INTRA AND INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN SOUTHERN KARAMOJA–UGANDA

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Introduction*

For decades, the agro-pastoral area of northeast Uganda, bordering Sudan and Kenya has been known for its endemic insecurity characterised by road ambushes, highway robbery and cattle rustling. The Karimojong inhabits the districts of Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit. These people are usually depicted as aggressive naked people harassing their immediate neighbours in Uganda including the Acholi from Kitgum district, the Langi from Lira district and the Iteso from Katakwi, Kumi, Soroti and Kagera districts, along with the Turkana and the Pokot from Kenya. Skirmishes are also frequently reported inside Karamoja between the Karimojong and the Tepeth, an indigenous community living on Mt. Napak, Mt. Moroto and Mt. Kadam. Feuds occurred even among the Karimojong themselves. The spate of killings, rapes, abductions, thefts and destruction of property and especially cattle rustling seriously escalated in 1999–2000 to date, due to a persistent drought and famine affecting the central plains of

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* A month-long fieldwork in Karamoja was funded by IFRA-Nairobi in January 2002. A longer filedwork was undertaken in the course of an assignment funded by DfID-Uganda, in April–May 2002.

1 These groups had a population of about 400,000 by the 1991 census.

2 This area was administratively referred to as Karamoja up to 1962. Kotido district was known as Karamoja North and Moroto including Nakapiripirit as Karamoja South.

3 In 1989, at Lorengdwat, 300 people were killed in one such battle between the Matheniko and the Bokora (The New Vision, 09/12/1990). In July 1999, Bokora warriors massacred 400 Matheniko and stole 2000 head of cattle in the nomadic village of Apule in a revenge attack. A month before that, the Matheniko had attacked Bokora and killed 140 people (The New Vision, 13/09/1999).
Karamoja. Many efforts have been undertaken to tackle the situation, ranging from peace initiatives to voluntary and then forceful disarmament. Nevertheless, the underlying economic and political issues do not seem to have been addressed yet although most of them had been identified since 1961.

In 1961, the Bataringaya report quoted the classic ‘cattle complex’ as one of the major causes of the conflicts. This theory emphasised: “the very high social prestige and prominence attached to the possession of a great number of cattle and the glorification of homicide connected with their acquisition and also the very high bride price (from 60 to 100 cows)”. But the report did not mention that even traditionally, it was theoretically forbidden for a Karimojong to steal cattle belonging to other Karimojong and to fight other Karimojong with spears. A wrong (akisec) had to be punished by the elders in local tribunals (akiwo), compensated or avenged. For homicide, compensation was standardised at 60 head of cattle. Revenge (ajore) took the form of cattle seizure or vengeance killing by the victim’s kin. Neither did it mention that the payment of bride price is usually over a period of time and not on a ‘cash’ basis. On the contrary, raiding enemies was legitimate. Their herds were a legitimate prize and their seizure did not count as theft but as an enterprise of self-improvement. It was laudable to kill foreigners of any age and sex and the successful killer has the right to adopt an enemy name and to scarify his shoulder. However, it was a social act, ritually controlled through the blessings of the elders. Before the departure of the raiders, a preparatory ceremony for starting a war campaign (amuronot ngina ajore) was held in the section ceremonial ground (akiriket). The sacrifice of an animal was associated with the practice of haruspication by a diviner (emuron) who read its entrails to evaluate the chances the raid had and, in the litanic prayers (akigat), the elders prayed for its success. Moreover, returning from a raid, those who killed an enemy had to perform specific cleansing ceremonies (Novelli, 1988).

Despite the misconceptions reducing cattle rustling to an in-built cultural tendency, the report insisted on a more crucial economic issue, which is the decrease of grazing grounds (Bataringaya Report, 1961). Since then, most other analysts have explained inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict as a coping

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collective tactic to face natural and human environmental disasters (Ocan, 1992). However, little analysis investigated the other adaptive strategies employed and their consequences.

This report will first explore the environmental constraints that determine the patterns of relationships between the Karimojong themselves and with their neighbours, especially the Iteso. The impact of colonial and postcolonial policies will be emphasised and the conditions of merging a migratory trend toward the mountains of Karamoja will be explained. Since the 1980s, some authors have stressed the rise of Karimojong warlordism, motivated by private interests and the shift in the emphasis of raiding from ecological to economical (Gray, 2000). Few studies associated the crisis in the customary leadership system to a tension in the generation-set system. The second section of this report will discuss the survival of the traditional political system among the Karimojong and the spread of a new pattern of settlements and land-use, breeding an institutional vacuum. Finally, most analyses underlined the national and international stakes of the heavy militarisation of the Karimojong but few really questioned the failure of the state policies of public order. The third section discusses the national dimension of the local conflicts.

1. THE LAND PRESSURES

Karamoja is the only semi-arid region in Uganda. Erratic and unpredictable rainfall (averaging 350–750 mm per annum) do not favour rain-fed agriculture. The rainfall is not only meagre but also unreliable with regard to when and where it falls, how much and for how long it falls, and what area it will cover. The rains are scattered in varying amounts from year to year, and even from one place to another in the same year (Dyson-Hudson, 1966). The result of this pattern of rainfall is seasonal variations in productivity characterised by patchy conditions even within the same zone. There can be lush vegetation in one location and near-emptiness in another. This 3700–4500 foot high plateau has a vast erosive surface referred to as the Karamoja Plains. There are four mountain peaks of volcanic origin: Moroto in the east, Toror in the north, Kadam in the south-east and Napak in the centre-west. This latter rises over 2134 metres above sea level and receives higher
rainfall. Thorny bush, cammiphora woodlands and patches of grasslands compose the vegetation. Savannah acacia vegetation, characterised by perennial grasses and scattered trees, dominates the higher areas, and the west that receives higher rainfall. Annual grass-shrubs and dotted trees dominate the plains right through the eastern borders. Succulent shrub thickets further cover the eastern side.

The environment is suitable for agro-pastoralism except when the rains are delayed, which leads to drought and famine. In such periods, the Karimojong are obliged to migrate towards the mountains and to neighbouring districts in order to sustain their herds. Recent restrictions of inter-regional movements, insecurity inside Karamoja, and development of extensive agriculture in the valleys of Mt. Napak and Mt. Kadam induces an over-concentration of people and livestock in these well-watered and fertile zones.

1.1. **The Karimojong traditional rotational grazing system**

N. D. Hudson distinguished agnatic kinship, claiming that there were only three generations inclusive of the living adults (cattle kin) and matrimonial ties (water kin). He identified 19 Karimojong clans. Three of them are seen as pure Karimojong clans (the Ngiribo, the Ngilobal and the Ngikelipa). They have specific ceremonial privileges and duties. The others are indigenous people, peacefully or violently absorbed during the migrations. Each clan bears a distinctive name, specific cattle brands and is strictly exogamous. According to Dyson-Hudson, the Karimojong clans do not have a territorial inscription. However, our field data has revealed that some clans are associated with specific territorial sections.

1.1.1. **The permanent settlements in the central belt**

The upper Karimojong territorial division is the territorial section, ngitela, which means seasonal riverbank, where permanent settlements are found. Novelli (1988) identified ten Karimojong sections settled in the central plains. The biggest communities are

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5 An anthropologist who studied Karimojong agro-pastoralist social organisation in the 1950s.
the Ngipian (the lightings) scattered in Nakapiripirit district, the Ngiibokora (partridge or dirty ones) and the Ngimatheniko (bulls) inhabiting Moroto district. In Bokora County, six other smaller communities can be found. These are the Ngimuno (snakes); the Ngimogoz (a mountain) settled in Matheniko County; the Ngipei (wild dogs); the Ngitome (elephant), the Ngimozingo (rhinos); the Ngikoogwa (buffaloes) and the Ngikaleeso (ostriches). Each section is associated with an emblem animal that is not totemic, for example, the tortoise for the Ngiibokora and the giraffe for the Ngimatheniko. They are separated by inhabited buffer zones. They have exclusive rights to their water points and surrounding agricultural land and pastures. They also have their own ritual body that takes care of the ceremonies, and perform their own initiations. Birth and patrilateral affiliations express the section membership although it can be provided by co-residence and elders’ co-option.

1.1.2. The dry season grazing areas

The Karimojong practise transhumant pastoralism that entails seasonal mobility of cattle herds to track the highly variable resource potential in time and place. They were based in permanent settlements (ngireria, [s.] ngireriere [pl]) located in the central belt; this is where which most of the family stays throughout the year, while the active herding population moves out, sometimes hundreds of kilometres away, to graze the animals. According to Ocan (1992) the animals were grazed near the homestead in wet seasons (akiporo) and were moved to more favourable areas towards the west in dry seasons (akuma). As the dry season draws to an end in the west, grass is burnt in order to kill ticks, chase away wild animals and allow new grass to sprout during the closing rains (Ocan, 1992). When rains start around April, herds (esipan) are quickly moved to dry eastern areas where coarse and stony soils preclude cultivation. Soft grasses sprout immediately after the rains fall, only to wilt immediately the rains stop (Muhereza, 1997). Since the central plains are also where cultivation is carried out, this eastern movement is additionally meant to allow cultivation of crops without danger of being eaten or trampled over by the animals. As the rains reduce in August when crops\textsuperscript{6} have been cultivated.

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\textsuperscript{6} Sorghum and maize are cultivated in gardens near the rivers.
harvested in the settlement areas, the herds return to the village to take advantage of the abundant water and stems of harvested crop, rich in food value. At this time, the burning of westward grass takes place, where the herds will move to once the dry season starts in September. Pastoralists avoid the western area with perennial grasses to preserve it for the dry season. They thus avoid pest diseases in these bushes because the freshly burnt grass yields more nutritive and palatable grass. This is also a form of protection for their cattle as raiders will be visible from a distance (Muhereza, 1997). However, it should be noted that these movements are not similar. Otim (2002) describes the movements of the Matheniko of Rupa sub-county. They follow a north-south pattern where at the beginning of the rains, the stocks are normally moved to the rocky northeast towards the border with Kenya, and as the dry season sets in, a southerly movement targets the more reliable watering points at Nakiloro. Nakiloro is reliable as a watering point and the Rupa cattle camps therefore do not move out of the Karamoja region. However, in both cases, the area moved to and duration spent in any particular area depends on security and the availability of water and pasture for the livestock. The duration thus varies from year to year.

The general seasonal movements involved a broad south-western trek of the Bokora/Pian herds to the seasonal swamps and the dry season grazing grounds along the Langi/Iteso-Karamoja boundary. The Bokora used natural dams to move to Labwor Hills, Mt. Akisim and Mt. Napak. At Mt. Akisin, they watered their animals in the natural springs of Alekilek and Iriir. In Napak, they took their stock in the natural springs of Micoko, Kodike, Alengia and Tiyan. The Matheniko moved to Mt. Moroto, Toror hills, Labwor Hills and to the Cheremongi hills. The Pian moved to Mt. Napak and Mt. Kadam or towards Cheremongi Hills near the river Kanyangareng. In Napak, the animals were watered in the natural spring of Nakisilet.

In their migrations towards the hills, the Karimojong herders came into contact with the Labwor and the Nyakwai who belong to the Luo cluster that also includes the Acoli and the Langi. They also interacted with the Pokot from the Kalenjin cluster. Moving

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7 Jie migrated toward the Acoli country. Pian wet grazing is toward the east. Dodoth moves toward the north.
toward the mountains, they encountered the Tepeth, the Nyangea and the Ik, from the So cluster, who have been associated with them although they do not belong to their jural community.

During very dry seasons, the Bokora herders followed two western water roads outside Karamoja, into Katakwi district. They entered the swamps in Kirik and Lokok and followed the river Akokoroi to Ajeleik and as far as Komolo. They used the Oseuma wells near Oloito, the Apito, Oloyin, Oseleo, Okudongole, Oungay, Amo and Osobi wells, and the dams of Ayilini Konye and Ikwangan near New Ngariam to access Angobo swamp located between Old Ngariam and Katakwi. The Pian herders accessed the Iteso swamps in Ngariam and Magoro, especially Amusia and in Okolto and Kamisikey. In bad years, the Karimojong depended on lakes Opeta, Okolim and Chepsikunga. In the course of this longer transhumance, they came into contact with the Iteso.

From the very first interview with Hon. Patrick Apuun, the current MP for Bokora County, it was evident that there was a strong reluctance from the Karimojong to dissociate themselves from their related neighbours, especially the Iteso agro-pastoralists: “Iteso and Karimojong were and still are one people.” In fact, the Karimojong share a common origin with the Dodoth, the Turkana, the Iteso and the Jie. They belong to the Nilo-hamitic group of tribes also referred to as Ateker-speaking people (Ateker cluster) of Uganda. In their early migrations, this group, who also include the Nyangatom and the Toposa inhabiting southern Sudan, came from southern Ethiopia to Kenya and Karamoja (Turton, 1997). By the early years of the 18th century, a progressive split led to the emergence of distinct Jie and Karimojong communities by about 1770 and 1840 respectively (Lamphear, 1976).

Despite this common origin, today the Karimojong and the related communities consider each other as ‘foreigners’ and potential ‘enemies’ (aryan). The fieldwork revealed a mutual ignorance of the respective pathetic situation faced by each community. The Karimojong minimise the abuses committed by their herders in Iteso and the Iteso fail to understand the natural catastrophes affecting Karamoja. It was also observed that the Iteso

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8 Constructed in the 1960s.

could not distinguish the Karimojong sections and vice-versa. This induces a blind and collective repression. “The mistrust between us and the Iteso is linked to the question of security. There are criminals who go to Iteso and raid their animals. Now, by staying in Iteso, you are the first suspect. They suspect that you collaborate with those fellows who come and steal their animals. This makes your stay uncomfortable and they chase you away.”

Yet, those seasonal movements, especially in Iteso, were and still are particularly vital in times of drought and outbreak of epizootic diseases. Darby (1999) noted that “the Bokora and the Pian stressed the importance of the swamps and the lakes in Iteso. The elders said that they were worried about where they can continue to use the area around Opeta as access is hampered by gardens of the Iteso, and there were now many paddy fields on the way. They explained that crossing the gardens usually resulted into bad feelings between the two tribes as crops could be damaged. This area is very important to them as it provides good grazing and watering in the dry months and they rely upon it in bad years.” In fact, drought and post-drought periods are the usual timings for intra and inter-ethnic raids as a restocking strategy. There is a general decline in the per capita number of cattle. It is estimated that the Bokora lost 40% of their herds between 1963 and 1985 and the Pian 69% (Muhereza, 1997).

1.2. Land alienation

The disruption of the Karimojong rotational grazing system started during the colonial period with a deprivation of their dry grazing areas, especially those located at the slopes of Mts. Moroto, Napak and Kadam, inside Karamoja.


12 Rampant in 1887, 1894, 1976.
1.2.1. The Karasuk

Karasuk was an area inhabited by Pokot that was legally part of Kenya but that came under the Karamoja district administration in 1931 until the independence of Uganda. The British decided to allocate the Pokot-Suk a small tract of land in Uganda known as the Upe country that remained in Uganda after independence. These Pokot from Upe country are now known as Karasuk (Karamoja Suk) and differentiated from Kenyan Suk. The Pian, the Bokora and the Matheniko lost their southeastern dry grazing areas. Karimojong used to water their stocks in the Turkwell and in the waterholes along the base of the Suk Hills they shared with the Suk (Brasnett, 1958).

1.2.2. The forest reserves

The 1938 report of Wayland and Brasnett recommended that vast areas be fenced off as forest reserves to protect them from pastoralist-induced degradation. They even proposed the planting of a poisonous weed (*Lantana*) and encouraged the spread of the tse-tse fly (Mamdani et al., 1992). In 1940, Mts. Moroto, Napak and Kadam were gazetted as Crown Forest Reserves.

In their early migrations, the Karimojong chased away the Tepeth community from the plains toward the mountains. Pastoral groups only required from them access to the water supplies around the mountain bases. Mountains were seen as the land of witches. Karimojong bought baboon skins and tobacco from the pastoralists, and dug saltpetre crystal to mix with snuff. This interdependency dramatically stopped at beginning of the last century. With the implementation of the British conservation policy, the indigenous habitants had no more rights but only privileges. As early as 1933, several attempts were made to remove the Tepeth from all tree mountains, often forcibly. They succeeded only at Mt. Kadam. In Moroto and Napak, they forced the Tepeth to move down from the higher slopes to the valley floors by decreeing altitude limits on cultivation and settlement at 4500–5000 ft. A major effect of this migration was that it placed the Tepeth in direct competition with the Karimojong herdsmen for prime dry season grazing and water sources and this intensified an already growing hostility between the tribes (Laughin & Allgier, 1979).
In 1951, insecurity changed the patterns of settlement and cultivation on Mt. Moroto. The Tepeth were located in a belt along the northern and western perimeter and they cultivated entrant valleys and lower slopes with settlements adjacent to the fields. They shifted near more secure locations in Lia, Naukoi, Tapach and Katekikele valleys where police posts and army barracks were established. For example, Nakiloro valley, the most fertile, was abandoned in 1962 after a series of raids mounted by the Karimojong. Nadiket was evacuated in 1967 followed by Musas and Nasigina. In 1967, Kakingole and Kolohoki were left after Turkana and Matheniko attacks. People fled towards Musupo and Lia. In 1980, the Tepeth were victims of a general assault. The Turkana, Toposa and Jie raided them in Nakonyen and Tapac (Aworobu and Musupo) and the Matheniko, Jie and Bokora raided them in Lia. This war is remembered as ajore lopetu. The Karimojong assault was a response to the first counter-attack of the Tepeth against the Matheniko in Aworu but the Tepeth never attacked the Turkana (Miligan, 1999). The inhabitants of Nadukon in Lia valley stopped cultivating the lower slopes of the valley between 1966 and 1968 under Obote I because of massive aggression by the Matheniko who grazed their livestock there during the dry season. The high concentration of people in Lia valley damaged the environment. Clearing, cultivation of catchment areas, wood-cutting for making charcoal and over-saturation of hand pumps along its lengths led to denudation and erosion. Lia stream does not flow perennially anymore.

1.2.3. Game reserves and controlled hunting areas

The 1952 National Park Ordinance allowed the colonial state to demarcate vast stretches of grazing land as game reserves, declaring its continued use by pastoralists a criminal offence. In 1964, the dry grazing area located north of Mt. Napak was classified as a Controlled Hunting Area (CHA) and the Matheniko, Bokora and Pian wet grazing areas were gazetted as game reserves. Grazing, settlement, cultivation and use of natural resources were permitted in the CHA but officially prohibited in the game reserves.
1.3. Restriction of movements

The Karimojong were not only placed in competition with the agro-pastoralists of the mountains but they were also deprived of the previous Iteso/Karimojong common swamps that became subject to exclusive ethnic and administrative appropriation.

1.3.1. Ethnic boundaries

During the colonial period, the Karimojong were subject to an oppressive territorial control aiming at regulating and restricting their seasonal movements. The international border separating Uganda and Sudan was drawn and they had to comply with internal boundaries established on ethnic and tribal identities. In 1911, Karamoja was declared a closed district and came under a military administration. Until 1962, there was a notice at Iriir Police Station as one entered Karamoja stating: “You are now entering Karamoja closed district. No visitor may enter without an outlying district permit.” (Cisterino, 1979).

This policy prohibited interaction between the Karimojong and their neighbours in common grazing lands. After the drought of 1958, a lot of raids resulting from border restrictions occurred. The Karimojong were further restricted to their locations and denied access to the swamps with the Special Regions Ordinance of 1958. For the agro-pastoralists (Iteso, Langi, Acholi, Sebei, Bagisu and Labwor), these boundaries were acceptable partly because mixed farming activities restricted them from movement and partly because they had fertile and permanent swamps. They often complained about the destruction of their crops and there were shortages of water and grazing resources in drought periods. The Iteso shifted to agriculture (millet, sorghum) from nomadic pastoralism at the beginning of the century. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) introduced cotton plantations in Iteso country in 1907, which were continued admirably by the government (Lawrence, 1957).

Colonial boundaries also divided the Karimojong along tribal lines. Administrative procedures were guided by the need to stabilise the bulk of the population in the settled areas, strictly demarcating tribal pasture areas (Gulliver, 1953). County boundaries were established in the 1910s. Counties thus came to bear names of tribes (Bokora, Matheniko) and in turn, each tribe
was supposedly restricted to its county. Counties became the basis for national representation.

1.3.2. Administrative boundaries

Restrictions of movements and internal borders were abolished after independence but re-implemented in 2000, when the local and national Iteso politicians of Katakwi and Kumi districts denied access by the Karimojong herds into their areas of jurisdiction. This radical stance still stands today. In January 2002, an official letter written by the Office of President was sent to the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Katakwi asking him to convince the Iteso to re-accept the Karimojong. The Karimojong herders try to use copies of this letter to secure their access to the swamps.

On 4 March 2000, a joint security committee held in Ngariam directed the Karimojong herdsmen to leave Katakwi district immediately. The following day, a regional meeting held in Kumi in the presence of Iteso MPs, local leaders and RDCs led to the inflammatory ‘Kumi declaration’ instructing all the Karimojong to leave Iteso territory immediately: “At the risk of being called tribalist, enough is enough. The Karimojong should not cross into Iteso in the next dry season. We shall implement this (declaration) with or without the government.”

According to the MP for Bokora County, this statement was then debated and endorsed in Parliament with the Mukula resolution. The Iteso leaders blame the Karimojong for an outbreak of unpunished offences they commit as they graze and water their animals in Iteso territory. These are destruction of crops, stealing of crops and crop products (uprooting of cassava, looting of granaries), rape and abduction of women, stealing of cattle and small stock (without arms) and cattle rustling (with arms and with or without manslaughter).

In April 2001, Karimojong political leaders reacted to this categorical stand contesting the limits of the administrative border between Moroto and Katakwi districts. During a meeting between Moroto leaders and the UPDF field commander held in Iriir, on 7

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April 2001, the chairman of Moroto district, Terence Acia, claimed that part of Katakwi land, totalling 40 kms, belonged to Moroto. He declared that: “If the Iteso do not desist from preventing Karamojong from crossing into Iteso during dry season, they (the Karamojong) would reclaim their land.”

Hon. Patrick Apuun argued that the first boundary drawn in 1926 was changed in 1948. According to Joshua Akol, former MP for Moroto constituency before its sub-division in 1986, the limits of the Karamojong territory that were established in the 1952 Constitution were changed for private interests in 1965 by Cuthert Obwangor, a former Iteso MP, who was also a Minister. “He wanted this land to belong to Iteso including his own land in Magoro.”

In response, Obwangor referred to the demarcations drawn in the Atlas of Uganda of 1982. “Position of boundaries of districts in Uganda are indicated on page 33 of Atlas of Uganda, first edition, 1962, containing Kingdoms and Districts. Equally, the Supreme Law of Uganda, namely, Constitution of the Republic of the Republic of Uganda 1995, Article 5(2). Though some of them may have split into districts but remain otherwise within the old same boundaries as those said boundaries above. Now Iteso boundary with its neighbour Karamoja runs from north Busigu on the said page above, northwards to Napak (alias Kamalinga) mountain, Okisim mountain, thence to Otukei mountain north-westwards and thence to Kodokodoi to Lango westwards along areas to be claimed by other neighbours in Karamoja.” Statutes 8 and 9 of 1980 revised the district borders but these were not gazetted and the Constitution of the Republic Uganda of 1967 does not show the old boundaries.

The Iteso understood this border contest as an attempt to grab their land. The district chairman for Katakwi, Steven Ilemukorit, said the suspicions they had that the Karamojong wanted to grab Katakwi land were correct. He said the nature of

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15 “Iteso warn of massacre by K’jong”, The Monitor, 13/04/2002


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the raids that Karimojong carried out early in 2000 were so vicious that their ultimate aim was to drive away the Iteso from their land at the border region. “They rustled our cattle, now they want our land. The nature of those raids was so different. They burnt down peoples homes in all the border parishes, destroyed their crops and killed whoever came their way.”\(^{20}\) The Karimojong responded to this accusation stressing that the Iteso now covet the fertile land of Mt. Napak. “The problem of the Iteso is that they want to cultivate in Iriir. The Iteso think that all fertile and productive land is theirs and that the Karimojong have no right to it. This is why they say that the border is in Nakichumet and Lorengercora as long as they include this area. It is a resource conflict.”\(^{21}\)

Apparently, this border issue arose much earlier than 2001. In 1997, the Moroto administration had settled Karimojong returnees from Mbale, Busia and Jinja at the foot of Alekilek rock, a location under Katakwi district, without consulting the local authorities. Alekilek trading centre and the three settlements of Alekilek Nagun, Alekilek Namatala and Alekilek Busi numbered 580 persons in May 2001.\(^{22}\) Moreover, the new settlers refused to pay allegiance to the Katakwi local government. “They don’t want pay taxes to Katakwi. Their leaders claim that they are answerable to Moroto and not Katakwi. While paying a visit to the border, Nicolas Muron Ocakara, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Katakwi, told the Karimojong there that they should pay their taxes to Ngariam sub-county in Katakwi since the Alekilek area is part of Olilim parish in Ngariam. The message seemed to be landing on rocky ground, for the LC1 chairman of the Karimojong settler community at Alekilek, Elijeh Losike, was opposed to the Katakwi CAO message. Losike who engaged Ocakara in an argument said that when they were resettled in Alekilek, they were told that it was part of Moroto district. He said that whatever happens to them, they have been and are continuing to report to Moroto.”\(^{23}\)

Of course his position made sense bearing in mind the fact that it was Moroto district that not only facilitated their return but


\(^{21}\) Moses Aleper, 21/04/2002, Iriir.


also showed them where they could settle. The returnees could not be resettled in the central plains because they were already overcrowded. These people had left Karamoja as they escaped insecurity and famine in 1980 and went to Mbale, Tororo, Malaba and Busia towns. Most of them did not have access to land for cultivation and survived through begging and collecting food from garbage dumps. They lived at the fringes of society as they suffered discrimination and sometimes were assaulted. After a visit by the LC5 Moroto, Terence Acia, in November 1996, they wrote to the Moroto administration requesting it to help them return and be resettled at Kodike, north of Mt. Napak. He promised to send a team to Iriir to identify locations where people could be resettled. Since the slopes of Mt. Napak were overcrowded they were resettled in Alekilek. From our interview with the LC1, Zakaria Lomo, more than 1,500 people from Namatala alone (Mbale) are still waiting for resettlement.24

Even before the resettlement of these returnees, in 1995, a faith-based NGO named Christian Initiative for Peace Services (CHIPS), promoted mixed resettlement of Iteso and Bokora from the Central Plains in Lomaratoit and Apetolim at the regional border (Lomaratoit being located inside the current administrative limits of Katakwi district). These new settlements were temporarily abandoned after the Uganda People Democratic Army (UPDF) attacks in 2000. On 13 March and 3 April, the Army attacked Apetolim and killed 85 head of cattle and one warrior using a helicopter gunshot. On 14 January 2001, Iteso ASTU (Anti Stock Theft Units) and UPDF massacred 17 people and stole 200 head of cattle in Lomaratoit. They justified their action by claiming they were searching for Karimojong cattle rustlers. Witness accounts claimed the villagers were murdered in cold blood. “They told us that they wanted a meeting and they shot at us. Nobody knows why they did it. The official of the project (CHIPS) was there. They closed the project. We reported to Moroto, Kampala and the President. The government promised compensation. We are still waiting.”25

24 Zakaria Lomo, Namatala, 04/05/2002.

25 Awas Samuel, Lomaratoit 2, 24/04/2001.
1.3.3. ** Interruption of inter-regional socio-economic relations**

The tensions between the Karimojong and their neighbours have dramatic social and economical consequences on both sides. The displacement of Iteso induced the creation of an un-exploited buffer zone, broke the symbiotic relationship between the communities and generated mutual xenophobia. In Katakwi, even administrative officers would say, “a good Karimojong is a dead Karimojong” or “we wish a Rift Valley could separate us.”

**Exodus and displacement of the Iteso**

Since the 1980, violence and conflict emanating from the Karimojong cattle rustling escalated in magnitude and resulted in an exodus outside Katakwi and a collective resettlement of the Iteso agro-pastoralists in internally displaced people (IDP) camps. These camps are situated in the main towns, near the trading centres or in the bush, especially in the sub-counties of Katakwi adjacent to Moroto. The LC5 councillor of Magoro sub-county, Victor Odile, estimates that \( \frac{3}{4} \) of the population of his area of jurisdiction fled to places like Kumi, Soroti, Serere, Pallisa, Busoga, Bunia, Magonoga, Bugerve, Makelama, Masindi and Kampala.

In 1997, according to the census of Julius Ocan, there were 37 camps and 54,891 internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in the sub-counties of Obangala, Kapelebyong, Acowa, Usuk, Ngariam, Katakwi and Magoro. On 6 August 2001, a Katakwi district emergency meeting unanimously declared Katakwi “a disaster-struck district”, in accordance with Article 176, Section 2 of the Constitution of Uganda 1995 and subsequently, Second Schedule part 1, n° 2 of the Local Government Act of 1997.

In the above sub-counties, the total number of IDPs stood at 88,623 people which is about 38% of the district population going by the projected figures of the 1991 Population and Housing Census. On 31 August 2001, Katakwi administration provided a more accurate census of 53 camps and 75,846 IDPs, more than 30% of the District population.

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26 Victor Odil, 07/05/2002, Magoro.

27 Council Declaration of Katakwi as a Disaster Struck District, 13 August 2001
Our investigation in the camps of Amaseniko, Aketa, Ongongoja, Adacar, New Ngariam and Magoro confirmed the assessment carried out by Action Aid Uganda on 23–26 July 2001, indicating that most of them started at the beginning of the 1980s. By then, the Karimojong, affected by a severe drought and heavily armed with their newly acquired weapons, carried out the biggest raids in the history of the region. The other major raids referred to are those carried out in 1995 and in 2000. This concentration into ‘camps’ is associated with a reversion to the former collective pattern of settlement of the Iteso labelled as ‘backward’. The camps are meant to provide security for the people as well as for their livestock which are locked in a collective kraal.

The government responded by reinforcing security, training and arming Local Defence Units (LDUs). However, most of them were deployed in Moroto in April 2002 to assist in the forceful disarmament in Karamoja. Although the government transferred LDUs from other districts, their number had decreased. In January 2002, the 61st battalion of the UPDF was sent to Kirik to supervise grazing during the past dry season. They left on 18 March 2002. The ‘town’ camps are now decongested as people have been moved to smaller camps in the parishes. The displaced were able to access their farms or small gardens during the day and return to camps at night. Some locked up their camp huts and stayed in their homes until the threat of raiders sent them back to the camp.

Contrary to our expectations, this new pattern of settlement into ‘camps’ did not really affect the district crop production. It might be due to the fact that the Iteso managed to continue to cultivate their fields while based in the camps. There was a decline in general production; the cotton market collapsed in the 1970s but improved again in 1999 to go down again in 2000. However, the production of green grams, rice, beans and soya beans increased. The rice cultivation on 177 km² of swampland, fishing, brick-making and mining of sand became new productive activities. The agriculturists we met were persuaded that this was illegal cultivation. In fact, the Natural Environment Statute No. 4 of 1995 regulates the use and management of wetlands and empowers the local authorities to allocate the rights of exploitation. In 1995–1996, Colonel Omaria, a former Minister of State for Internal

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28 CAO Katakwi, 06/05/2002, Katakwi.
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Affairs in the Obote II regime applied for a title deed in Magoro for a project to cultivate cotton and rice. The Soroti district administration sought consent of the locals who refused on the grounds that he did not originate from Magoro. This new trend could represent a serious source of conflict in future if no amendment is provided to secure access rights to the pastoralists.

However, insecurity impacted on land use. A large stretch of valuable land along the border, in Usuk County from Magoro to Adacal up to Kapelebyong and Obwin, ceased to be cultivated or used for grazing.

**Breakdown of marriages and abolition of the “friendship system”**

The Iteso and Karimojong used to intermarry. However, due to cattle raids in the 1980s, the bride wealth of the Iteso dropped down from 60 head of cattle to 4–5. The Karimojong still demand 60 head of cattle for their daughters. The result was a progressive decline of intermarriages, which almost completely stopped from 2000.

Another important inter-ethnic socio-economic relationship affected was the “friendship” system. It has been observed that “some Karimojong have established cordial relationship with their neighbours which enables them complement each other’s needs especially with regard to food production. Nomads when returning to Karamoja after the rains, leave a few oxen with their friends in the hope that the gesture of good will be reciprocated the next dry season when they return” (Muhereza, 1995). In exchange they would plant cassava and millet for them and share the harvest. These informal contracts were practised until recently in the bordering sub-counties and, especially, in Kapelebyong and Magoro. The Iteso from Usuk and Ngariam were reluctant to carry out the system. “We have to cultivate and feed them with the animals they stole”. The CAO Katakwi, Nicolas Ocakaro, admitted that the local administration now discourages this practice because of previous manipulations. “The Karimojong steal animals in Karamoja and hide them with their friends in Iteso. In 2000, Bokora raided Matheniko and sought refuge in Iteso. They brought animals to Iteso, stole them and then claimed them again.”

On their side, the Karimojong pointed out the frequent

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29 Nicolas Ocakaro, 06/05/2002, Katakwi.
confusion between raiders and friends. “In 2000, a Bokora came to harvest cassava in the garden of his friend and the Iteso LDUs shot at him.”

This type of contract developed in the 1980s due to cattle rustling and a severe decrease in numbers of Iteso herds. According to Charles Ocan, the cattle population of Soroti district numbered 320,000 between 1980 and 1984, dropped to 123,000 in 1986 and to 5,320 in 1989 (Ocan, 1992). Dr Richard Adugno, the Katakwi district veterinary officer, estimated that the Iteso stock in Katakwi numbered 200,000 in 1984. It went down to 9,000 in 1999 and numbers about 50,000 today. The Iteso started restocking in 1997 from Karamoja, Kumi and Pallisa and were helped by the government in June 2000 with the allocation of 1,506 animals for distribution to displaced people (20 per parish).

Collapse of inter-regional transport and trade
Karimojong trade is restricted to general merchandise with household goods such as salt, tobacco and local brew. Trade is minimal and often characterised by barter for cereals, ornaments and local brew. Only in rare occasions are livestock exchanged for cash, except when the sale is meant to finance occasions such as weddings, burials or to buy clothes, food or medical care. This conservative attitude is partly due to poverty, poor infrastructure and lack of a livestock production objective that is market-oriented.

Indeed, Karimojong and their neighbours interact in the markets of the main trading centres of the area and the inter-regional network is vital for the Karimojong, especially in times of drought.

In 1980, during the drought and in reaction to an increase of cattle-rustling, the Iteso militias manned roadblocks along the Moroto-Soroti roads at Weera, Ngariam and Katakwi. Since Iteso militias were constituted of victims of cattle raids, the manning of roadblocks offered them the opportunity of releasing pent-up sentiments of hatred and revenge. This manifested itself in two-

30 Philippe Ichumar, 10/05/2002, Namalu.
31 Dr Richard Adugno, 08/05/2002, Katakwi.
pronged acts. They denied entry of foodstuff into Karamoja. Foodstuff carried by individuals of Karimojong origin was confiscated at roadblocks and those by businessmen were not allowed to cross over. Instead, they were turned back (Okudi, 1992). The Katakwi administration even declared a ban (August 2000) on transporting cattle. Furthermore, Karimojong moving to and from Iteso and other districts were removed from vehicles at roadblocks and either tortured and forced to walk back to Karamoja or simply killed. Those who had already migrated to Iteso and settled in the districts of Kumi and Soroti were also victimised. For a one-month period, Karimojong long-settled in Kumi, Bukedea, Serere and Katakwi were violently evicted by the locals in these areas. The incidents have been termed as “the most notorious of all Karimojong public massacres” (Okudi, 1992).

Likewise, on 14 September 2001, the Iteso took the law into their hands. Seven Bokora and two Iteso, mistaken for Karimojong, were killed by an irate mob in Katakwi town and Ocorimongin cattle market. Their bodies were dragged to the RDC’s office in Katakwi. According to police reports, the mob first mounted roadblocks in Katakwi district headquarters, stopped Moroto-bound traffic pulling out passengers and killing them. The same acts were repeated at Friday market in Ocorimongin where Karimojong traders were lynched by an irate mob. The victims from Bokora County had travelled to buy merchandise unaware that some kinsmen from Pian County, in the newly created Nakapiripirit district, had carried out a deadly raid in Ngariam IDP camp and Katakwi Township on 13 September 2001.

On this day, in broad daylight, 200 Pian raiders, dressed in UPDF fatigues, attacked Ngariam camp and made off with 600 head of cattle and killed 17 people—14 civilians and three soldiers. One group attacked the LDUs and confined them to the barracks; the second stole cows that were grazing and the third went to the camp, shot indiscriminately and looted household property. According to the army and witnesses, the attack was not anticipated. The trend was that the raiders would come after dark

33 Report on Cattle Rustling in Ngariam sub-county Katakwi District on 13th and 14th September 2001, UHRC, Soroti Regional Office.

34 Nakapiripirit district was carved from Moroto district in July 2001.
and in a stealthy manner. The killings in the camp were executed with no regard to age or sex. The victims included an 80-year old man and a 3-year old baby. The warriors destroyed some homes, looted personal property and relief supplies, and in addition, carried off as much food as possible. The remaining, for example posho, was destroyed by pouring and mixing with sand and human urine.\footnote{Report on Cattle Rustling in Ngariam sub-county Katakwi District on 13 and 14 September 2001, UHRC, Soroti Regional Office.} This planned and organised massacre might be the result of the prohibition of access to the Iteso territory since 2000. But there was really no explanation for this attack. Some alleged that the Karimojong had left a number of their herds behind when they had been violently expelled from Katakwi district. “\textit{In February 2000, Karimojong were chased away from Iteso by LDUs and UDPF.}”\footnote{Moroto LC5 Chairman, \textit{The Monitor}, 19/09/2001} The attack in Ngariam could have been meant to get the animals back. Another reason given in Namalu is related to the friendship system. “\textit{There was an annoyance. A Pian from Nabilatuk had bought a tractor and had left it with his Iteso friend. He went to him to take it back. By this time, Bokora had problems with Iteso. Pian had their animals, their oxen with their Iteso friends. They refused to give him the tractor.}”\footnote{Philippe Ichumar, Namalu, 10/05/2002.} The acting chief of Nabilatuk confirmed the incident adding some details. But according to the latter, this incident and the attack in Ngariam are not related. He specifies that “\textit{a Pian bought a tractor from Ngariam and the tractor was brought to Nabwal for ploughing. The driver who was an Iteso, run away with the tractor in Ngariam. When they went to negotiate the tractor back they were chased away by Iteso LDU of Ngariam sub-county.}”\footnote{Juma Badang, Nabilatuk, 11/05/2002.}

Hostility between the two groups increased up to a point where the Iteso recently denied burial to the Karimojong raiders killed in their territory. In April 2002, three Karimojong came to Kapelebyong and stole three cows. The Iteso LDUs killed one raider while they were trying to escape. His remains were left in the bush. The Iteso stated that their enemies did not deserve to be buried. When we suggested returning the body to the Karimojong community, the Iteso replied that they feared they would be killed.
Another argument emphasised that the Karimojong never bury a person who had been killed violently. This was on the grounds that it was a bad omen. The relatives of the deceased would even refuse to see the body. As noted by Novell, “among the Karimojong there is the tendency to attribute death to the ‘evil eye’ or to evil dispositions of other people, rather than to natural causes. This is particularly the case of violent death or with deaths of a mysterious origin. For this reason, their body are left where they are, in order to avoid contamination from the same misfortune and also for fear that the dead will take revenge not only against those who caused their death, but also against everybody else” (Novelli, 2001).

The Iteso were also victimised in Karamoja. After the incident of Lomaratoit on 14 January 2001, some Karimojong wanted to kill the Iteso businessmen settled in Iriir. Aisu William Opus, an Iteso trader involved in the sale of foodstuff and local brew since 1994, had to escape to the mission where he stayed for two days. He only left after the LC3 and the elders assured him of his safety. The same fear was evident in February 2001 when the army clashed with the warriors just behind the centre. Jimmy Elungat and Aisu William Opus were almost killed by the Karimojong warriors.39

1.4. Bokora and Pian herders’ pressure on Mt. Napak

The border restrictions induced a confinement of the herds around the dry season grounds in Mt. Napak. This concentration increased competition between the herders and the agro-pastoralists recently around the fertile mountain.

Iriir sub-county benefits from a microclimate. There are two planting seasons, in April and July. Harvest for the second crop normally takes place from November to January, during the dry season for the herders of the central plains. This is when these herders migrate with their herds in search of water and pasture. The farmers complained about the destruction of their crops by both the livestock and the herders. The herders on the other hand complained of difficult access to the resources they needed because of the fields. The farmers were helpless as they were not able to demand compensation or punish the herders for the destruction they caused, mainly because the herders were armed. In April 2002,

around 50 kraals from the central plains with an average of 2000 head of cattle were still located at the northern foot of Mt. Napak, east of Naturumuruk. To these 10,000 head of cattle, should be added the 65,400 cows of the agro-pastoralists settled in Iriir leading to a total number of 75,400 cows.

The kraal of Apangitieng had left Matany in December and proceeded westward toward the Bokora dry grazing area. They stayed for one week around the dam of Nataparin Kirionok and then shifted towards the dam of Loketela Agnitak. They spent one week here. When the dams dried up, they moved toward the swamp of Kirik in Katakwi district. They stayed here for a month and then were chased away by the Katakwi LDU, who told them to “go back to their land.” It is claimed that eight people were arrested and 40 sent to Katakwi district headquarters and 52 cows were stolen. They withdrew to Moroto district to the dam of Lodoon, near Lorencecora. They were here for three days but sought refuge at Mt. Napak due to the Jie attacks. They grazed their animals at Nayoni Angamalera and watered them at the permanent springs of Alengia and Tiyan (a 1.5-hour walk) or Micoko and Kodike (a 3-hour walk). Although the rains had started, they feared to go back to Matan, in the central plain, due to the Jie threat.

During the dry seasons of 2000–2001, the Karimojong herders could access neither the Iteso swamps nor the entrant valley of the mountains due to a violent conflict between the Bokora (northern slope) and the Pian (southern slope). The Bokora agro-pastoralists settled near Iriir had to hide their herds up in the mountain. The southern slope was completely deserted.

1.5. Settlement process in Karamoja

This development of agriculture in Iriir sub-county is an indirect consequence of the settlement policy in Karamoja that started in the 1920s. Its first aim was to achieve a regime of law and order. Secondly, it aimed at promoting ecological restoration. Conversely, it had an opposite effect.

1.5.1. Water policies

40 Logiel, Lokwajama, Bokora kraal leader, Naturumuruk, 23/04/2002
The administration estimated that the mobility of the Karimojong was caused by their search for water. In the 1950s and 1960s, a new hydraulic network was built in Jie and Bokora grazing areas, with the aim of limiting the erosion in the central and eastern plains of Karamoja. It also hoped to discourage inter-regional mobility of the herders. The idea was to increase the grazing areas in Karamoja in the dry season as herders were prohibited from crossing the Karamoja boundaries. The dams provided permanent sources of water in certain areas leading to heavy concentrations of cattle and overgrazing. However, no maintenance was carried out and most of the dams subsequently silted up. “The plan boomeranged. Instead of checking erosion in the central and eastern plains, it facilitated its spread to the western plains, encouraging grazing in excess of the carrying capacity of the existing grassland, particularly around the sources of water” (Mamdani et al., 1992).

Although the United Nations FAO reconnaissance team called for a halt to any further construction of dams or tanks, 108 dams were built between 1960 and 1966. By 1969, there were 120 dams and valley tanks in Karamoja. In 1977–1980, more water sources were added. In 1986, one point of the NRM development programme was the promised construction of 260 dams. But, according to Francis Onapito-Ekomolit, funds had been misappropriated by the corrupt Karamoja Development Agency (KDA). KDA personnel argued that this programme would contribute to desertification.

In 1993, there were only two functional dams in Nataparin Kironok and Nakakaleis (Bokora County). In 1983, there were 338 boreholes in Moroto District out of which 213 were not operational. The Karamoja Development Programme operates under an agreement with WDD, UNICEF and the Lutheran World service (LWF). Conventional pumps are replaced with Uganda Mark Two pumps, which are more durable and require less maintenance. The dam of Logom was drilled by LWF in 1989. In 1996 an Italian NGO, Service Voluntary International (SVI), drilled two boreholes at the southern slopes of Mt. Napak in Dol and Nabwal. In 1998, CHIPS equipped the natural spring of Micoko and Kodike in Mt. Napak but the equipment silted one year after, in

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41 He is the deputy editor of The Monitor in Kampala. He conducted research on Karamoja for the PANOS Institute in London.
They trained only one technician (repair-man) but he made off with the spare parts. LWF has offered to repair the equipment and form water committees, including several technicians. The locals require the equipment at Alengia, Tiyan, Pilas, Alekilek and Iriir springs. Since 1999, the Uganda government has built four new dams in the sub-county bordering Iteso. These are as follows:

- Iriir, Lodoon dam in 2001;
- Lolacat, Locagar dam (1999) and Okuto dam (2001);
- Namalu, the dam of Kamuriapus.

The locals complained that Lodoon dam is not sufficiently fortified and that the dams of Locagar do not hold water, even in the rainy season.

1.5.2. The development of unsustainable agriculture in the central belt

The different Karamoja groups are known to have cultivated crops, especially sorghum, for a long time. The total amount of land open for cultivation has increased since 1990 (Muhereza, 1997). This increase did not replace cattle-keeping but strengthened the complementary source of livelihood and reduced the risk of starvation.

Government seemed and still seems to view cattle raids to be a “traditional Karimojong practice” which can only be resolved if the Karimojong abandoned transhumant pastoralism in favour of ranches and settled agriculture. In 1960, 80 families were settled on irrigated agricultural land in Namalu, on the slopes of Mt. Kadam. This is a fertile wet area suitable for cotton cultivation, but did not attract pastoralists due to the presence of tse-tse flies. The resettlement programme was revised in 1968, with the entire population resettled in areas holding 200 people each. There were to be up to 800 stock units and 200 acres of agricultural land, and 14 policemen for each resettled area. The plan was to increase the agricultural acreage for the district and was to be supported by by-laws. One of its conditions was that the Karimojong herders could not graze land supposed to be left fallow for agriculture. It also proposed that stock could not be moved out of the settlement area, and enforced agricultural work on those not required for herding (Mamdani et al., 1992). The plan did not get off the drawing board, but settled agriculture and livestock-keeping under
clear administrative control continued to be an objective of government and development agencies. Other aspects of government policy, in education for example, served to reinforce these priorities of settlement and security through more agriculture and more water: “In the Karimojong environment, education is to be ranked as one of the measures meriting top priority since it is a means of changing attitudes. . . . with other means such as land resettlement and water provision, could contribute to conversion of a pastoral society given to warfare to an agricultural society peacefully pursuing economic activities” (Design of Development for the District of Karamoja, 1970–71).

It was in this context that the NRM government sought to establish itself in Karamoja. It launched its activities with an attempt at imposing security through disarmament. However, following an initial unsuccessful military operation, resulting in heavy losses, the government made attempts to address development issues in Karamoja. Karamoja was part of the NRM’s ten-point programme after taking power. In a familiar move, the way forward was seen in terms of settling the Karimojong. “Settling these people, according to our investigation when we were in the UNLF government is not all that difficult. One of the crucial elements should be the provision of water. Karamoja being a dry country, people will be attracted to these water points and the government can use the opportunity to reach them.” (NRM ten-point plan). While the approaches prioritised may not have been appropriate to pastoralism and been subject to the same misperceptions of previous governments, there has been a genuine commitment to development and greater engagement on the part of the NRM government.

Nevertheless, the Karimojong cannot rely on agriculture only due to erratic rainfall. The County Director of Oxfam-GB also came to this conclusion. “To generate an entirely crop-based strategy was not realistic for Karamoja where frequent crop failures demand ancillary livestock operations for fall back food supply.”

1.5.3. The new vertical archipelago

From 1995–1996, there has been a migration trend from the central plains of Bokora and Pian toward the wetter fertile lands located at the slopes of Mt. Napak and Mt. Kadam. We already
mentioned that the Karimojong established new permanent fenced settlements around which they practice agriculture and rear cattle. But, they never abandoned their homes and fields in the central localities, and usually bring and share the crop produce with their relatives left behind. This adaptive strategy has been witnessed in Southern America and in Kenya among the Kikuyu, and named “vertical archipelago”. This concept was borrowed from Malinowski from his work on the Argonauts of the Pacific to describe. “The synchronic representation of the ramification of the domestic unit. It represents the multiple islands that these domestic units constitute, scattered in different ecological zones (high lands, savannah, forests, urban centres) and practicing different socio-economic activities (salaried employment in the capital, informal sector, subsistence production in the countryside, self-help group” (Droz, 1999).

The SIV Baseline Survey of May 2001 listed 227 settlements with an average of 110 people and 200 head of cattle in Iriir sub-county. The total population was 25,687 Bokora agro-pastoralists. The Bokora from Iriir started to cultivate the northern valley of Mt. Napak after the burning of the trading centre by the Iteso militias in 1984. The second influx took place from the central plains in 1995–1996 after the drought and it continues to date. The sub-county chief of Iriir estimates that 300 people per year come to Napak to settle and practice agriculture, mostly from Ngoleriet, Matan, Lopei, Lokopo and Lotome. The agricultural settlements, on the southern slope of Mt. Napak, especially in Nabwal, Duol, Akisilet and Alakas, started in 1994–1995. There are now around 200 homesteads intermingling Bokora and Pian, attracted by this more secure and fertile area. In the area around Iriir and Lorengecora, in addition to the traditional sorghum, sweet potatoes and maize can be grown.

According to Claudio Chiappa, the head of SVI, Iriir, only 10% of the arable land of the northern slope is actually used. Extensive agriculture with a population of more than 30,000 agriculturists would not be sustainable (the current figure is already more than 24,000). “It is untenable to advocate for policies that encourage the increasing transformation of the Bokora in particular, and the Karimojong

43 Moses Aleper, 21/04/2002, Iriir.
44 Claudio Chiappia,
in general, into settled agriculture. This is because there are increasing numbers of households which have acquired plots of land for crop cultivation in the well watered areas, especially around Iriir, but without becoming completely sedentary or, without completely abandoning their interest in cattle keeping” (Muhereza, 1997).

1.5.4. Encroachment on protected areas

Before 1984, Mts. Napak and Kadam were only cultivated by the Tepeth and only on the higher slopes. From 1984, in Iriir and Namalu where this fieldwork was conducted, the Bokora and Pian started rearing cattle and cultivating around the slopes of the mountains, encroaching on the forest and game reserves. The Land Act of 1998 cannot be used by the communities to secure continued access to and control of land at the moment. The current debate on the changes to be made on the protected areas will impact on the issue of title deeds.

In 1996, the Wildlife Statute N° 14 created the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). Under this statute, game reserves were renamed wildlife reserves (WRs). The controlled hunting areas (CHAs) were to be reviewed by the UWA, and either abolished or upgraded to protected area status and converted into Community Wildlife Management Areas (CWMA). The monitoring unit of the newly-created UWA conducted this review, assessing the status of all CHAs in terms of their conservation value. In Karamoja, the assessment covered the CHAs and the protected areas—the national park, the three wildlife reserves and the 19 forest reserves.

As part of the assessment, the monitoring unit held meetings with district councils and officials in Karamoja who expected a downgrading of the status of the CHAs and protected areas (KADP, 1999). It was hoped that the WRs would be degazetted and that the CHAs be abolished because

(a) these areas were key agro-pastoralist areas and had continued to be used as such in spite of their classification

(b) most of the wildlife had gone anyway.

However, the subsequent findings of the monitoring unit were a disappointment. “These recommendations have significant implications for use of rangeland. Where an area had been delineated as CHA, grazing, settlement and use of natural resources was permitted. The upgrade in status from CHA to Community Wildlife Area recommended for
the areas listed above would imply partial restriction on grazing and cultivation (UWA, 1998). In addition, the recommendation that Matheniko and Bokora Corridor wildlife reserves remain gazetted as wildlife reserve would mean grazing, settlement and cultivation is prohibited” (Walker, 2001).

In March 2001, UWA redrafted its recommendations. They now advocate for the degazetting of all CHAs. However, part of the degazetted CHAs would be reclassified as CWAs. UWA also recommended the alteration of the boundaries of the Bokora, Matheniko and Pian/Upe Wildlife Reserves. Koten, a small area located in north Karamoja CHA should be added to the Matheniko WR. A larger portion of the north Karamoja CHA should be added to the Bokora WR. Concerning the Pian/Upe WR, UWA suggests an excision of the WR located in Katakwi district as well as a small area located near Namalu.

The monitoring unit has been accused of not consulting with the locals (KADP, 1999). In November 1999, Karimojong leaders planned to appeal to the Minority Rights Group of the United Nations to denounce this fact. There is concern that re-classification will lead to attempts to restrict use of key areas (KADP, 1999). Indeed, the UWA monitoring unit in reaching its conclusions partially considered the existing land uses. The extension of the Bokora Reserve northward aims at conserving vegetation and wildlife species. It aims at including the woodlands and tickets around Toror Hills and westwards towards Labwor to include Combretum woodlands. The northern extension would give further protection to Uganda’s only breeding population of ostrich. However, the UWA also took into account socio-economical factors such as the pattern of existing settlements and land uses. They observed that Bokora WR is seasonally used by Bokora herds as a dry grazing area. Dams along the Lochomom river are being rehabilitated and there are two settlement areas in the WR. The Apetolim villagers were issued permits by the Game Department in the 1960s, although the village is not registered and does not have RC/LC representation. Kobulin/Kopopwa comprises 24 illegal settlements but there is a LC representation. According to the UWA researchers, degazetting of the section of Bokora south of Longirkipi dam where these settlements are located could be possible if environment conservation measures would be taken to

45 The Monitor, 17/05/1999.
The case of the Pian-Upe Reserve is more contentious. The area is used as a seasonal grazing ground. It was observed that two dams were drilled by KPIU at Lochagar and Lochilimukat and 22 illegal Pian settlements have been established around the base of Mt. Napak inside Pian/Upe WR. In their view, this expansion compromises the integrity of the forest reserve with an increase in fuelwood demand inducing deforestation and reducing the effectiveness of the catchment. They also observed 22 Pian settlements within the reserve south of Namalu. The degazetting of small portions of Pian/Upe WR located in Katakwi and near Namalu is legitimised by the fact that the areas are settled but UWA decided to retain the settled area around Mt. Napak. This decision is contested and according to the Karimojong Initiative for Sustainable Peace (KISP), promotion of settlements at the border, including the Pian/Upe Wildlife Reserve would serve the peace.

The UWA recommendations need to be placed before parliament before any decision can be made on changes to protected areas in Karamoja and elsewhere. This is also a condition for World Bank release of relevant funding to the UWA. The issue of WRs and CWAs in Karamoja is still contentious. Rather than the UWA attempting to exert control to regulate use of grazing and other resources, an alternative could be to protect the areas as reserves with ownership and control them under customary institutions with agreements to protect wildlife and habitat. The position on the forest reserves is by far the most radical. The UWA refuses to degazette the parts of the reserves where people de facto settled. However, alternative solutions of co-management are under investigation. UNDP recently launched a bio-diversity project implemented by SIV in Iriir and Namalu and by LWF in Moroto. The aim of the project is to reduce the rate of loss of bio-diversity in Karamoja forest reserve through local training for reducing vegetation clearance, charcoal-burning control, control of tree-cutting for fencing, crafts, and building granaries. The National Project manager advocates for co-management. However, it would only apply to the original inhabitants of the mountains (the Tepeth). He suggested that the Bokora and the Pian agriculturists settled inside Mt. Napak forest reserve should be expelled and that
SIV should only promote agriculture outside the borders of Napak and Kadam forest reserves.46

Conflicts over natural resources have social and economical impacts, especially on settlement patterns and land uses. Large tracts of land have been abandoned in Iteso and Karimojong herders have been confined to the mountains. They now compete with a new generation of Karimojong agro-pastoralists encroaching on the forest and wildlife reserves. It is clear that none of the communities gain from these conflicts over natural resources emphasised by poor local and national political leadership.

2. THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS

Both communities, the Karimojong and the Iteso, identified a crisis in the customary and modern leadership as a hindrance to management of conflicts over natural resources. This is especially true in the new settlements in Iriir sub-county referred to as an “institutional vacuum”. This newly-settled area could qualify as an ‘internal border’. This concept was used to describe a gap between socio-political entities already established, where people migrated. (Kopytoff, 1989). These are marginal zones where the state has little influence and under-exploited areas with an agricultural potential.

2.1. Customary leadership

Many authors have associated insecurity with the emergence of Karimojong warlords who control the cattle camps (kraal leaders), and the cattle raids challenging the authority of the elders through their military strength (Ocan, 1992; Otim, 2002). Most warlords trace their origins to the army, active raids or trade. They introduced private interests into raids that are motivated by self-acquisition and do not simply wait for a disaster to happen before depleting stocks and looting property through massive killings.47

46 Robert Nabanabia, 13/05/2002, Kampala.

47 The Monitor, 26/09/2001

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Our field data indicated the confusion between manhood and elderhood. The data outlined an over-estimation of the collapse of authority of the Karimojong elders, to the demobilised soldiers who degenerated into a crew of predatory brigands and to the idle youth.

2.1.1. Warlords or war leaders?

The Karimojong seniority status was derived from a generation-set system. Among the Karimojong, it was only the members from the senior generation-set who could approve raids against outside societies and it was they that exhorted the younger men to go on cattle raids. The booty was shared and used as productive herd capital. Membership in the junior generation-set required a role of compliance and response to leadership in public affairs. “Politically, the elders are the ones exhorting the coming generation to raid and kill members of foreign groups that intruded in their pastures” (Tornay, 1995). At the section level, it was the elders from the senior generation-set who granted permission to move the cattle out of the peripheral grazing areas and prayed that they would be given good grazing and water. This ritual called akiwudakin ngaatuk (freeing the cattle) occurred at the onset of the dry season. In case of disputes in a cattle camp, elders from the senior generation-set were too far away for arbitration since they generally remained in the homesteads. Hence the men of the junior age-set undertook the settlement of the issue.

The erosion of the Karimojong generation-set system: myth or reality?

The Ateker people, the Surma speakers such as the Didinga, the Narim and the Koegu (Kwegu), the Kuliak-speaking So as well as the Omotic-speaking Kara shared the same type of age-grade system. “Asapan is a term used all over the area, in some dialect meaning initiation, in other referring to the transfer of power from the generation of fathers to that of sons. The people of the asapan do not practise circumcision except the Pokot. Sacrifice of cattle by sons to their fathers played pivotal role in the transfer of power” (Kurimoto & Simonse, 1998). The Kenyan Pokot still practice succession ceremonies. The latest occurred in 1991 (Maisonhaute, 2000).

The Karimojong generation-set system has been described as a cyclical creation of four generations made up of “two symbolically linked alternating pairs (A-C, B-D) and two interacting
adjustment pairs (A-B, C-D)”. There were two living generations (nganyameta): the junior (A) and the senior (B). Each generation-set included five age-sets (ngasapaneta). People of the same age-set were those initiated in the same collective ceremony that used to take place every 5–6 years, usually at harvest time. There was a close correspondence between alternated generations (A-C/B-D). They shared age-set names and the same colour of ornaments. The relations between alternated generations resorted to the grandson-grandfather model. Entrance to an age-set resulted from initiation (asapan) that corresponded to the passage from childhood to manhood and warriorhood. Rituals involved sacrifices of herds to god (Akuj) and haruspication. There were three stages: “spearing the ox”; “eating the tongue”; “cooking the stomach”. Every 30 years constituted a generation succession that corresponds to the passage to elderhood. This occurred when the senior generation-set handed over power to the generation-set immediately below. It normally took place when all members of the junior generation-set had been initiated, and when the senior generation-set included few members (Dyson-Hudson, 1996).

In Moroto district, we found two generation-sets alive—the Ngimoru, the seniors only represented by the closed age-set of the Ngibaanga; and the Ngigete, the juniors who were initiated in different age-sets according to the sections and the locations. For example, the Bokora from Kangole were initiated in Ngikalibak; the Bokora from Matany were initiated to Ngioowa; the Bokora from Nawoi were initiated to Ngitera; and the Matheniko of Rupa and Acholi Inn were initiated to Ngiwapeto age-set. Pastoralists still performed initiations but administrative officers and politicians also followed the custom. For example, the District Planner for Moroto district was initiated to the Ngioowa age-set with four other Bokora men from Matany in December 2001. The former MP for Matheniko was initiated to the Ngioowa age-set in 1996.

Only the sons of the senior generation, even if their fathers were dead, are eligible for initiation whatever their age. In a family, initiation follows the rank of birth and two sons of a senior can be initiated in different age-sets. Within each generation-set, named age-sets do not group men of the same age. During the ceremony, the initiates are given the yellow ornaments of their grandfathers. In other words, a son never belongs to his father’s generation-set but always to his grandfather’s. All the sons of a father belong to
the same generation-set. Some of the eligible sons may already be married and have children of their own. Uninitiated men bear the generic names of the Njimirio (the Mice) or Ngiddoi (the Rats). In fact, the period of recruitment in an age-set is not fixed. It depends on the number of those eligible and on the economic status of their families. The eligible have four chances to initiate into an age-set. In Rupa, Matheniko had already initiated three times in Ngiwapeto but no initiations had taken place since 1989 because of poor harvests. Once, the Ngiwapeto age-set has been closed, they will open the last age-set of the junior generation-set. It should be named Ngiiru like the age-set of their grandfathers, who have been dead for a long time, so there is no risk of confusion of names. However, they could also choose another one.

Dyson-Hudson wrote that the last succession ceremony (akindung amuro) was held in 1956 in Apule. This is a tribal ceremony ground restricted to these particular gatherings and functionally designated as nawiamuros—the place of the sacred camp. The first ceremony was called akuwar asapanet where the perennial flesh of oxen is eaten first by the most senior elders and second by the juniors. The second ceremony involved the division of the haunches. The junior generation-set returned to their villages and announced that their children could now be initiated (generation succession is associated to a mass initiation of new age-sets in the generation of the sons of the new seniors). The representative of the former junior generation-set (now elder-designated) made a second trip to Apule for the third and final stage of the ceremony; the sacrifice of oxen and the collective receiving of advise related to their new status, power and obligations. “Representatives of the ten sections gathered at their respective places, with their livestock and set out toward Apule for the first ceremonies. They proceed together on a three day journey to Nakadanya, at the foot of Mt. Koteen” (Novelli, 1988).

According to our informants, the last succession ceremony occurred in October 1956 in Nakadanya and not in Apule. Novelli observed that in the past century, this ceremony was convened by the Bokora section; which happened to have then the most senior elders and was held at the tribal akero of Namoru between the two rivers Ngolaopolon and Apule, north of Moroto. The Bokora were also the custodians of the sacred crooked spear used for separating the thighs of the oxen, the central part of the ceremony. Then, the
pre-eminence passed on the section of the Pei, for the same reasons. But in 1956, something changed. The most senior members was Lokolomoi from the village of Lokitelaigete of Mogož section, he was a member of the Ngigete-Ngitukoí generation-set and belonged to the age-set of the ngiwapeto (Elands) and, beside this, his was acknowledged to be prophet but he was living at the time in Turkana. Next after him was a member of the Bokora section. So, it was the Bokora who were supposed to call the ceremony. But notwithstanding the pressure of the then junior generation-set of the Ngimoru, they were reluctant to call the meeting. The elders of the Mogož and Matheniko took the initiative to call Lokolomoi home. He convened the akidung anuro at the ceremonial ground of Nakadanya, near Mt. Koteen, a Karimojong location between Jie and Turkana, which was a place of dispersion of all the tribes of the Karimojong cluster. Lokolomoi presided with his own spear, since the one used by the Bokora and Pei was of Tobur origin and was therefore coming from enemies of the tribe. None of the other sections were present there, but as soon as they heard that the Matheniko and the Mogož had done the ceremony on their own, they followed after the Ngítome asked them to do so and started to do the same in their sections. This explains the divergent versions of the ceremony collected later on from members of different sections (Novelli, 2001).

The next generation-set ceremony should have taken place in the 1970s. The fact that the traditional handing over of tribal authority is almost extinct would show the irrelevance of generation structure as a determinant authority in the present context (Ocan, 1992). However, the last ceremony was also delayed because of economic and political factors. “A succession ceremony should have taken place in 1930 (last ceremony around 1900) but ecological conditions did not allow tribal gathering. An epidemic outbreak led to restriction of herd’s movement by the administration to Apule. In 1953–1956, there was a great agitation for the Zebras succession. The ceremony took place in 1956. Zebras have been the senior generation for 50–60 years and the Mountains were the cadet generation for the same period. Their fifth age set (Ngibaanga/Ngirengilim) had recruited for 27 years and will probably stay open until 1960” (Dyson-Hudson, 1966).

underlined the confusion between the family generational interval and the global social interval. There is often a dilemma between the biological age of the individual and the generation-set he belongs to. Under-ageing occurs when young initiated men are promoted to elders. This happens when a lot of men are born after their fathers exercised power like the sons of Ngiiru. Over-ageing occurs when old men are delayed in their promotion to become elders. They may die in their junior generation-set. The optimal solution in case of over- and under-ageing cannot be obtained within an interval of 30 years. The demography of the system seems to impose a period of 50–55 years. It should be noted that parallel recruitment, observed after 1956, seems another means to prevent under-ageing. Theoretically, all members of one generation must have been initiated before any members of the next generation can be initiated. In other words, only one generation-set at a time can be open to recruitment (Gulliver, 1953). “The recently promoted generation-set (Mountains) inaugurates a junior generation-set (Gazelles) but does not close its own ranks (Ngibaanga-Ngirengilim). The Karimojong explain parallel recruiting as a recognition that the recently retired generation-set (Zebras) may have sons approaching initiation age and are thus entitled to join the recently promoted generation-set. Once all members of the retired generation-set have died (Ngiiru), the senior set is closed to recruitment and initiation only admits the junior generation, irrespective of the generation-set affiliation of the initiants’ fathers. Periods of dual recruitment are characterised by the initiation of persons well above the usual initiation age into the junior set and well below the initiation age into the senior set” (Dyson-Hudson, 1963). In fact, contrary to other communities such as the Meru, the Karimojong do not have rules to control their demography (like a prohibition for a father to stop procreating after his first-born begets children). With the parallel recruitment of the Ngibaanga/Ngirengilim, the last-born of the senior generation-set were not ‘out of the system’ as in the case of the Boran (Petrik, 1995). They could still belong to an alternate generation-set. The Jie adopted another solution in 1865 to fight over-ageing. They allowed uninitiated men to marry, raid or claim adult status. This strategy might be linked to the rise of the war leader Loriang in 1898 (Spencer, 1978). But this led to an under-ageing situation.

If a period of 50 years between generation successions is now considered as structurally normal, it means that the next Karimojong succession ceremony should take place in 2006. The
Gazelles do not seem to agitate for it, unlike among the Nyangatom, where the juniors rebelled against the seniors. Among the juniors, the eldest age-sets who died without receiving the right to give asapan, uttered a curse on the youngest age-set if they agreed to receive it (Tornay, 1995). In other words, the frustrated faction (Ngikangaraak) of the climbing generation (Gazelles) is now turning against its junior factions (Ngioowa). Although two biological generations are non-initiated (Mice/Rats), and although the first age-sets of the juniors generation are growing old, the seniors are still numerous and able to perform the ceremonies. It is estimated that 60 Ngirmorn are alive in Bokora County. They are not ready to surrender their power. We were told that if the succession ceremony would be done, they would die immediately after. In fact, one of their major privileges is being given food, especially the best part of the ox during ceremonies (elamachar). Moreover, since 1973 a gathering of the whole Karimojong community was impossible due to insecurity.
The counter-powers

Initiations are still conducted and the elders of the senior generation-set still perform the ritual ceremonies. They also retain their political powers to bless and to curse. For example, in Kangole, they fulfilled the rite of “freeing the cattle” (*akinudakin ngaatuk*) in December 2001, just before the departure of the animals to the dry season grazing area of Iriir. The LDU commander for Matheniko County told us that in 1999, the Matheniko seniors observed the ceremony for opening the war against the Bokora (*amuronoot ngina ajore*) and that the warriors followed purification rituals after the raids. Scarifications are still practised and are perceived as a sign of bravery.

However, the seniors admitted that some raids are mounted without their consent, especially in dry seasons when the herders are isolated from permanent settlements and in Iriir where only one *ngimoru* was available in the trading centre. In those cases, the blessings of the elders are sought after. Such matters were also reported in the 1950s. “*Most raids are mounted by small groups, who meet in the bush rather than at the section ceremonial ground and dispensed with ritual preliminaries for the sake of security*” (Dyson-Hudson, 1966). Warriors might also mount raids despite the refusal of the seniors. This act of disobedience was witnessed in 1956 and is associated with a mythical explanation of the emergence of intra-ethnic fights among the Karimojong. A Karimojong legend known as “the legend of give me an enemy” stresses that somewhere in the Karamoja past, when Lokolomoi was the ultimate elder of all the Karimojong, the warriors petitioned him to allow them mount a raid. Then, the Karimojong were still one united group and lived in Nakadanya, where they first settled. He refused to authorise the raid but they pressed him. When it became obvious to the old men that the warriors and their parents were determined, he let them go but refused to bless the raid. The young men proceeded to Turkana, mounted a raid and came back with cattle and stories of victory, and death of many enemies. Now, one of the kraals they had attacked in Turkana had Lokolomoi’s own cattle and in the process of the attack, the Karimojong warriors killed son, Arion. Lokolomoi forbade his family to cry and cursed the Karimojong,
saying that in view of what had happened, they would turn on each other (Ochieng-Odhiambo, 2000).

Lokolomoi was forced to approve the raid against the Turkana during the akidung amuron held in Nakadanya in 1956. As the last representative of the senior generation-set of the Zebras (Ngitukoi), he was then handing over the power to the junior generation (the present Mountains). At the same time, the juniors asked for war blessings and demanded that Lokolomoi quote enemies such as the Jie, the Pokot and the Turkana. The eldest Karimojong was reluctant to mention the Turkana, probably because the Turkana and Karimojong were in alliance (matrimonial alliance and sharing of natural resources in Lotisan in Mogosi area). It was also mentioned that there was a negative influence of a prophet (akadumurongo), Gerabon, an etukoyit belonging to the Ngitopon sub-section of Matheniko. He was inciting the Turkana and Matheniko to war. The authority of the seniors might have been temporarily challenged by prophets.

From theft to raid

Even if the seniors do not entirely control the raiding parties, they usually know the raiders but rarely denounce them. In fact, our fieldwork data revealed an outbreak of small thefts (akoko). It is only after a succession of such small and unpunished thefts that the elders usually decide to mount a big-scale raid (aremo). When killings are involved, the raid is referred to as a revenge raid ajore. This is how the war between the Bokora and the Pian started in 2000.

2.2. The inefficiency of the modern leadership structures

Apart from these tensions in the Karimojong customary leadership, both communities point out the lack of effective modern leadership at the local and national level. Moses Aleper, the young sub-county chief of Iriir told us, “It is simple to be a Karimojong and to know the Iteso. I have friends there. I have my cows there. I went to see them last week in Ollim. I have a friend called Opio who keeps my animals, my cows and my pigs. I have no problem with Opio but I have problems with

49 James Chere, the Parish Chief of Rupa, 21/01/2001, Acholi Inn.
those who are above. They have their problems and they bring them to the peoples.” A kraal leader also noted that if there is no understanding among the leaders, both people and cows cannot live in harmony (ARLIP, 2001). When the border issue featured in the newspapers, Cuthert Obwangor observed that “some uninformed MPs, young LCs and others who may be misinformed or just empire builders can easily indulge in conflict. To spear (airem) any district as they say, for political ambition or otherwise is to cause untold perpetual political social trouble that may recall always.”

2.2.1. Special “indirect rule” for Karamoja

The short-lived Administration (Karamoja) Act (ch 315, v1, repeal Act 13 of 1966) aimed at integrating the customary political system of the Karimojong to the modern one. Provisions were made to associate elders to the district council. Among the district councillors, on top of the three elected members for each county, the law required the election of one elder in each county. The ability to speak and read English was not a precondition for qualification. Whenever it was necessary to elect an elder from any county to be a member of the district council, the administrator had to appoint a day on which all the elders of the county assembled to elect one of their numbers to be a member of the council. The Administrator could establish local councils. On the other hand, the chief administration was retained. Provisions were however made for the revival of village chief. The administrator would seek the assistance of the council to appoint chiefs in charge of the village, Nyampara. The chief has the power to arrest those suspected of offences, and to seize suspected stolen animals. The Administration of Justice (Karamoja) Act (ch 35, v2 repeal Act 6 of 2000) aimed at increasing the Central Native Courts providing the establishment of jury trials and the procedure of selecting a list of jurors. It applied not only to offences committed in Karamoja but also in any other place within Uganda.

The restoration of these special laws is contentious. They contravene the previous Ugandan Constitution stipulating that

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50 Moses Aleper, 21/04/2002, Iriir.
cultural leaders should not be directly involved in local and national politics.\textsuperscript{51}

2.2.2. Decentralisation and balkanisation

Special measures to tackle regional insecurity were initiated by the local governments. Local councils, especially LC5s seem to have great local powers in banning interregional cattle transportation, abolishing the friendship system and enacting local by-laws prohibiting inter-regional movements. This can be understood in reference to the decentralisation process.

From 1964, district councils were gradually denied the right to elect district heads, who were nominated. The 1967 Republican Constitution took away most of the powers devolved to the local councils in 1962. The 1969 Local Government Act ensured that most administrative structures in the country were appointive. This process of centralisation continued during the Amin period (1971–1978). Politics was banned, no elections were held. Parliament and district councils were closed. When Obote returned in 1979 until 1985, centralised authority continued. When NRM started its protracted bush war against Obote, it established in the liberated areas an administrative structure based on elected resistance council (RCs) at different levels (RC1 village and RC district), the level above being elected by the level below. The decentralisation programme was launched in 1992. The Local Government statute legalised and enshrined this policy in 1993. The 1995 Constitution consolidated the legal status with altering the elective process to include direct elections for LC1 (village representatives) LC3 (sub-county council with parish representatives) and LC5 (district council with sub-county representatives). The Local Government Act of 1997 devolved greater power to the local government structure than the Constitution of 1962 except with security, defence, immigration and foreign affairs in charge of a government representative, the Resident District Commissioner (RDC). The district council is the planning authority for the district and its Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the accounting officer.

2.2.3. The local by-laws

\textsuperscript{51} Patrick Apuun, Mbale, 9 August 2002.

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Although we actually observed a complete lack of inter-regional co-operation, the local governments have launched two initiatives to reduce the conflict with the enactment of inter-regional by-laws. In 1977–1978, Kapelebyong sub-counties proposed a by-law setting inter-regional customary rules and regulations that were not endorsed by the Soroti County Council. In 1998, the two administrations, Katakwi and Moroto finally agreed upon the same agreement. The Magoro agreement of September 1998 is described as the most comprehensive initiative spelling out the modalities of Karimojong arrival and penalties for particular offences they committed while in Katakwi.

Security meetings were held at Kapelebyong and Magoro by the CAO and LC5 Katakwi. These meetings were attended by the people and authorities of Kotido district, Moroto and Katakwi and also by Hon. Colonel William Omaria, Minister of State for Internal Affairs, and Hon. Peter Lokeris, Minister for Karamoja Affairs. Rules and regulations regarding control of pastoral movements, local policing and punishment of offences, were agreed upon and implemented until 2000. However, S.S. Mangusho, Katakwi’s Chief Magistrate Grade 1 was not aware of its existence and openly contested its legality. “This agreement is illegal and the ones who signed it could be prosecuted under the section 21. The issue should have been debated in Parliament. The by-laws can only be endorsed thereafter”.

In fact, the Constitution of 1995, section 178 allows inter-district cooperation and the Local Government Act of 1997, sections 39 to 45, allows legislative powers to the district councils provided that they are not inconsistent with the Constitution or any other law made by the legislative powers. A local bill should be passed by the district councils and forwarded to the Attorney-General through the minister to certify that the local bill is not inconsistent with the Constitution or any other law enacted by Parliament before the chairperson signs the law. As a matter of fact, the current Attorney

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52 Katakwi District was only carved from Soroti District in 1997.


54 Satyn Semu Mangusho, 08/05/2002, Katakwi

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General is not aware of the Magoro agreement and, according to him; the third section contravenes the Uganda penal code.

2.2.4. The Magoro Agreement

The first section of the agreement regulates inter-regional movements. It stipulates that Karimojong herders entering Iteso to graze and water their animals during the dry season shall be required to bear introduction letters from their respective LC3 chairmen in Karamoja to the LC3 chairman of the sub-county to which they will graze and water their animals. On returning to Karamoja after the onset of wet season, they will get letters or reports of their stay in Iteso from the host LC3 chairman to the authorities in Karamoja. These letters shall indicate the number of animals in possession of the herdsman (at his arrival in Iteso and return to Karamoja). It also prohibits the carrying of weapons except for the ASTU/Vigilantes during their official duties.

The second section advised on proper identification of the anti-stock theft unit personnel. ASTU could not be differentiated from the cattle rustlers. During the Ngariam incident, (13 September 2001), the Karimojong raiders wore military fatigues. Iteso LDUs were accused of raiding the Pian in Lomorimor and Lomongnangay in June–July 2001. Conversely, LDUs without uniforms are regularly mistaken for thieves.

The third section, addressing penalty for offences, is the most contentious. It recommends that crops destroyed by animals shall be compensated according to the terms and conditions agreed upon by the owner of the crops and the owner of the animals. The LC1 authorities of the area act as arbitrators. Anybody caught stealing cattle shall be made to pay a fine of double the number of animals stolen and shall face legal action thereafter. Anyone who rapes a woman shall be made to pay a traditional compensation of 2 head of cattle or UShs 300,000 and shall face the same charge in the courts of law. Anybody who kills a person shall be fined blood compensation of 60 head of cattle and charged in court. These regulations advocate for the application of a double punishment for rape, cattle rustling and murder. Under the agreement, the offences of stealing cattle, rape and murder are sanctioned twice

under the customary law and the modern law (double jeopardy). The CAO Katakwi, Nicolas Ocakara, explained that it was meant to be a deterrent to prevent culprits from coming back and stealing the cattle given as compensation.\(^{56}\) The customary law applies a collective sentence since compensation is supposed to be paid by the family or even the tribe of the offender. The Chief Magistrate Grade 1 of Katakwi insists on the illegality of the rules. “The agreement should first mention the legal actions and then stipulate the possibility of compensation. They can agree to compensate crop destruction but for capital offences such as cattle rustling, murder and rape, no compensation is possible.”\(^{57}\) According to the Attorney General, even cases of theft cannot be compensated. Moreover, it has to be noted that the offences such as stealing of crop products are not addressed. Finally, that in the Uganda Penal Code, there is a difference between stealing cattle and cattle rustling, which is not addressed in the agreement.

In the Uganda Penal Code, the usual offences committed by the Karimojong deserve the following sentences.

- Stealing of crop (under ch 106: Malicious injury to property, sections 252, 315 and 320 of 1984 [act 9]) deserves five years imprisonment, if no other punishment is provided, meaning a fine of USh 50,000.
- Destruction of crops (under ch 106, section 252) deserves five years imprisonment. Nevertheless, as far as destruction of crops is concerned, we argue that no prosecution should be undertaken if the owner of the field is blocking access to water and common grazing for the pastoralists. In fact, to reach the permanent spring of Alekilek, we had to trespass agricultural fields because no paths were available. We were asked to pay Ushs 40,000 as compensation.
- Rape (under ch 106, section 118) deserves the death sentence.
- Stealing animals (under ch 106, section 255 of 1965 [act 1]), deserves seven years imprisonment for a first offence and 15 years imprisonment for a second.

\(^{56}\) Nicolas Ocakaro, 06/05/2002, Katakwi.

\(^{57}\) Satyn Semu Mangusho, 08/05/2002, Katakwi

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Cattle rustling (under ch 106 section 255b of 1984 [act 9]) is
defined as a capital offence deserving imprisonment for life.

The main difference between stealing of cattle and cattle
rustling is the use of deadly weapons. Whether the theft is
associated with manslaughter or not, the culprit is liable to life
imprisonment, which is the sentence for manslaughter (Cap. 106,
section 185). The sentence applies to the one who actually steals
and to the one who organises or receives and conceals the crime.
Iteso herds are not branded, it is thus difficult to prove that they
have been stolen.

To our knowledge, few cases of Karimojong offences in
Iteso were dealt with under the Uganda justice system. On 3 May
2002, the case of the eight Karimojong arrested in Milmil, near
Kirik, was heard at Katakwi Court. The Chief Magistrate Grade 2,
gave us the following details, “Eight Karimojong from Bokora county
(Matany and Lokopo) were arrested in Milmil near Aketa on 6 March
2002 for stealing eight head of cattle (Ushs 1 million) belonging to Simon
Aminu. They have been prosecuted for the offence of “stealing cattle” under the
section 252 and 255 of the penal code. One of them, Lokiru Lamor,
admitted the offence and was sentenced to three years imprisonment in Soroti.
He should have been jailed for seven years but the penalty was reduced because
he admitted to the crime and because the cattle were recovered.” The
remaining seven were kept in prison while awaiting the results of
the investigations. On 17 May 2002, one of them, Abura Elia, who
was a 12-year old juvenile, was released on bail under the section
91/1A. They could have been charged with cattle rustling under
section 255b associated with life imprisonment but they were not
armed.”

The Magoro agreement was only implemented in cases of
crop destruction, crop thefts and cattle thefts. According to a
POKATUSA representative, “the crops were sold by the Iteso and claimed
as stolen by the Karimojong. Compensation required for cattle theft was later
increased. For one cow stolen, the Iteso required five cows in compensation. The
60 cows “blood monney” for homicide was too heavy for the Iteso. The Iteso
LDU recovered more cattle than the amount stolen.” The agreement
broke down due to a lack of co-operation on the side of the local

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59 Peter, Mbale, 9th August 2002.
authorities of Moroto. In the word of Nicolas Ocakaro, “they don’t use their authority. When 256 were stolen in Adacar, We sent a message to Moroto but very few were recovered.” In fact, the 256 stolen in Adacar on 28 March 2002 were taken from the Jie from Panyangara sub-county. The Moroto administration declared that their work would be easier if the Iteso cattle were branded. The issue of branding Iteso animals was addressed in the Magoro meeting when the following recommendations were made concerning the animals. Each county in Iteso and Karamoja should have a distinct mark for its animals. The branding of the Iteso animals restarted slowly in 1999 (sub-county brands) but there is still a problem related to trade. A Karimojong who stole Iteso cattle can say that he bought it in the market.

In order to strengthen inter-regional co-operation the Magoro agreement also tried to promote inter-regional dialogue at all levels of the politico-administrative structure. In the course of fieldwork in Katakwi, we were told that the LC5 Katakwi and the LC5 Moroto, both re-elected in 2001, actually refused to talk to each other. The radical position taken by LC5 Katakwi is considered by the Karimojong as a challenge to the authority of the President—“Museveni rules in Uganda, except in Katakwi District that has its own President.”

Customary leadership and institutions are still alive among the Karimojong even if the generation system is subject to a high pressure. However, their integration in the modern political and administrative system is contentious. The decentralisation process seems to over-empower the local governments, especially in enacting illegal and unsustainable by-laws applying a double-barrelled punishment.

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60 idem
3. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ARENAS

As noted in the previous section, some of the offences committed by the Karimojong outside Karamoja do not involve the use of weapons. Therefore, it seems improbable that disarmament alone will solve the problem of regional insecurity, especially because it is a unilateral effort, and also because the local conflicts are manipulated both at the national and international levels.

3.1. The militarisation of civil society

Karamoja region did not attract both the colonial and post-colonial government. This left the area uncontrolled and underdeveloped. But Arabs and Ethiopians who traded in ivory and guns promoted the proliferation of modern weapons throughout the region. This trend continued after independence.

3.1.1. The colonial arena

The emergence of a semblance of state in the region was witnessed with the Jie providing a great war-leader, Loriang (1898–1910). The Jie were heavily armed and together with the Acholi, they attacked other Karimojong. In 1880, they acquired guns through contact with the Belgians in Congo, Arabs on the East African coast and Italians in Ethiopia. This was so as to hunt elephants and sell the trophies after the epizootic of 1884. The Jie consolidated and demanded tribute from other Karimojong groups. Economic competition and political conflict between Belgians and Italians on one side and British on the other also played a crucial role. In 1910, the British, using loyalists amongst the already defeated Iteso and Acholi, attacked Bokora in Matany. But their real aim was to destroy the Jie. In 1911, the region was placed under military rule. The closing of Karamoja to the outside world was followed by restriction on movement to Karamoja.

According to Lamphear, “quite unlike the situation with the Maasai and the Turkana, Loriang’s centralisation presented no serious challenge to the underlying gerontocratic control of the generation system. Booty was absorbed broadly into the community as a whole, functioning, as always as a currency of corporate social relations. The younger men never tried to break free of gerontocratic control.” (Lamphear, 1998). But Spencer
demonstrated that, at this period, in order to curb over-ageing, uninitiated men were exceptionally allowed to join the army and marry so they had nothing to complain about (Spencer, 1978).

3.1.2. The civil wars in Uganda

The second step of militarisation occurred in 1979. Forces composed of exiled Ugandans assisted by the Tanzanian army forced the military regime of Idi Amin out of power through military defeat. The fall of Kampala meant loss of central command of the government army. Consequently, fleeing soldiers left behind an assortment of military hardware, arms and ammunitions as they abandoned the military barracks in Moroto. It was not long before the Karimojong realised that the barracks had been abandoned. They broke in, taking away with them as much arms and ammunition as they could. Thus, the Karimojong were suddenly well armed with automatic weapons. It is argued that it was the Tepeth and the Matheniko groups that benefited most from this booty and the military imbalance that ensued in an unprecedented increase in conflict both within the region and against the ill-equipped agro-pastoral neighbours (Ocan, 1992).

The Iteso militias

In response, the government of Milton Obote decided to recruit tribal militia in all districts neighbouring Karamoja. From 1984, the Iteso militia, associated with Col. Omaria, then Minister of State for Internal Affairs, and Peter Otai, then Minister of State for Defence, was held responsible for the burning of Iriir and Kangole in Karamoja. The Langi/Acholi militia associated with Oyite Ojok and General Lutwa were held responsible for attacks on Kotido. But the fall of his regime in 1986 marked the end of these forces.

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The insurgency movements

To bolster their front against the NRA, hordes of Karimojong warriors were recruited into the UNLA (Uganda National Liberation Army) to fight for the government. When the NRA defeated the UNLA in 1986, the demobilised Karimojong soldiers fled with all their arms back to Karamoja and fuelled a new wave of rustling in the region (Behrend, 1999; Werbner, 1989). On the other hand, the militia from all the neighbouring districts had been disbanded. The result was another widespread Karimojong raid that left the area virtually without livestock. The Bokora, who had not benefited from looting arms were immediately an inferior force and lost almost all their herds to the Matheniko. It was these raids, coupled with the 1980 famine that led to the exodus of many Bokora. Some of them have since returned and been resettled at Alekilek.

When the Karimojong intensified the raids, the Iteso interpreted it to mean that the government did not care about them. Spearheaded by some politicians of the defunct government, a rebellion against government was started. The NRM government was therefore was faced with the task of protecting the Iteso against the Karimojong raiders and at the same time fight the rebel Uganda Peoples’ Army (UPA). Since the UPA posed a threat to state power whereas the Karimojong did not, the former were the prime concern of the state. The result was that Karimojong raids continued, while the focus of the state was the UPA. The people lost virtually all their stock as a result of a three-year relentless raid by both the Karimojong and some of the rebels who took advantage of the situation to enrich themselves (Ocan, 1992). During this period, the Karimojong raided virtually all parts of Iteso taking all the livestock they could find, stealing food and other household effects, and raping women. At the same time, the war between the UPA and government forces was going on.

In 1988, the Karimojong lost 50% of their cattle due to an epidemic of East Coast Fever. Since NRA tightened its forces in Kumi, Soroti, Lira, Apac and Kitgum following the defeat of Alice Lakewena, Karimojong rustlers and criminal elements of Iteso, Langi and Kitgum were unable to mount raids there and so they

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62 The NRA had been waging a guerrilla war against the Obote government.
turned to Karamoja. Inter-group raids resurfaced and old grudges were revived.

In 1995, a year before the general elections, the Uganda government sought to control the use of weapons in Karamoja by having them registered with 'vigilante forces', a form of the Local Defence Unit. These individuals were to be trained and equipped by the government and would be under the command of the national army (Muhereza, 1999). Karamoja gunmen performed services as an auxiliary force to contain the LRA and to block any operations these might mount across Karamoja. Unlike in Ethiopia, after the fall of Mengistu, the militias were not put under the control of the senior generation-set (Tornay, 1995). In fact, it appeared to be a political strategy of incorporation responding to the provision of arms to LRA by Khartoum.

3.2. From predatory repression to national integration

Portrayed as a “cattle-eater”, the violent repression of the army never succeeded in curbing insecurity and increased the lack of trust of the population towards the government. In 1995, Museveni gave the Karimojong new enemies with the feeling that they were participating in the national armed struggle against the LRA rebels. However, the Ugandan government had to consider the Iteso electoral pressure (1996 and 2001) as well as their threat to arm themselves in response to the Karimojong intrusions. The President had no choice but to undertake a promised disarmament. His new method of voluntary and peaceful disarmament was relatively successful even if the absence of synchronisation with Kenya left the Karimojong in a very vulnerable position.

3.2.1. Army and para-military repression

After serious raids in 1959, the Bataringaya Report of 1961 explicitly advocated brute force as the best method of resolving the Karamoja crisis. In the 1950s, the colonial administration indiscriminately confiscated female stock under the pretext of controlling cattle raiding. From 1962–1963, government soldiers raided homesteads and forcibly confiscated spears, punishing those found in possession of them. In 1973, the 1971 decree requiring the population of Karamoja to wear western clothes was enforced. Amin ordered the killing of hundreds of people in Kangole,
Matany and Lotome in Bokora County, on claims that they resisted wearing western clothing (Ocan, 1992). This year was named after Apalothiel. He was a Lugbara sergeant from the West Nile district of Arua. In 1984, a joint disarmament exercise with the Kenya Paramilitary Police flopped when the soldiers involved in the programme indiscriminately killed Karimonjong and raided their cattle.63

_The Local Defence Unions/Forces (LDU/Fs)_

When a decision was taken to cut down the size of the regular army, the government decided to create a para-military force of well-trained militias who would be based in the local areas. The first local youth were recruited in Local Defence Forces in Iteso in 1987. They were specifically recruited, trained and armed to help the NRA fight UPA rebels. In Iteso and Acholi, the LDUs were later re-drafted into the NRA. The LDUs would assist the NRA in combat operations, screening exercises and patrols. They would jointly man roadblocks in war zones. LDUs would carry out road patrols. They arrested and killed many Kony rebels (Muhereza, 2001). After the end of the Iteso rebellion in 1991–1992, the government recruited LDUs mandated to provide security to the IDPs camps against raids and attacks. However, they were taken to serve the UPDF in 1998. From 1998 to 2000, the camps remained without any protection.

1993 saw the birth of the vigilante programme in Karamoja. It was a community-based system of controlling raids that involved Karimojong kraal leaders and local councils from Karamoja. These leaders were used to sensitisze the local communities, create a good working relationship between UPDF and the locals and to create a friendly atmosphere between Iteso, Lango, Acholo, Bugishu and Kapchorwa. The programme recruited warriors into state service, under the command of the army, paying them US$ 10–20 monthly when they agreed to register their guns and get military training. It started officially in 1995. By the end of 1996, 8000 vigilantes had been registered. The vigilantes were disbanded and replaced by anti-stock theft units (ASTU) both in Karamoja and Iteso under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

63 _The New Vision, 29/01/2001._

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In 2000, in response to the Iteso complaint, 20 LDUs per parish were provided with arms and trained to ensure the protection of the IDPs. Strikingly, on the side of Karamoja 60 LDUs per parish were recruited. In 2001, Katakwi received approximately 700 guns and about 700 LDUs where trained (200 in Usuk, Ngariam and Magoro, 150 in Abala, Acowa and Kapelebyong). It is alleged that in December 2001, they were taken to Congo, and in May 2002, to Moroto, to help in the disarmament process. The main problem associated with the LDUs is that these former indigenous soldiers and warriors are accused of involvement in raids. The civilians also blamed their laziness on their low salary.

The protected villages

Protected villages were first established in 1989 in Iteso during the rebellion and then, in Gulu and Kitgum in 1996 as a response to wanton killings of civilians by LRA rebels. The government, with co-operation from the RCs and the District Security Committee, moved civilians from villages into town to create fire-free zones in the countryside thus denying the UPA rebels a base in the population. The main criticisms on the adoption of this strategy as a mechanism for managing and dealing with conflict concerned depriving civilians of their daily livelihood. Gathered in crowded conditions, they had little to do except wait for the next relief handouts. They also became dependent on external assistance. Moreover, considered as a military tactic, some NGOs declined to provide assistance because it would violate their neutrality. Finally, since the camps became targets of the rebels and cattle rustlers, NGOs questioned the effectiveness of this strategy to protect civilians (Muhereza, 2001).

3.2.2. The Presidential Commission for Iteso (PCT) of 1989

In Iteso, traditional elders and chiefs were involved in wooing their rebel sons out of the bush. There were also low-key peace talks between the NRA and the UPA rebels that led to the surrender of Jesus Ojirot64 with 600 of his men. Jesus Ojirot was the first UPA commander to surrender to the NRA in Soroti.

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64 The leader of UPA's Ostrich Brigade in 1988.
district. However, at the beginning of 1989, he fled to Matany in Moroto district from where he planned cattle raids into Iteso. Victor Odil, the current LC5 councillor of Magoro and a former UPA rebel explained what really happened to Jesus: “Charles Anjina and Ilet Aburun tried to stop us. In 1989, the government arrested some of us and took them to Kampala. Jesus was scared of being sent to prison. He fled to Nabilatuk, Mamalu and Lotome from where he planned to get his own cattle from Magoro to Lotome. His Karimojong friend, Ocheba Kale, organised the raid but the raiders changed their minds and raided everything. Jesus was sent back to Ngariam and arrested in Palam, 6 miles away from old Ngariam.”

Jesus Ojirot was killed during an operation against cattle rustlers. This notwithstanding, it was argued that the Iteso rebellion ended in a peace agreement achieved through the efforts of the Iteso Commission. However, no details are available on how that process was accomplished (Muhereza, 2001).

In 1989, President Museveni established a Presidential Commission for Iteso (PCT), comprising five members, namely: Prof. Opio Epelu, Grace Akello, Stephen Akabway, James Eceret, Charles Egou-Egwau and Zira Egweu. The major objective of the Commission was to initiate an economic development programme in Iteso in order to prove to the people of Iteso that the President was committed to developing the area. In return for the President's commitment, the Iteso community was to challenge the remaining UPA rebels to come out of the bush and to help collectively re-build Iteso. The commission sensitised the people through seminars, sports, culture and the mass media. It persistently launched an appeal for the remaining rebels to come out of hiding. In 1991, when there was going to be a military operation in Iteso which people were apprehensive about, the Commission made another appeal to the remaining rebels to surrender. A vast number did so and the operation was called off. Through the PCT, emergency relief was provided to people who had lost all their property and were beginning to put back their lives together. Economic reconstruction programmes followed this with a long-

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65 Victor Odile, 07/05/2002, Magoro.


term vision method of dealing with structural post-war problems such as issues of orphans and widows. Through the PCT, ox-drawn ploughs, bulls and cash grants were allocated to victims of the rebellions and former rebels to improve their welfare (Muhereza, 2001). Former rebels who reported to the government were rehabilitated and incorporated into the LDU. In Iteso, they were allocated ox-drawn ploughs, bulls and cash grants to improve the welfare of former rebels who formed the bulk of the LDUs. In 1993, Danida, a Danish aid organisation channelled a total of US$ 293,196 through the PCT for the resettlement of ex-rebels in the two districts of Iteso. Those who surrendered were rehabilitated and co-opted in the NRA. One such person is Major Charles Anjina of 3rd Division. Those who did not want to continue with the army were facilitated to start a new life (Muhereza, 2001).

Despite this effort from the Ugandan government, Museveni is still nicknamed the Emulalot (Ankole herdsman) and accused of conniving with the Karimojong to steal Iteso cows, because of his Banyankole origin. The Iteso, along with the Langi and the Acholi, believe that under the Obote-led governments they were used as “political footballs to be fed on rhetoric during the elections time only to be abandoned to their fate after the politicians are home and dry.”

The political lobby groups

In May 2001, Elijah Okupa, the Iteso MP of Kasilo threatened to prosecute the government for not providing compensation for the loss of lives and property. This led to the creation of a new parliamentary group to “lobby for the development in the region and pressure the government for rapid disarmament of Karimojong warriors.” One month later, two special committees were formed in Katakiwi district. These were the Displacement and Resettlement Committee chaired by the Second Deputy Premier, Brig. Moses Ali,

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68 _The New Vision_, 19/09/1993

69 _The New Vision_, 14/03/2000


who was also Minister for Disaster Preparedness; and the Defence and Security Committee headed by the First Deputy Premier, Mr Eriya Kategaya, who was also Minister for Internal Affairs.

3.2.4. The disarmament exercise

The latest disarmament motion was passed in Parliament in June 2000 after this political pressure from the Iteso. The operation was supposed to start in August 2000 but was postponed until December 2001. Nevertheless, the Uganda government engaged in restocking the victims of Karimojong (USh 100 million) and to rehabilitate Soroti municipal market. It was part of Museveni’s Election Manifesto 2001 (Election Manifesto, 2001).

The President officially launched the disarmament exercise on 2 December 2001, because “taming the guns had failed.” The exercise was designed to be in two phases. The first phase was the voluntary disarmament period. This was scheduled for December to January 2002. The second phase of forceful disarmament would immediately follow. It should be noted that the launch of the process coincided with the dry season in the region. The President also spearheaded the sensitisation process before launching the programme. He was camped at Morulinga in Moroto district for two weeks before the launch in December 2001. One issue that had to be dealt with was compensation for the surrendered weapons. He had initially agreed to provide a certificate for every gun returned, but after realising the willingness of the Karimojong to give in their guns, grain and agricultural tools were included as part of the incentive list. The period for voluntary disarmament was extended until 15 February 2001 to give a second chance to the undecided. By this deadline, the response was still unsatisfactory according to the Division Commander, 3rd Division of the UPDF based in Moroto. After a lull of about a month, forceful disarmament was eventually launched.

The Moroto NGO Forum, through LWF, organised a meeting held on 17 January 2002 at Mt. Moroto Hotel on the disarmament process. The process was a success except that the Jie attacked the Bokora in Lopei on 29 December 2001 and many more times after that. These attacks included raiding cattle some

72 *The New Vision*, 25/01/2000
killings. The Bokora had earlier attacked the Jie and the Poro Nyakway.

In his remarks, RDC-Moroto John Abingwa, observed that “a lot of people ask about the progress of disarmament in Karamoja. For four decades, there has been insecurity due to the introduction of modern weapons. Cattle raids, conflicts and road thuggery increased within Karamoja and with their neighbours. Arms trafficking from Sudan and Kenya worsened the situation. Cattle rustling and lawlessness have prevailed causing loss of lives. The decentralisation process became difficult. The traditional powers of the elders are eroded because of the guns. Karamoja is the poorest area of Uganda. Neighbouring districts pressed the government for disarmament. It has provoked fear and panic among the Karimojong. Many people doubt the feasibility of the operation because of survival issues. Jie and Pokot attacked Bokora. Thieves crossed over to Iteso. The beginning of such kind of operation is always rough but we will accomplish it. The end of the voluntary disarmament is planned for 15 February, and after that forceful disarmament will start. 66 LDU’s per sub-county have been trained and deployed. Soldiers have been deployed at the border and local disarmament committees have been set up. 7000 guns have been recovered so far. The movement of guns on the roads and in the trading centres has stopped. Road ambushes have considerably reduced but not all the guns have been surrendered.”

A Pian kraal leader explained that raids had taken place during the disarmament process. The Pian feared the Pokot who had fled to Kenya with their arms. Some people expressed their lack of confidence in the government, the army and the LDU to protect them. The 3rd Division Commander of the UPDF Col. Sula Semakula accepted some of this information but responded that “the Division headquarters has moved from Mbale to Moroto in order to be closer to the people. Concerning the raids of the 29th December when Jie raided Bokora killing one man and injuring others, some cattle was recovered and suspects arrested during an operation in Jie country. The Pian also raided Ngaram and we recovered some cattle and suspects have been arrested. My only worry is to be accused by the Human Rights Commission in future because of overcrowding the cells. Many suspects have been arrested but we do not have enough Magistrates to try them. I also appeal to the kraal leaders to use the joint command centres set up in each district. There are no secrets. You can ask questions. I always ask locals to come with me to witness. Our approach is

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different from the one in Gulu. We want the population to guide us. The locals have to tell us where to deploy."

Other kraal leaders responded that the main concerns were external assaults. The Turkana attack the Matheniko in Rupa and the Tepeth; the Pokot attack the Pian and Matheniko. This is because the disarmament exercise is a unilateral move by Uganda without the Kenya government's participation. However, on 29 January 2002, Major General Mwanyia, the Kenya Chief of Military intelligence visited Moroto to learn about Uganda's experience with disarmament. There is also the threat of internal assaults. The Jie attacked the Bokora in Naoi and the Upe Pokot attacked the Pian. The Jie were accused of not surrendering most of their weapons, but were not represented in the meeting. The Karimojong also expressed fear of expulsion by the Iteso when they crossed over at the height of the dry season. They argued that the disarmament left them vulnerable. The only solution would be to deploy LDUs at strategic points along the border and near the kraal to protect the animals from raiders. The actual number of LDUs is not sufficient. 292 LDUs should be deployed in the sub-county bordering the frontier and 146 in the other sub-districts.

Despite all efforts by the Uganda government, the responses on the ground were and still are authoritarian. The case of Lomaraitot was reported to the Uganda Human Right Commission (UHRC) on 21 March 2001. UHCR was requested to investigate on the arrest of Lt. Owen George Bada and his detention at Soroti military barracks. The information obtained through Lt. Col Sam Kavuma, the Brigade Commander 306 Brigade Soroti, related the incident as follows: “The suspect, together with other officers and men of the UPDF mounted an operation in Karamoja in a place called Amoloton at the border of Karamoja and Iteso. The motive of the operation was to weed out suspect cattle rustlers in the area. Apparently, the Army reached a camp called ‘CHIPS’ run by some Christian NGO where they cited a wanted felon called Luuka and in the ensuing attempt to apprehend him overreacted. In the process, they killed 17 people including the wanted felon’s wives and children. Preliminary investigations carried out by the UPDF authorities found that the civilians had been killed in cold blood and thus arrested the suspect together with two other officers, who were produced before the Unit Disciplinary Committee (UDC) on 26 February 2001. The offence being capital, the
matter is to be heard before the Divisional Court Martial."\(^74\) The case was out of the jurisdiction of the UHRC.

After the Ngariam incident, the Katakwi-Moroto road was immediately closed. Cattle were recovered in Napak Hills of Nabilatuk County. Five suspects were arrested—3 from Nabilatuk County and 2 from Lolachat sub-county. Later, 14 more suspects were arrested in Nabilatuk sub-county. The local authorities of Nabilatuk claimed and still claim that the people arrested were innocent. "First, the gunshot came, destroyed animals and burnt houses. Three people died in the bombing. On 16 October 2001, 19 people were arrested in Nabilatuk while going to church. Among them was the Parish Chief of Kaske, Max Sagal. They were taken to Moroto and then Soroti and now they are in Mbale. One died in Soroti. One of the real suspects, John Lokuko was arrested and escaped. Moreover, the Pian complained about the confiscation of animals. 90 heads of cow were stolen from Ngariam and the army rounded up 502 heads of cattle that never reached their rightful owners. They just haphazardly raided any kraal. They did not use the right channels. They could have come and asked the local administration to investigate."\(^75\) Elders from New Ngariam reported that 500 head of cattle were stolen and 191 recovered. But these were Karimojong cattle.

**Conclusions**

Since December 2001, there have been no AK-47s seen in the villages or on the roads. The disarmament enforced the idea of the illegality of self-help in the region. Nevertheless, the incapacity of the LDUs and the army to protect the Karimojong against the intrusions of the Kenyan Turkana and Pokot and to secure their access to the vital western Acholi and Iteso swamps compromised the process. The recent transfer of the 3\(^{rd}\) division to Gulu to fight the LRA back from their bases in southern Sudan and the spectrum of famine in Karamoja is a bad sign.

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