

The GLOCEPS

Weekly Influential Brief

Research and Analysis in Defence and Security

The emerging dimensions of the insecurity in Laikipia County

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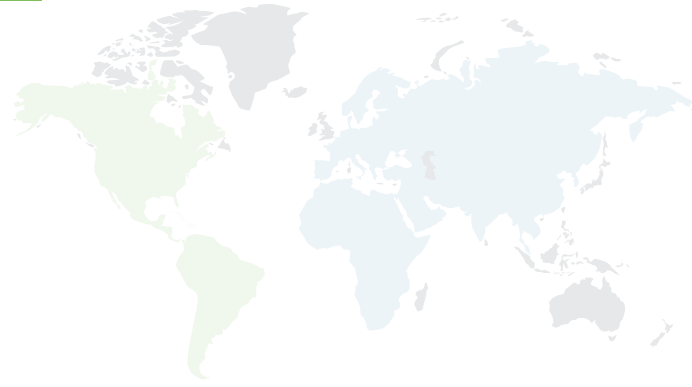
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Abstract

This brief explores the expansionist agenda, increased profitability of the livestock trade, gaps in livestock management practices, and possible linkages to money laundering as the evolving dynamics contributing to insecurity in Laikipia County. These dimensions continue to

complicate the cattle rustling menace in the County. The discussion recommends, among others, a multi-agency security approach and review of several policy guidelines to regulate the livestock trade and address the emerging dynamics.





Context

Conflicts in Laikipia have spanned over many generations where traditional conflict dynamics have revolved around access to land, water, and pasture. The historical nature of these conflicts stems from the 1904 and 1911 Anglo-Maasai agreements where the Maasai community was dispossessed off their land and moved to reserves. After Kenya got her independence in 1963, the land was subdivided and sold to government agencies, elites, and farming communities, while some of the large ranches remained intact. However, the historical land injustices have not been addressed and pastoralists continue to be further marginalized.

Over the years, the creation of wildlife conservancies in Laikipia has been on the rise thereby exacerbating existing land, water, and pasture conflicts. Pastoralists and farmers continue to be pushed to the periphery furthering conflicts in the area. These conservancies have been seen as

vehicles for resource capture in Laikipia since their actors have retained land rights after their leases expired.

In recent times, conflicts in this County have led to loss of lives and livelihoods, displacement of people, and destruction of property. Behind the volatile insecurity are evolving dimensions centred on expansionism from neighboring counties, the increased profitability of the livestock trade, and the possibility of money laundering. This brief opines that while the traditional conflict dynamics have revolved around access to land, water, and pasture, the growing demand for beef coupled with insufficient regulations in the beef trade is providing a window of opportunity for new conflict dynamics. The foregoing discussion highlights the developing latitudes around the conflict which provide new perspectives in managing the conflict.





Key Issues

The following concerns are pertinent in addressing the emerging dimensions of insecurity in Laikipia.



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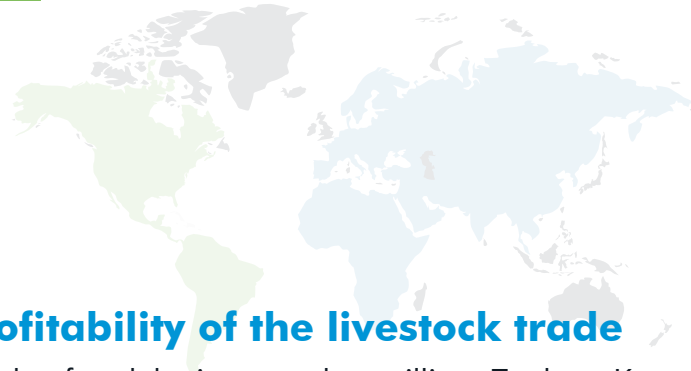
The expansionist agenda

Growing expansionist tendencies by investors from neighbouring counties such as Isiolo, Samburu, and Baringo have served to intensify the insecurity in the County. This is driven by political and economic considerations. Some nomadic pastoralists from Pokot and Samburu communities have overstayed in Laikipia under the protection of politically connected cattle barons. This has elicited expansionist fears among locals that the herders could be seeking to secure permanent grazing lands for their livestock.

The colossal cattle investments by the barons have led to increased demand for grazing resources as the massive influx of large herds invade private land in Laikipia County. The desire to acquire land for short-term grazing has made investors negate resource-sharing

mechanisms such as contract grazing with ranch owners and small-scale farmers. Instead, the acquisition of small arms and light weapons to secure the investments and the expansion of grazing territory in the County has intensified. The conflict, therefore, rests on a network of politico-criminal groupings as prominent public officials and business people collude with the barons and other criminal syndicates in the County. The perpetrators take advantage of minimal state presence, under-resourced National Police Reserve, and the ad hoc nature of security operations in the County to invade land with impunity. The resultant situation is an enhanced arms race among communities for defence and expansion purposes as the conflict further spreads into the neighbouring counties. These dynamics are not only reviving land conflicts, but also inter-community tensions.





The increased profitability of the livestock trade

The growing demand for beef and the increased profitability from the trade has presented an opportunity for organized criminal syndicates to benefit from the trade. The criminals thrive in an underground economy that takes advantage of weak border controls, cultural practices, and minimal state presence in remote parts of Kenya. Ready beef markets have aided the intensification of cattle rustling in Laikipia making it a lucrative business enterprise. This has emboldened hundreds of pastoralists armed with lethal weapons to raid farms, wildlife reserves, and conservancies. The vice is highly coordinated through sophisticated politico-criminal alliances comprising domestic and international syndicates keen on livestock trade supporting its existence. Its modus operandi have alienated the traditional community elders, who have lost control as key arbitrators. The large herds of stolen cattle have continued to satisfy growing beef demand in the local and international markets, especially in Gulf countries. The supply of stolen beef to urban markets is estimated to be worth US\$500

million. To date, Kenya has a deficit of 300,000 metric tonnes of meat with Nairobi and Mombasa accounting for the largest share of consumption. This allows for faster disposal of stolen cattle due to the absence of reliable livestock tracking mechanisms and insufficient regulations on the beef trade supply chain. The criminal cartels have continued to exploit the increased profitability of the livestock trade, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the weak disarmament interventions, the inadequacy of existing security apparatus, ad-hoc security operations, and policy gaps to remain armed to perpetuate the crime. The situation has occasioned debates to amend the Penal Code, Cap. 63 to enhance the punishment for livestock theft to a death sentence. The delays in amending the law further constrain efforts to counter the black market for stolen cattle. The situation is further compounded by the non-ratification of the 2008 Mifugo Protocol for the prevention, combating, and eradication of cattle rustling in Eastern Africa by Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Sudan.



Photo Credit: The Africa Report





Photo Credit: laikipia.go.ke

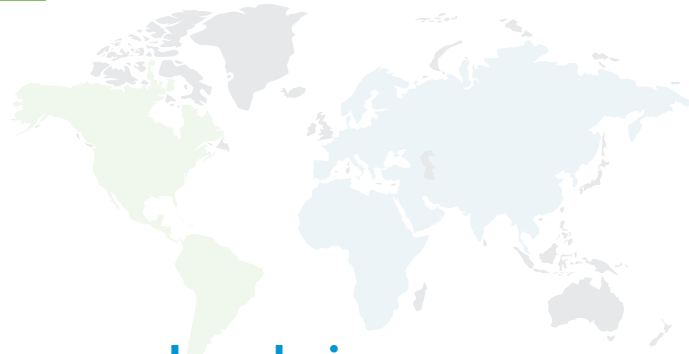
Gaps in livestock management practices

There are existing legislative and livestock management policies. However, gaps remain in their strengthening and implementation. Existing legislative measures include the Stock and Produce Theft Act which aims to curb the theft of stock and produce. Additionally, the Meat Control Act Cap 356 regulates meat and meat products in the country. Nonetheless, gaps arise in lenient penalties offered by these legislative measures. There have been proposed interventions to close the lenient measures around such vices as cattle rustling. This is evident in the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2021 currently in the national assembly.

There exists a series of progressive policies and strategies that guide livestock management

practices including threats such as cattle rustling. Key policies include the National Livestock Policy of 2019 that seek to develop guidelines for the livestock sector in Kenya. This policy acknowledges the existing gaps and has necessitated the development of the Animal Identification and Traceability Strategy 2020-2030, after affirming that there was no fool proof livestock identification and traceability system. The strategy identifies key areas of policy interventions that are yet to be fully operationalized as the activation of technological innovations in tracking mechanisms and related frameworks. There is still opportunity for policy mechanisms focusing on the implementation of the strategy to account for a multi-agency approach to create awareness on the strategy.





Opportunities for money laundering

The increased interventions by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, the Kenya Revenue Authority, and the Financial Reporting Centre to assess the legitimacy of wealth acquired by Kenyans has increased the opportunity for individuals to hide ill-gotten cash in legitimate businesses such as livestock trade. The cattle rustling menace and the booming and poorly regulated beef trade lends leverage to cattle barons to purchase the livestock and resell them quickly to feed the growing beef market, or just keep them for speculative purposes. Given the informal transactional nature of livestock business, individuals have been able to purchase hundreds of livestock cheaply on a cash basis from herders in the neighbouring counties of Isiolo and Samburu. These transactions are rarely reflected within the formal financial systems as the money is kept in cash. The livestock are later on sold at market rates to Kenya meat commission and other abattoirs through the regular financial systems. Those

keen on cleaning ill-gotten wealth are encouraged by the huge profit margins between the purchase and resale values. This presents an opportunity for proceeds of corruption by public officials and other crimes such as drug trafficking and wildlife trade to be introduced into the formal economy through the large-scale cattle investments. The illicit financial flows permeate to Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Somalia due to protracted conflicts and state fragilities which allow ease of accessibility to firearms.

There is evidence to the fact that the trajectory of cattle rustling has frequently coincided with electoral cycles, making the crime a campaign finance source. The possibility of public officials (with looted cash but oblivious of their survival in the next regime) exploiting the beef trade to help place illicit funds into political campaigns remains large.



Photo Credit: Egypt Today





Conclusion

As new dimensions of conflict emerge in Laikipia County, there remains the need for proactive multi-agency interventions to pre-empt the security threats posed. The key focus should be on strengthening the legislative and policy frameworks touching on livestock trade, the flow of arms, taking a proactive security approach in Laikipia, limiting opportunities for money laundering, expansionism, investigation and prosecution of suspected cartels engaged in cattle rustling.



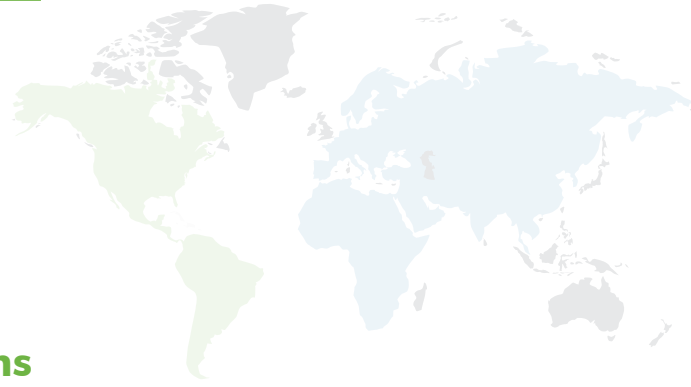
Photo Credit: Private Banker International

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered:

- a) The Financial Reporting Centre to intensify investigation of the dealers in livestock trade with the focus on identifying the suspected financiers of cattle rustling for prosecution.
- b) The National Assembly should fast-track the enactment of the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2021 into law to provide for enhanced penalties for individuals engaged in livestock theft, among other provisions.
- c) The National Assembly should ratify the Mifugo Protocol for the prevention, combating, and eradication of cattle rustling in Eastern Africa.
- d) The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives should initiate a phased pilot program in Laikipia for the Animal Identification and Traceability Strategy 2020-2030. The pilot program will be key in learning lessons and closing gaps around the strategy implementation.





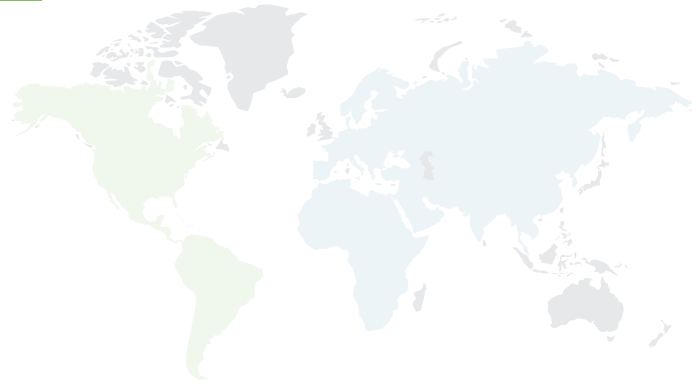
Recommendations

- e) The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives should collaborate to
 - i. create public awareness on the Animal Identification and Traceability Strategy 2020-2030.
 - ii. effectively control and regulate livestock trade across the country.
- f) The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government and the Ministry of Defence should regularly conduct disarmament operations to forestall the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the county.
- g) The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government should revamp a robust strategy for resourcing National Police Reservists in Laikipia and neighboring counties.

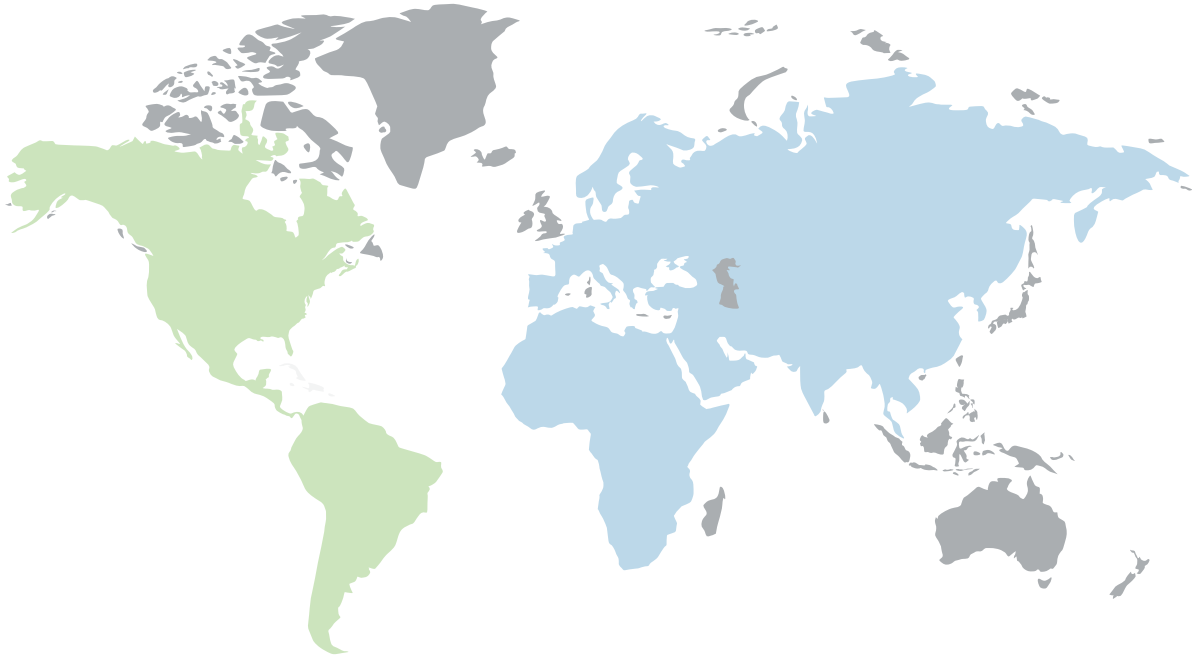


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