

## 1 Introduction

It is now recognized that violence plays a decisive role in the breakdown of coping strategies leading to famine in Africa today. This is especially the case where armed conflict magnifies trends already discernible as a result of enviro-economic factors such as drought. Nevertheless, as de Waal (1993: 33) cautions, “the glib commonplace, ‘war plus drought equals famine’ grossly understates the complexity and intimacy of the links between the two”. Greater awareness of these links is needed for more effective famine prevention strategies, but is itself dependent on a much deeper understanding of why violence erupts in the first place.

Violent conflicts, like all social processes, are cultural phenomena and should be analysed as such. This is the starting point for understanding the links between the age-old pastoral institution of livestock raiding and livelihood insecurity among nomadic Turkana herders in Kenya.<sup>1</sup> In East Africa, raiding has been a characteristic of pastoral systems for hundreds of years (Fukui and Turton 1979). Yet, despite the pervasiveness of this practice, raiding is often depicted as superimposed on pastoral life rather than as an intrinsic component of changing relations and competition in a harsh environment. In particular, the impact of raiding on the normal productive activities of herders, and how raiding interacts with drought to cause famine, are poorly understood.

The long-persisting and erroneous conception of famine in Turkana as an essentially ‘drought-driven’ event has given way to growing recognition today of the key role which livestock raiding plays in the breakdown of herders’ coping strategies. However, this article argues that the phenomenon of cattle raids *per se* is not the problem. Common portrayals of raiding as a manifestation of ‘tribal’ hostilities fail to recognize its traditional livelihood-enhancing roles (Oloka-Onyango *et al.* 1992). Rather, the problem is the fashion in which raiding has been

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# Livestock Raiding Among the Pastoral Turkana of Kenya

*Redistribution,  
Predation and the  
Links to Famine*

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transformed over the years, from a quasi-cultural practice with important redistributive functions, into more predatory and violent forms driven by a criminal and acquisitive logic and waged with sophisticated weaponry.

This article highlights the central distinction between 'redistributive' and 'predatory' forms of livestock raiding. It seeks to understand its increasingly modern and violent forms in terms of the changing functions which raiding serves within pastoral society and, increasingly, outside it. Using a simple model of armed conflict and livelihood vulnerability the article concludes by illustrating the complex ways in which violence and the threat of violence interact with drought to undermine coping strategies, particularly with regard to herder mobility.

## **2 The Rise in Livelihood Insecurity Among the Turkana**

### **2.1 Background**

The Turkana inhabit a desolate region in northwestern Kenya. Numbering around 300,000, of which 70 per cent are pastoralists (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995), they are divided into 13 sub-tribes, each occupying a well-defined territorial 'sub-section'. To the West, North-West and North-East, Turkana district is bordered by Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia respectively (See Figure 1). The Turkana, like the majority of pastoralists in Africa, have traditionally led a lifestyle geared towards subsistence. Though precarious at the best of times, it is well suited to the harsh, dryland environment which they inhabit. Drought and famine are constant hazards: only one year in four is likely to bring adequate rain (Gulliver 1955).

Owing to the variability of the rainfall and fodder upon which their livestock depend, the Turkana pursue a nomadic existence. Their migration routes habitually take them across district boundaries and, during more prolonged periods of drought, into neighbouring countries. During their long experience of recurrent drought and environmental uncertainty, the Turkana have developed elaborate survival strategies. These have traditionally included herd diversification, herd splitting through daily and seasonal movements, livestock

circulation among extended family members and 'stock associates', alliances with neighbouring communities (pastoral and non-pastoral) to allow access to resources in times of stress, and raiding stock from neighbouring groups (McCabe 1990). Increasingly, the Turkana have also become reliant on the market to supplement their own production.

The stage for political conflict, environmental degradation and food insecurity within Turkana was set decades ago (Oba 1992). The indigenous livestock economy was seriously weakened following pacification by colonialism at the turn of the century. More recently, the rise of physical insecurity in the district has been linked to Turkana's geo-political situation at the heart of a region torn by war and civil strife. Internal wars in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda have often spilled over into Kenya. Although cattle raiding and intra-regional conflict are far from new phenomena, the growing availability of modern weapons of war in recent decades has indirectly contributed to more destructive and lasting hostilities between the Turkana and neighbouring tribes including the Toposa, the Donyiro, the Merille, the Karamojong and the Pokot.

The general rise in insecurity has undermined local social security systems and the capacity of people to buffer drought. In the past 15 years, major drought has struck three times. The severity of the 1979-81 drought, in particular, obliged many herders to give up pastoralism as a way of life, at least temporarily. Livestock losses in northern Turkana reached 90 per cent of all cattle, 80 per cent of small stock, 40 per cent of camels and 45 per cent of donkeys (Hogg 1982). In February 1982, 80,000 out of 180,000 Turkana were still receiving food aid. While the famine was largely attributed to 'drought-related' causes, evidence indicates that livestock losses were in large part the result of disease spread after a Turkana raid on a pastoral group in southern Sudan (Cullis and Pacey 1992).

Swift (1989: 308), in his study of drought prevention strategies in Turkana, argues that the fall-back activities which have traditionally played a key role in sustaining pastoralists during periods of stress 'have become increasingly unsatisfactory'. Both hunting and fishing are constrained by

Figure 1 Location of Turkana District within Kenya and the Horn of Africa



Note Map reproduced from *A Development Dialogue: Rainwater Harvesting in Turkana*, by kind permission of Intermediate Technology Publications.

over-demand on the local ecosystem, while the ability to take advantage of local 'livestock-for-grain' exchange networks is often restricted by unfavourable terms of trade or their breakdown due to generalized insecurity in rural areas. In this context, there has been a growing integration of external assistance into the arsenal of survival strategies employed by the Turkana, though at the great cost of dependence on outsiders.

## 2.2 Famine responses as 'drought-driven'

The nature of the links between livestock raiding and famine in Turkana have been ignored or poorly understood for three reasons. First, outside interest in Turkana has been shaped by a narrow conception of famine. Famine relief was provided as early as the 1930s in Turkana by the British colonial administration (Cullis and Pacey 1992). In recent years the district has become the target of the largest

famine relief efforts in the country. Guiding these interventions has been a narrow Western definition of famine equating it with starvation and mortality. The focus has tended to be on the consequences of famine rather than on the causes, in particular sidelining those which were not 'drought-related' in origin. More importantly, this has typically led to an emphasis on providing food aid and saving 'lives' rather than the 'livelihoods' of pastoralists.

Second, development interventions have been characterized by general ignorance about pastoralists and pastoral systems. The failure of many pastoral 'development' projects has been attributed to the stereotypical views and images of African pastoralists and their environments held by researchers, government officials, aid and development workers (cf. Oxby 1975; Baxter and Hogg 1990; Leach and Mearns 1996). These views represent African pastoralists as arrogant, warlike, economically irrational, unresponsive to development, and environmentally destructive. While colonial in origin, these images have persisted long after independence. In short, these perceptions have identified pastoralism itself as the primary source of herders' misfortunes.

Given the frequency of drought in the region, this has led to a certain feeling of 'inevitability' about famine. To the extent that it could be avoided, it was originally thought that this would involve the sedentarization of nomads. Ironically, instead of strengthening livelihoods, this often undermined them. Development interventions have been environmentally damaging, largely because they constrained the traditional mobility of herders, concentrating human and livestock populations in more fertile areas, and thereby accelerating the depletion of soil nutrients, vegetation and water resources. Relief operations during famines have had similar effects by confining herders to relief camps, thereby increasing their susceptibility to disease epidemics and their dependence on outsiders.

The third reason why livestock raiding has been overlooked is political. As Cullis and Pacey note in their study of Turkana (1992: 8):

drought is politically neutral, and to present it as the cause of crisis avoids blaming national governments or district administrators for failure

to control the security situation. It also avoids the need to identify and remedy other factors which may encourage raiding - factors that might include chronic poverty, alienation from national institutions, and trading in weapons.

Development and relief agencies have traditionally had neither the mandate nor the experience to deal with armed conflict. A common response, dictated by the lack of options to confront this problem as well as by the need to appear politically 'neutral', has often been officially to ignore conflict issues.

Nevertheless, it is increasingly clear that famine in Turkana stems from a complex interaction of environmental, political and development variables (McCabe 1990). A 1985 study highlights the key contributory role of raiding, noting that this problem 'is one of the most dominant and intractable of constraints to the full realization of livestock potential in Turkana' (Ecosystems, Ltd: 9.3.1). Recent studies further confirm that raiding is a prominent feature of famine and food insecurity in the district (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995). However, neither the key livelihood-enhancing functions which raiding performs, nor its changing dimensions in the modern era, have received adequate attention to date.

### **3 'Redistributive' Raiding as a Pastoral Institution**

Because raiding has long been considered a 'primitive' feature of tribal relations, its crucial role in processes of pastoral production and socio-cultural reproduction has largely been ignored. To understand why raiding remains such an important feature of Turkana social organization and external relations today, reference must be made to the underlying environmental, political and socio-economic determinants of pastoral relations in harsh environments.

Anthropological explanations of raiding tend to portray its redistributive forms in the context of a subsistence ethos (i.e. Fukui and Turton 1979; Turton 1991). The 'material' explanation sees raiding as competition for scarce resources. In line with nomads' perceptions, their livelihood systems extend spatially as far as their productive needs (and courage) take them (Schlee 1990). This can

encompass grazing land under the control of neighbouring tribes, subject to the prevailing state of inter-tribal relations. For nomads, gaining free access to grazing land is more important than occupying it (Tornay 1979) and has traditionally been as much a question of attaining peace with hostile tribes as of superior military strength.

Raiding is also an important means of rebuilding herds after stock have been killed by drought or seized in raids. Following the 1979-80 drought which caused losses of 50-70 per cent of the livestock in parts of Turkana district, Ellis and Swift (1988) argue that raiding was a significant determinant in the relatively rapid recovery of animal populations. Among herders, the milk from livestock serves as the principal source of nutrients. Livestock are also the currency of exchange in social transactions. Marriage, for instance, requires payment of high bride prices which are often a very strong motivation for young men to raid (Bollig 1990).

The 'political' explanation views traditional warfare as a means of establishing and maintaining the separate identities of neighbouring groups. Turton (1991: 259) sees the Mursi expansion in Southwest Ethiopia, though primarily determined by ecological change, as made possible by warfare. He argues that war is a 'means of maintaining rule-governed relations between autonomous political units in the absence of an overarching authority', suggesting that warfare is a reciprocal activity, crucial to maintaining balance. Far from signifying a breakdown in 'normal' political relations, warfare is seen as their very underpinning. In the case of large-scale aggressions, convention demands that an aggrieved tribe mount a counter-raid to re-establish its stature before peace can be made. The equivalence in terms of stock taken or casualties inflicted is not as important as re-establishing a sense of 'balance' which remains an important pre-condition for conflict resolution (Fukui and Turton 1979).

'Social' factors also play an important role in explaining the incidence and intensity of raiding. Many elements of Turkana culture display a military ethos which blends in with religious, political and economic matters. For young men, warfare is an important rite of passage, one which has become linked with raids and is often an important

inspiration for raiding (Lamphear 1992). Raids seem to be one of the few ways for a young man to earn prestige and gain independence from his father. Bourdieu (1979) notes that in systems where economic capital is permanently at risk, accumulating social and symbolic capital is probably the most enduring and reliable form of accumulation, as it can be transformed into economic assets at any stage.

The incidence of raiding is closely tied to climatic conditions and the prevailing state of the 'tribal peace', and is an equally common feature of both intra-tribal and inter-tribal relations (Dyson-Hudson and McCabe 1982). Dietz (1987) notes that since the early 1900s, the peace between the Turkana and Pokot has predominantly broken down during periods in which livestock epidemics have coincided with two or more consecutive dry years. Generally speaking, the will and capacity of the state to enforce the 'tribal peace', both during the colonial era and following Kenya's Independence, has been a key determinant in patterns of raiding. However, whether vigorous patrolling of Turkana's border areas is directly correlated with an increase in livelihood security among herders is not necessarily clear in the context of redistributive raiding.

Redistributive raiding has traditionally been carried out according to strict rules governing preparation, engagement, disengagement and conflict resolution. Extreme violence, especially against women and children, was generally not 'acceptable'. When it did occur, it was more often a characteristic of inter-tribal clashes. Fukui and Turton (1979: 12) note that 'the rules which, to a greater or lesser extent, govern the actual conduct of hostilities seem designed to prevent one side gaining an 'unfair' advantage over the other'. Over time and other things being equal, traditional raiding on a systemic level can be seen as a positive sum game. The entire pastoral system - comprising the Turkana and their neighbouring tribes - is better off due to the internal reallocation of resources which occurs between richer and poorer households.

It would be wrong to romanticize 'traditional,' redistributive raiding by overlooking the negative impact it can have on livelihoods, especially in its more modern forms. However, whereas redistributive raiding occurred within a social framework

which could accommodate its excesses, predatory raiding has overwhelmed this framework through its sheer intensity. Predatory raiding is systematically destabilizing and driven by a criminal logic contrasting sharply with traditional notions of balance and reciprocity. In the context of Turkana society as a whole, this more modern form of raiding which is characterized by external involvement can be seen as a zero-sum game.

## 4 Armed Conflict in the Contemporary Pastoral Zone

To understand predatory forms of raiding, the 'material', 'social' and 'political' explanations of redistributive raiding must be supplemented with 'economic' ones. The main distinction between redistributive and predatory forms of raiding does not relate to the use of sophisticated weaponry,<sup>2</sup> for both could be considered modern in this sense today. The main differences have to do with the arena in which livestock raiding occurs, the motives of the main actors, in particular the role of the state, and the impact which raiding has on pastoral livelihoods and the socioeconomic integrity of the wider pastoral system.

### 4.1 External actors, changing motives

Redistributive forms of raiding can be understood as **internal** conflicts, occurring between actors practising the same activity (subsistence pastoralism). When raids occurred, livestock remained within the broader pastoral system. This contributed to a certain 'system stability' and crudely served to redistribute resources within it. Redistributive conflicts are also **competitive**, linked as they are to competition for scarce resources, either for production needs or socio-cultural reproduction. The pastoral way of life is not directly threatened by such raids.

Predatory raiding, on the other hand, is an **external** activity, occurring between actors who practice

different kinds of activities (between pastoralists and 'entrepreneurs' motivated largely by economic gain). This dimension of raiding is mostly unidirectional and very violent, involving large-scale seizures of cattle for sale in markets outside Turkana. The increasing use of modern weaponry, where spears were once the norm, has helped erode the checks and balances governing redistributive raiding. The increase in predatory forms of raiding has led to a decline in per capita stock wealth within the pastoral system, further exacerbating these trends. Predatory raiding can thus be considered a **damage** conflict. As an external activity, the undermining of the pastoral way of life which is dependent on a certain systemic cohesion and balance can be considered an inevitable consequence (and in some cases, objective) of its action.

The distinction between the two forms of raiding is blurred by the fact that predatory raiding often builds on inter-ethnic tensions. However, it is important to make the distinction because predatory raiding both fuels and is fuelled by regional armed conflicts and illicit markets in cattle and light weapons, among other goods.<sup>3</sup> These trading networks can be seen to stem from the breakdown of the state which is also increasingly, in its own right, an important actor in livestock raiding today.

### 4.2 Role of the state

Fukui and Markakis (1994: 3) note that 'conflict in what might be called the contemporary tribal zone ... is set apart by at least one particular motive: its motives and goals are unrelated to the state'. This was formerly the case of redistributive raiding. The Turkana's struggle has never been waged against the state, but rather to preserve a way of life. Similarly, the state's interest in Turkana has usually been minimal. While cross-border raiding has often occurred with impunity, state intervention to bolster security has been rare. This explains why redistributive raiding in Turkana has long been able to persist on the margins of several nation states.

<sup>2</sup> It would be misleading to think that the use of guns in raiding is strictly a recent phenomenon. Lamphear (1994) argues that Turkana militarization has its origins in the latter part of the 19th century when the Abyssinian government in neighbouring Ethiopia armed the Northern Turkana to fight the British.

<sup>3</sup> Duffield (1990), in his study of food security and war, argues that local conflict is the stepping stone for internal wars. He sees modern conflict in Africa as rising from growing instability and the crisis of semi-subsistence.

Predatory raiding, on the other hand, and the livelihood insecurity it engenders, can be understood as a direct and indirect consequence of state actions. It is clear that local 'security' does not necessarily coincide with 'national' security. When central authorities have disarmed the Turkana with the intention of improving 'national' security, the effect has often been to make them more vulnerable to raiding. The promotion of poorly armed local 'home-guard' units in Turkana, in an attempt to reduce such vulnerability, has been largely ineffective in the face of their manipulation by political interests and the huge menace posed by outside raiders. The occurrence of predatory raiding at the local level thus often resonates with political events at the national level, especially inter-ethnic competition.

Predatory raids are largely initiated by people outside Turkana, often with links to security personnel in Kenya or surrounding states, and to government officials. The motives are largely economic, either to procure cattle in vast quantities to feed warring armies or to sell on the market for profit. General economic stagnation in Kenya has contributed to the development of an informal 'parallel' economy (Duffield 1990), unconstrained by national frontiers and largely controlled by people in positions of political power or with access to the means of violence. The illicit cross-border trade in arms and cattle is at the very crux of the problem of insecurity in Turkana today.

The rise in predatory raiding can also be seen to result from the breakdown of the state, especially in terms of its accountability to the people and its ability to provide basic services and security. For instance, Dietz (1993) notes that the post-independence weakening of cattle marketing structures, including an abolition of taxation, may have encouraged raiding and illegal trafficking in cattle by Somali traders and others in positions of power. Though the state has provided various services for cattle herders such as livestock vaccinations and watering sources, it has consistently failed in its task to maintain local security. The shift toward greater state control of pastoral affairs through legal and

administrative frameworks introduced in colonial times has also exacerbated raiding. Restrictions placed on pastoral mobility by conflict in the region have joined with those imposed by colonial and post-independence administrations severely to curtail the pursuit of normal productive activities.<sup>4</sup>

Bollig (1994) notes that the colonial administration reduced the power of elders acting at an inter-ethnic level who customarily worked together after a period of raiding to forge a truce. The post-Independence Kenyan state has further consolidated power by undermining the power and independence of many tribal chiefs. The breakdown of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution is closely linked to the deterioration of the social fabric in Turkana society. In particular, the intricate networks of social relations which have traditionally served to moderate violence and temper vulnerability to famine have been dramatically undermined in recent years by the general rise in insecurity.

### **4.3 The growing toll on pastoral livelihoods**

Redistributive forms of raiding are livelihood enhancing in the sense that they enable herders to build up their stocks after a drought. In the short term, one household gains at the expense of another; in the longer-term, a significant redistribution of assets occurs between households across the pastoral system thanks to counter-raids and the functioning of the pastoral social security system. Redistributive raiding can thus contribute to systemic stability.

As raiding has evolved from predominantly redistributive to more predatory forms, the profile of 'winners' and 'losers' has changed in two ways. First, there has been an increasing shift of benefits out of the system. Actors in modern raiding who are external to the pastoral system do not stand to lose from the insecurity generated by their actions. Through their financing and access to modern means of violence, they are able to manipulate tribal

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<sup>4</sup> Movement of cattle, both cross-border and internally, has long been controlled in Kenya, ostensibly to prevent the spread of disease. However, such controls have often served to maintain elite monopolies in the cattle trade (Schlee, 1990).

raiding to their own advantage. They use existing ethnic tensions as a springboard for their actions. In certain cases, state elites stand to gain by their direct participation in raiding. In other cases, the state's inability or unwillingness to maintain security in pastoral areas allows raiding to be carried out by others.

While the stability of the pastoral system as a whole suffers, not all Turkana are losers. Strategic alliances, once very common within the pastoral system, are now increasingly needed between groups within and outside Turkana for survival. Where Turkana herders are involved in cross-border raiding initiated by outsiders, they stand to gain. However, it seems unlikely that the benefits these herders derive are as widely redistributed among their local Turkana community as they would be through the normal functioning of traditional exchange networks.

Second, within the pastoral system, the benefits of raiding are accruing to a smaller number of people, with the poorest and most vulnerable herders ending up on the losing side. It could be argued that the widespread availability of modern weapons in Turkana today serves to maintain a certain balance in tribal relations in the context of modern raiding. However, when this balance is undermined, it is done so in a much more drastic manner. As raiding has become more violent and one-sided, one clear group of winners which has emerged are those with access to modern weaponry, whether it is used for defensive or raiding purposes. This puts a greater premium on arming, and ultimately increases violence. Bollig (1990) argues that in Pokot society it is the extensive purchase of guns more than anything else which leads to livestock scarcity.

The case of young men illustrates well how group or systemic interests have become secondary to individual ones. In former times, young men stole from richer herders in a practice which was largely 'accepted' in Turkana society. Violence was rare and social norms were largely respected. More recently, as the viability of the pastoral sector as a whole has fallen, the ability for them to acquire cattle has declined. The difficulty of fulfilling the social obligations linked to raiding has undermined men's role in pastoral society. The pressures on

young men to employ violence have increased in line with changes in traditional power relations within pastoral society. The influence of elders, once sufficient to check the aggressive ambitions of younger 'age-sets', has in many cases dwindled significantly (Lamphear 1992).

Women, children and the poorer herders seem to be consistent losers. As dependents, women and children are often the first to leave the pastoral sector in times of crisis. They may be sent away to stay with distance relatives or, increasingly, to urban areas. Here their vulnerability to food insecurity is often not relieved. The growing urban population in Turkana faces severe problems of hunger, trauma and dislocation. Often women turn to prostitution to survive. The migration of herders dispossessed of their livestock out of the pastoral sector in search of wage labour represents the final blow to hopes of recovery. The crucial ties to the social networks needed to resume herding are often irrevocably severed.

## **5 A Model of Armed Conflict and Livelihood Vulnerability**

Pastoralists are one of the few productive groups habitually defined as being vulnerable to food insecurity and famine on the basis of their productive capacity (what they have), rather than their productive incapacity (what they lack) (Davies 1996). As long as the rains fall abundantly and their livestock are able to thrive, they are very secure. However, when their livestock are either stolen or die from drought, both their source of immediate consumption (milk) and the basis of their livelihoods (livestock) are lost. This *structural* vulnerability of pastoralists reduces their ability to weather transitory disturbances such as shocks from raiding, drought or disease. This is especially the case when the individual, market- or collectively-based coping strategies which they rely on in times of crisis are undermined concurrently by violence.

### **5.1 The need for a broader understanding of famine**

The **Model of Armed Conflict and Livelihood Vulnerability** (Figure 2) helps illustrate the process by which raiding, either alone or in conjunction



with other shocks, undermines livelihoods. It is based on a broader definition of famine which sees this event as 'part of a downward spiral of impoverishment and increasing vulnerability towards destitution and sometimes death' (Davies 1996). Conceptualizing the famine problem as the erosion of the basis of subsistence (a livelihood) rather than as a simple lack of food, focuses attention on the strategies which herders pursue to maintain their livelihoods, and the many ways in which these are undermined. As long as there remains a shortage of resources in the pastoral sector, ensuring livelihood security among herders will depend, as far as possible, on maintaining a lifestyle based on livestock and mobility (Scoones 1995).

While this model is informed by de Waal's (1990) **Integrated Model of Famine with Violence**, it extends the analysis in several ways which have special relevance for the case of pastoralists. First, the model narrows its focus to illustrate the impact of violence on the livelihoods of individual herders. Second, the model enables us to account for the possible recourse by herders to 'reciprocal' raiding with its livelihood-**enhancing** effects. Third, following our definition of famine, the model depicts changes in vulnerability as the prime indicator of relative destitution.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the model makes explicit the constant interaction between violence (or the threat of it) and livelihoods, all along the continuum between a notional 'securest' state and the end-state of death. This helps to conceptualize vulnerability as a permanent feature of pastoralist systems.

The securest livelihood state is one where pastoralists are able to nourish themselves adequately, on a more or less continuous basis, through the routine functioning of their normal livelihood strategies. While some entitlements to food may be undermined by shocks, the net effect is that vulnerability is low. As the double-headed arrow indicates in Figure 2, it is possible for a pastoral livelihood to move back and forth between a coping phase and a stage of relative security. Nonetheless, it must be

recognized that for most pastoralists 'coping' is **the** normal state of affairs in response to the numerous stresses and shocks which characterize their livelihood environment.

Raiding, or the threat of raiding, in combination with other shocks, typically pushes a livelihood further down the spiral of famine. The occurrence of entitlement collapse at the 'threshold of vulnerability' signifies a dramatic reduction in the options available to pastoralists for recovery. Destitution is characterized by a complete collapse of physical capabilities and entitlements to food. In an extreme case, where all entitlements are undermined, a relatively secure livelihood can drop straight into destitution. Health crises, which often play a crucial role in the final stages of famine (de Waal 1990), can be incorporated into this model below the threshold of vulnerability, as can the collapse of the collective social security system in pastoral societies.

Once entitlement collapse has occurred, recovery (broken line in Figure 2) is often very difficult without external assistance (e.g. food aid). At every point on the continuum of livelihood vulnerability, raiding is an option which herders can exercise, and traditionally have exercised, to rebuild their herds. This is indicated by the bold arrows in Figure 2. While redistributive raiding can undermine livelihoods, it also serves to reduce famine vulnerability. This traditionally occurred both on an individual level - in the short-term - and on a systemic level in the longer-term. The uni-directional flow of benefits characteristic of predatory forms of raiding today supports current understandings of famine processes which see them as creating clear 'winners' and 'losers' (Keen 1994).

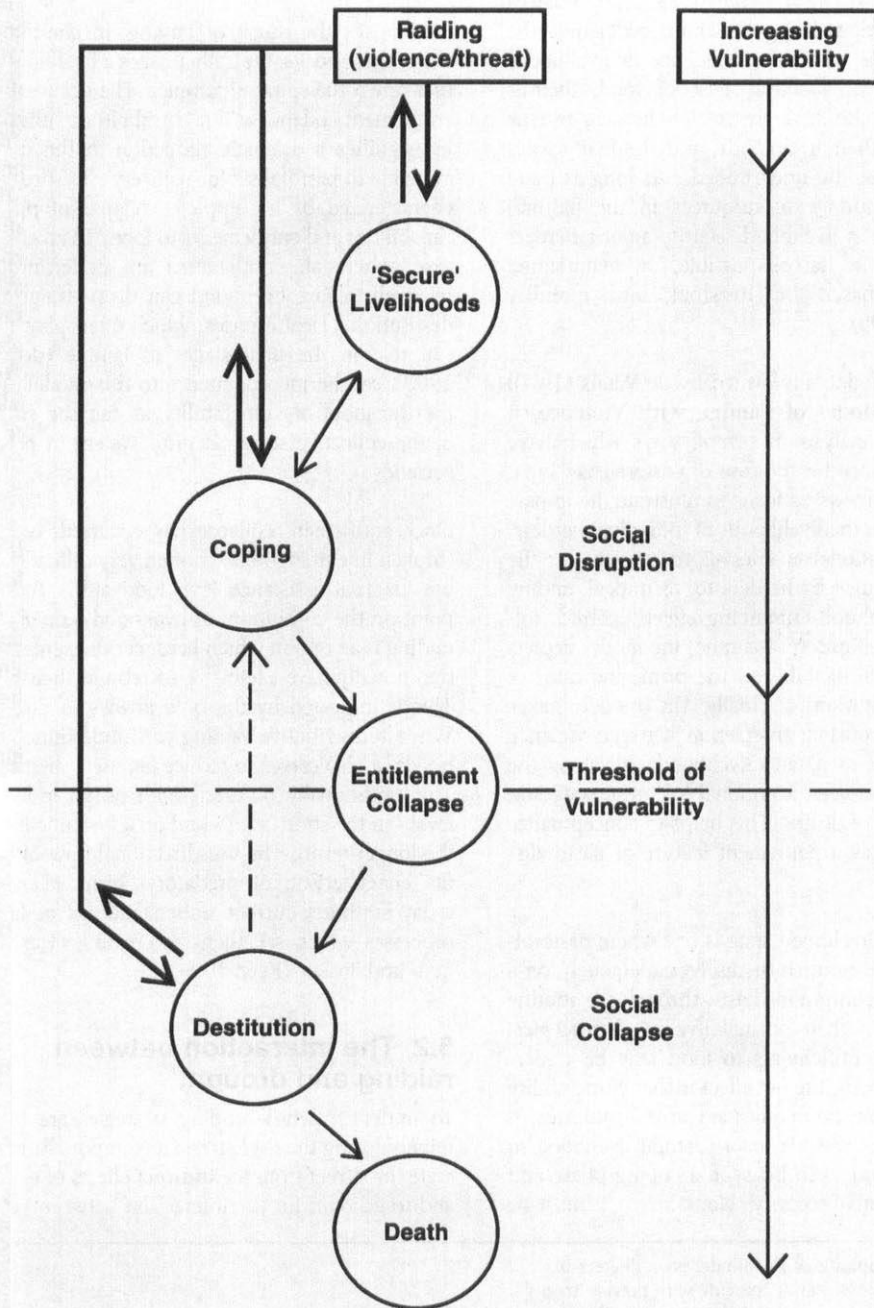
## 5.2 The interaction between raiding and drought

To understand how coping strategies are undermined during times of stress, it is important to separate the **direct** from the **indirect** effects of violence and to account for the interaction between raiding

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<sup>5</sup> While the emphasis of this model is on degrees of vulnerability, these do not coincide with precise 'stages' exhibiting distinct features. Rather, 'vulnerability' is determined by the characteristics of particular livelihood systems and the perceptions of people within them.

Figure 2 Model of armed conflict and livelihood vulnerability



and drought. Both drought and raiding undermine livelihood security primarily through their impact on large-stock dairy production. The impact of drought on pastoral production is more universal than that of raiding; it undermines the livelihood security of all households in a community, while some may be fortunate enough to avoid raiding. The impact of raiding is typically more concentrated on specific aspects of pastoral production than that of drought. A raid is more likely to rob households of all large stock, leaving other entitlements intact, while drought undermines all pastoral production, as well as agriculture and wild foods.

Raiding thus has a **direct** impact on the physical welfare of herders and their livestock. Paradoxically, however, it is not so much the raids themselves as the uncertainty and the measures taken to cope with the threat of raids which affect pastoralists the most. The insecurity generated by raiding impacts **indirectly** on coping strategies. Moreover, while redistributive forms of raiding were largely expected and could be dealt with in the context of existing strategies, the high intensity and unpredictability of predatory raiding has introduced an extreme degree of uncertainty into subsistence calculations.

The breakdown of the collective social security system is a response to rising insecurity. Whereas redistributive raiding often selectively targeted individual herders, the widespread violence characteristic of predatory raiding today affects whole groups of herders in a region. This undermines the ability of stricken herders to make claims for assistance upon one other. Violence also serves to suppress or distort the market mechanisms upon which herders depend in times of stress. The volatility of animal/grain terms of trade is central here and highlights the changing nature of social relations associated with famine which is at the heart of contemporary famine vulnerability within the pastoral sector (Watts 1991).

The fall in milk production among cattle which is associated with extreme drought stems from a lack of access to good grazing land due to constraints on mobility. This leads farmers to distress sales of cattle, often including their reproductive stock. As markets are flooded with livestock, the purchasing power of herders collapses and herds are rapidly

depleted. Herd reconstitution following the worst of famine may be impossible due to the surge in animal prices in the aftermath of wide-scale cattle mortalities or liquidation. Under conditions of famine, these processes may have devastating consequences for poorer herders, but this is even more likely where violence occurs as well.

It is the restrictions placed on herder mobility which have the most detrimental effect on coping strategies. One study found that 47 per cent of Turkana district, comprising much of the best grazing land, was virtually unused due to the mere threat of raiding faced by the Turkana and their neighbouring tribes (Ecosystems Ltd. 1985). In situations of protracted insecurity, the nature of vegetation cover on ungrazed land can change considerably, succeeding towards thorny shrubs that actually make the area less suitable for grazing as time goes by. The effectiveness of a coping strategy based on mobility is thus a function of the prevailing state of security in a region and often involves a trade-off between the perceived risk of being raided and the fear of starvation.

### 5.3 The importance of perceptions

Determining how drought and raiding **threats** interact and impact on coping strategies is difficult because one is largely dealing in the realm of perceptions, not objective indicators. Table 1 illustrates the impact uncertainty and perceptions have on livelihood strategies. There is a difference in the way a threat is perceived and its 'real' weight. In assessing threats, probability has to be weighed against consequences. Other things being equal, the more intense a threat, the greater influence it will have on livelihood strategies. Three important points emerge from this comparison.

First, the threat of drought materializes slowly; with raiding it is much swifter, leaving little time for preparation. Where a population is especially vulnerable to famine, livestock raiding can lead to a rapid-onset disaster compared with a slower-onset disaster caused by drought alone (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995). Moreover, once a raid has occurred, the threat of additional raids remains constant. Successive droughts are typically separated by a return to periods of normal rainfall, if only briefly at times, which helps to regenerate

*Table 2* Comparison of Drought and Raiding by Intensity of Threat

Aspect of threat	Drought	Raiding
<b>Specificity</b>	Low (diffuse)	High
<b>Nearness - in space</b>	General, hard to avoid without moving out of drought-affected areas	Can move away from or avoid in certain circumstances
<b>- in time</b>	Takes a while to develop, though impossible to say when it will strike	When threat materializes, impact is immediate; threat remains constant afterwards
<b>Weight of consequences</b>	General livestock losses affect everyone; make cultivation and grazing more difficult	Principally affects those with large stock and those unable to split herds
<b>Whether perceptions are amplified by past experiences</b>	Yes	Yes

pastures and allows pastoralists time to prepare for the next period of stress.

Second, with drought there is a greater balance between the way the threat is perceived and its 'real' weight than is the case for raiding. Drought is an intrinsic feature of arid environments, one to which pastoralists are well adapted. Its slower onset allows herders to adjust their perception of the threat it poses to them to its 'real' weight, and to plan accordingly. In the case of raiding, there is more of an imbalance between perceptions and reality. Owing to the high specificity of raiding, its unpredictability and its potentially devastating consequences, herders are unwilling to enter areas which they consider unsafe. The danger may be very real, but by the same token it may not be. Owing to the potentially immediate consequences of a raid, pastoralists tend to perceive it as having a higher probability of materializing, and so are unwilling to take a risk.

Third, it is clear that neither the direct impact of raiding, nor perceptions of it as a threat, can be dissociated from the effects of drought. The perception of drought as a threat is certainly heightened by the fact that raiding is known to increase

when drought occurs. These close links make it difficult to distinguish the separate impacts of drought and raiding threats on livelihood strategies. Nonetheless, understanding the impact of raiding is important. For while nothing can be done to eliminate the problem of drought, the more destructive forms of modern raiding could, under the right circumstances, be eliminated.

The tendency to view raiding as a 'one-off' shock fails to account for the permanent state of insecurity it generates and the knock-on effects. In the contemporary context, this insecurity must be seen as another facet of the structural livelihood vulnerability of Turkana herders. Permanent and generalized insecurity hampers recourse to both individual and collectively-based coping strategies in times of crisis, as well as the use of markets which herders have become increasingly reliant upon in recent years. The breakdown of social order and traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution in pastoral society are broader consequences of violence today and reinforce the vicious circle of livelihood insecurity and raiding among pastoralists.

## 6 Conclusions

This article has shown how the transformation of the traditional pastoral institution of livestock raiding in the modern era is linked with the growing crisis of livelihood insecurity among the Turkana. The policy implications for pastoral development are wide-ranging. The main point is that approaches to famine must be more concerned with underlying causes. Recent years have witnessed relief agencies seeking to reduce vulnerability among the Turkana by strengthening local coping strategies. Oxfam's restocking programme is an important step in this direction (Buchanan-Smith 1993), but as long as the raiding problem persists this will at best be a stop-gap measure.

Contemporary raiding is a symptom of a broader cross-national malaise which has socioeconomic, political and cultural dimensions. Under these circumstances, the success of pastoral development depends to a large degree on wider issues of regional conflict resolution and arms control, on the building of legitimate and accountable government in the region, and on the tightening of cultural norms around the legitimate use of violence. Such issues may seem intractable. While addressing the broader causes of famine involves engagement

with institutions outside the pastoral sector, there is also much that can be done at the local level. As Swift (1995: 171) notes:

Pastoral organizations can play a key role in bringing the activities of irregular armed forces, armed militias and bandits under control by opening channels of communication between opposing groups and regulating and policing conflicts before they escalate. Properly constituted pastoral organizations, given the necessary powers, could [also] perform these roles in a cross-border context, since they represent the only real authority in many such areas.

Strengthening pastoral institutions can have a direct and positive cross-national impact on efforts to manage and resolve violent conflicts. Indirectly, any improvements this engenders in pastoral livelihoods will undercut the alienation, impoverishment and vulnerability which make livestock raiding so attractive as a livelihood strategy in the first place. While outsiders may not view redistributive raiding as a viable or 'acceptable' coping strategy today, the search for alternatives must take into account its real significance in pastoral society and the void its disappearance would create.

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