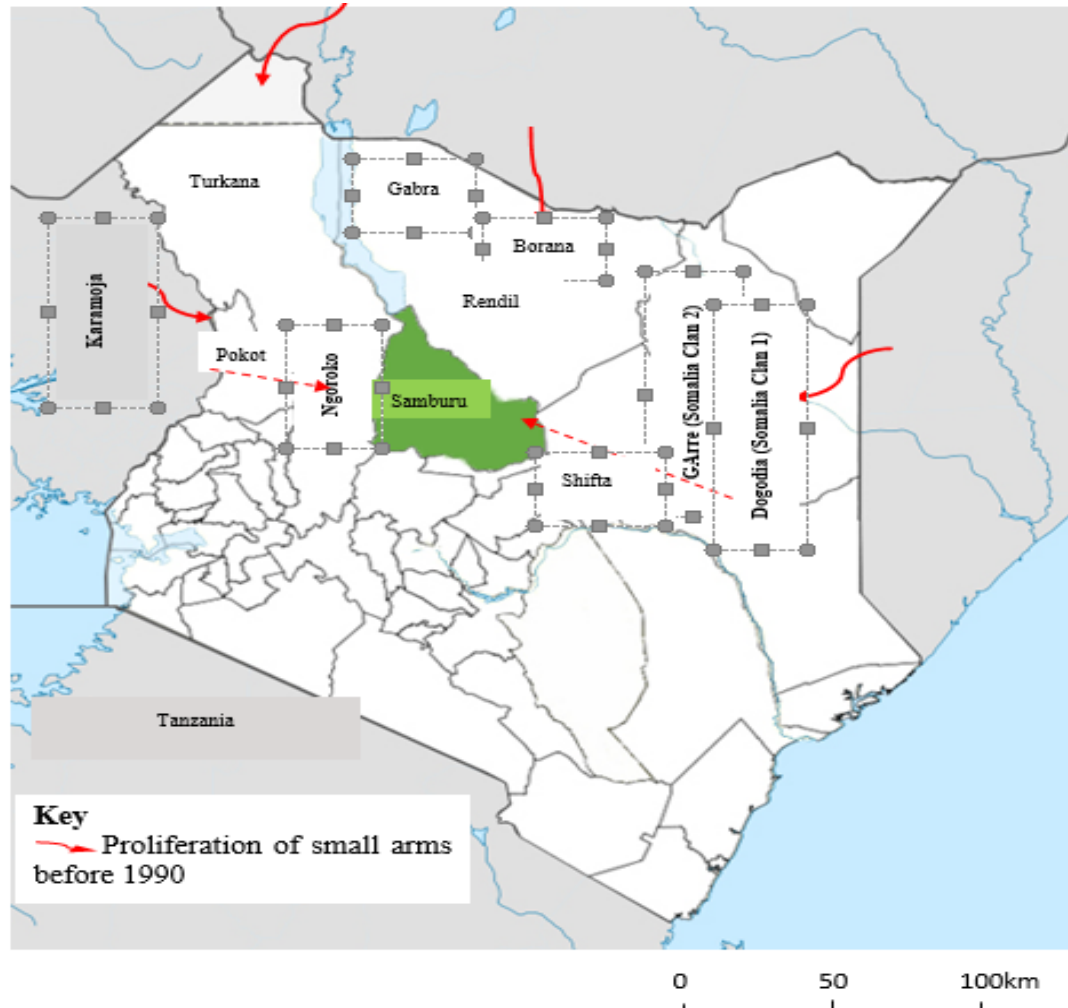


Figure 3.5: Map Showing Proliferation of Small Arms before 1990 (Times Series 1)

The map in Figure 3.5 shows the routes and the flow of small arms to Kenya and specifically to the Northern Kenya. South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and later Somalia are the main sources of small arms and light weapons to the region. The movement of arms to the region is a very gradual process taking several years before guns reach their intended destination.

On the Eastern Kenya in particular, the Samburu did not have access to arms from the Somalia because of the traditional enmity between the Samburu and the Somali.

#### 4.3. Introduction of modern ways or technology

The study sought to find out how the modern Moran used modern ways to escalate conflicts in the Pastoralist communities. Figure 19 presents the findings.



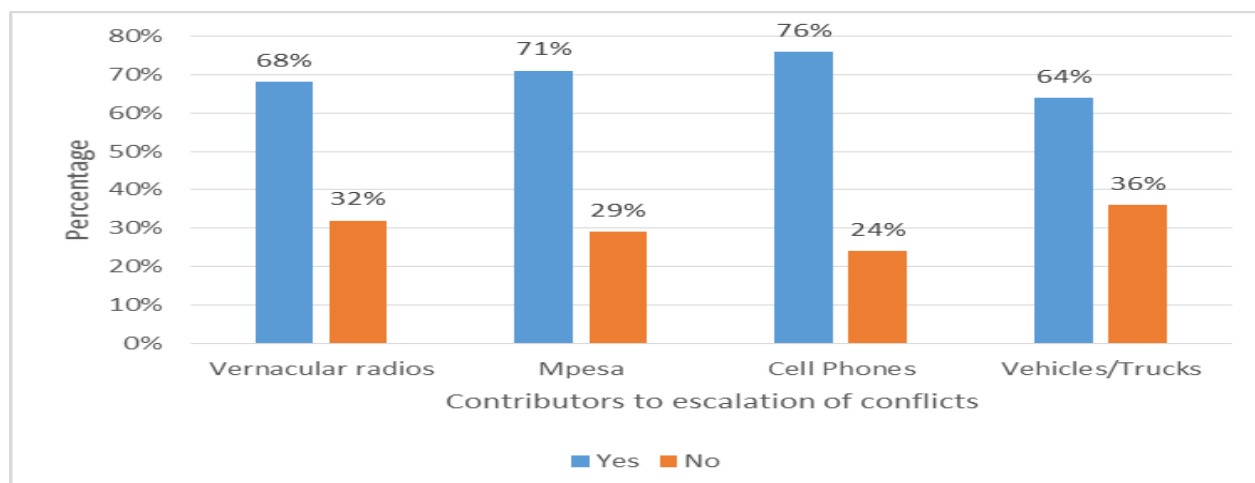


Figure 19: Modern Ways of Conflict Escalation

From the findings, 76% of the respondents indicated cell phones as a modern way of conflict escalation. The perpetrators use cellphones to communicate to Morans on the best tactics to use during the raid and the specific routes to use. Elites from these communities communicate to their rural folks every day using cell phones. Every morning and evening, the elites would inquire on their kins safety. Almost all morans have cellphones for this purpose.

### Discussions

For the last 50 years these countries have been embroiled in a series of civil wars and unending strife as political ambition has overtaken common sense, resulting in violent changes of government and the release of more tools of violence into society as alluded by Boutwell (1999).

The movement of arms to the region is a very gradual process taking several years before guns reach their intended destination. This is because these guns are illegal and could only be sold through a black market or commercial brokers. In general, small arms entry to Northern Kenya was from the western side, mainly from Uganda and Sudan. The findings of this study are echoed by (Irin 2003) in that the first beneficiaries of these small arms are the Turkana and the Pokots of Kenya. The study similarly premised that the Karamoja from Uganda are also among the first pastoral groups to acquire guns in the region. The Karamoja are cousins to the Turkana and Pokots but they never valued this relationship and continued to terrorize the Kenyan groups through cattle rustling. A continuous fighting between the Pokot and Karamoja and Turkana enabled these two Kenyan groups to access guns through cattle rustling and deaths of the armed militants as corroborated by (Irin 2003).

Samburu people have no borderline with either Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, or Somalia (Murunga 2005). Similarly, the study findings found that Samburu county has fertile soils, plenty of water, forestry, wildlife, commercial minerals, thick clay soil well-drained soils suitable for farming and livestock production. The county receives higher rainfall than other pastoralist areas, both short and long rains, unlike any part in Northern Kenya. This makes Samburu more attractive to other pastoral groups in search of pasture and water. Samburu is surrounded by six pastoral Counties, namely Turkana to the northwest, Baringo to the west, Laikipia to the south, Isiolo to the southeast, and Marsabit to the northeast. Most of these pastoral communities in the above counties have access to the border line.

According to (Bevan, 2008), Samburu Morans inspiration to arm themselves might have been overdone to an extent that Morans acquisition of small arms created a violent situation, hence perpetuation of conflict in the region. In support of this finding, the current study confirmed that Samburu did not have access to the cross border trade in small arms, therefore continued to rely on the middle men or the alliances with either of these groups to

acquire small arms. Samburu had a limited supply of guns since they never had direct contact with the source, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Somalia. The Samburu remained the least armed in the region and were vulnerable to the attacks. It is this vulnerability to attacks that gave the Samburu people and Morans in particular to arm themselves to the fullest.

After the collapse of Siad Barre, who funded the Shifta menace, a new crop of Somali businessmen emerged. These businessmen were not part of the greater Somali expansion agenda, and when the guns were easily available, they found a quick way of making money, by selling guns to anyone willing to purchase. The current study found that the Samburu Morans became the first beneficiaries of this trade as the Morans sold their livestock to purchase the guns. Morans always exchanged livestock for guns, for example, a G-3 would be exchanged with three bulls, an AK-47 and an M-16 with two bulls and pistols with an effective range of 75 meters with a heifer as highlighted by (Farah 2005).

On the third objective, the current study perpetually found that vernacular radios can play important roles in conflicts. They can be the channel of communication between the parties to the conflict, provide information about the parties to the conflict and issues at hand, and offer education on the different ways to peaceful resolution of the conflict. Similarly (Villanueva, 2009) confirmed that such radio stations could also help in building trust among parties to the conflict and the public, counteract misinformation, analyze the conflict, help identify the underlying interests of issues, allow parties to express their emotions, empower the parties like marginalized groups and help in consensus building. Osamba (2011) suggests the abuse of ethnic competitions through sending money through M-pesa between local political leaders prompt groups into ethnic viciousness all together for self-protection in control. Likewise, Krätli and Swift (2010) claim the involvement of legislators in backing attacks to increase political mileage among the voters and to have the edge over contenders. Cottle (2006) similarly found that conflicts provide the raw material for strong human interest stories where people use cellphones to find pathos and tragedy, heroism and camaraderie's acts of selfishness and personalized experiences of suffering. Galtung (1993) says that not only do cellphones have a perverse fascination with war and violence, they also neglect the peace forces at work. Furthermore, Brown (2001) in Yanacopulos and Hanlon (2006) found that many ethnic and internal conflicts are triggered by selfish leaders who will do anything to get to power. They often incite ethnic violence. The current study similarly found that youths in these areas have been supplied with trucks which they use in carrying out attacks, as well as carry the raided animals to the markets in towns and cities. As such, humanity's failure to prevent, mitigate, and resolve ethno-political conflicts suggests that those seeking to end them may be missing certain insights or new alternative perspectives and dynamics involved in the conflict.

## **Conclusion**

The development of increasing interest of shielding and protecting third world countries of capitalist by the USA marked the beginning of the significant presence of the two former superpowers' in the Horn of Africa. USA began to increase its presence through the control of the Mediterranean Sea route, Suez Canal channel further restraining the possibility of a Soviet blockade of oil lanes mainly located in Sudan. Its increasing interest of shielding and protecting third world countries of socialist influence prompted it to provide financial and military support to Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

Political instability in Somalia made Kenyan Somalis able to obtain guns by volunteering to join the fight for the Ogaden in Ethiopia, and then slipped back into Kenya. In some cases, renegade Somali soldiers did the same. In Ethiopia and Eritria, the rivalry between the countries led to arms race between the two nations, where each country is involved in massive acquisition of arms. Meanwhile, The Turkana exploited the ethnic rivalry between their foremost enemy in Uganda-the Dodoth and their Ugandan cousins, the Jie to get arms supplies from the latter. Similar tactics were used by the Turkana community to obtain arms from Sudan where they purchased arms from Didinga, who happened to be the traditional enemy of the Toposa who coincidentally has over the years been the Turkana's foremost challengers from the Sudan side.

Therefore, one of the reasons why conflict is escalating in Northern Kenya is the proliferation of small and light weapons, an effect of the upheavals experienced in neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa. Transformation of the conflict from a traditionally sanctioned practice to an all-out criminal activity can be attributed to the increased prevalence of so-called 'Small Arms and Light Weapons' (SALW) in the area. Pastoral communities in northern Kenya provide an excellent market for firearms. Where they traditionally relied on bows, arrows, spears, pangas, and rungas for protection and warfare, they now resort to assault rifles such as the AK-47 and the G-3 rifles, which are relatively cheap due to high availability. The availability of SALW's has scaled up the number of fatalities and indiscriminate killings among the Nilotic Pastoralist of Northern Kenya.

Other modern triggers of conflict like M-pesa/Cellphones and Vernacular radio stations are used by economic entrepreneurs to communicate and finance with the hired Morans during the raids. They use M-pesa to send money after the raids as a form of compensation. Cellphones are also used to advice on the best route to follow during and after the raid. This helps hired groups or Morans to know which route to follow for the raid to be successful.

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