

Research Article

Contribution of Conservation Diplomacy to Protracted Land Conflicts in Suyian Ranch, Laikipia County, Kenya

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Abstract

Objective and Context: There has been little research on the effect of conservation diplomacy on land conflicts in Laikipia County, Kenya, which is the focus of this study. The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between conservation diplomacy and protracted land conflicts in Suyian Ranch, Laikipia County, Kenya. **Methodology:** An exploratory convergent mixed research design was employed, where interviews and surveys were undertaken concurrently. The target population was 165,447 people living in Laikipia North and Laikipia West sub-counties, where Suyian Ranch is located. Additional population members included the local pastoralist community around Suyian ranch, the management of the ranch, the farmers around Suyian ranch and the local security apparatus in Laikipia County. Simple random sampling was used to select 96 residents of Laikipia North and Laikipia West sub-counties to participate in the study. Further, purposive sampling was used to select the sample size to participate in Key informant interviews. Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed using content analysis and descriptive statistics methods, respectively. **Key Findings and Recommendations:** The findings revealed that Suyian Ranch activities, such as reporting the pastoralists to the government security agencies, who often respond with lethal force against the pastoralists, resulted in conflict. The study recommends that Suyian Ranch management embrace peaceful conflict resolution methods such as getting into agreement with pastoralists as regards access to water and pasture during droughts. The government to stop the blanket use of brute force against all pastoralists, as some are genuine pastoralists in need of pasture and water.

Keywords

Conservation Diplomacy, Land Conflicts, Ranch, Protracted Conflict

1. Introduction

According to Dobriansky, conservation diplomacy refers to the use of diplomatic tools and strategies for states to enter into agreements or treaties with other states or citizens of a different country on the conservation of natural resources [1]. Conservancy diplomacy enables citizens of other countries to establish a conservancy in Kenya where they own large tracts of land to conserve wildlife, plant species or for agriculture. For instance, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was founded on

land allocated by the British colonial government in 1922 to the Craig-Douglas family [2]. These conservancies contribute to the host countries' economies by spurring tourism and thus a foreign exchange earner. If well-handled and managed, conservancy diplomacy can be of great diplomatic tool and benefit to all, especially in countering the harmful effects of climate change.

Despite conservation diplomacy having the potential to re-

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Received: 1 July 2025; **Accepted:** 28 July 2025; **Published:** 13 August 2025



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store a degraded environment, resolve conflict and achieve stability, it also has the potential to worsen already existing land conflicts and tension within and between states [3]. Conservation diplomacy that leads to the setting up of protected areas and conservancies can only be achieved at the expense of the human population. The protected areas and conservancies often intersect with territories occupied or claimed by communities, hence conflicting interests. Conservation at the expense of communities has been blamed for displacement, human rights abuses, and violence against the community in the pursuit of protecting biodiversity [4].

Conservation and associated dislocation of Indigenous communities often aim to create nature spaces separate from the local community and their livelihood activities, such as pastoralism [3]. The local community that depends on nature for its livelihood are thus estranged from it. As such, conservation can be said to have negative impacts on the livelihood of indigenous and local populations, such as pastoralists, especially in accessing and controlling land resources. Such displacement and human rights abuses in setting up conservancies and protected areas in Kenya have been met with resistance and uprising by the local communities, especially in cases where such can be attributed to historical injustices [5]. Studies on conservation diplomacy have tended to focus on its benefits, including peace building, stability, environmental conservation, and protection of endangered plant and animal species [6]. Other studies have interrogated the contribution of historical land injustices and colonial land acquisition (i.e., present-day conservancies) to land conflicts in Kenya and beyond. Historical land injustices and atrocities have been blamed on most land conflicts, bewildering the African continent [7, 8]. Another group of studies have narrated how the competition for scarce resources such as land has mutated into full-blown conflicts. Those owning large tracks of land, such as ranches and conservancies, are embroiled in conflicts with the local communities who do not own land [9]. Studies have tended to recommend that the national security organs rein in the land conflicts before they mutate into full-blown violence [7]. Current research has glaring knowledge gaps in the literature. First, most studies on conservation diplomacy have tended to be global with scant local studies [3, 10, 11]. Further, studies have tended to ignore the ills associated with conservation diplomacy, such as land conflicts and their implications on land conflicts in Kenya. Secondly, the studies on drivers of land conflicts in Laikipia, Kenya, have not linked conservation diplomacy to land conflicts in the context of Suyian Ranch [8, 9, 12, 13]. The gaps informed the need for another study examining the contribution of conservation diplomacy to the protracted land conflicts in Suyian Ranch in Laikipia County, Kenya.

1.1. Problem Statement

Despite the role that conservation diplomacy can play in cultivating peace within states, Kenya has witnessed land

conflicts pitting conservancy owners against pastoralists. Pastoralists argue that ranchers took advantage of them and duped them into signing agreements and treaties that they did not understand, thereby surrendering the ownership and control of their communal land [14]. One such treaty is the Anglo-Maasai treaty in 1904, which resulted in the Maasai community giving access to their ancestral land to white settlers and displaced inhabitants [13]. Conservation diplomatic efforts, such as the setting up of conservancies in Laikipia County, are already being blamed for the scramble over land resources and ensuing land conflict in various ranches and conservancies in Laikipia County. Suyian Ranch, a leading conservancy in Laikipia, has already witnessed multiple tensions pitting the ranch management against the indigenous pastoralists and farmers in Laikipia [9]. The conflict has often manifested itself in terms of the invasion of ranches by pastoralists who have, in the past, burned down tourist lodges and grazed thousands of cattle, destroying available pasture [15]. Failure to mitigate the ensuing conservation-driven land conflicts within Suyian Ranch may gravitate towards a full-blown land conflict in the other conservancies in the larger Laikipia county, with consequences including death, destruction of property, loss of revenue from tourism and carbon credits. Further, the conflict may result in constrained relations between Kenya and the governments of the ranchers' nationalities.

1.2. Research Question

What is the contribution of conservation diplomacy to the protracted land conflicts in Suyian Ranch in Laikipia County, Kenya?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

Resource scarcity theory was advanced by Homer Doxon to explain the link between resource scarcity and conflict [16]. The theory notes that as the supply of non-renewable natural resources declines for any reason, competition emerges for the use and control of the resource. The competition for the use and control of the resource results in aggression among competing parties, hence conflict [16]. The scarcity of the resource motivates a few elites in the community to take control of the source, hence disenfranchising the majority of the weaker members of the society. The disenfranchised members may seek to forcefully gain access to the use of the shared resource, which has been captured by a few elites in the society, hence resulting in conflict and even violence in extreme cases [16].

The relative resource scarcity precipitated by the acquisition of land to establish protected areas, such as conservancies, may trigger conflict and sometimes violence at the individual

and collective levels. The conflict is sometimes provoked by resource misappropriation during periods of abundance by a few elites [17]. The community that engages in violence due to resource scarcity is often motivated by a collection of factors such as historical animosity, inequality, and illegitimate greed by a few members of the society who control vast resources [18]. The conflict resulting from a scarcity of a resource is often made worse by underlying factors such as inequality, economic degradation, political influence, unclear property rights, and proliferation of firearms, among others.

The theory underpins the link between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts in the ranches in Laikipia County. Conservation diplomacy is one of the factors contributing to land scarcity, as arable land that can support pastoralism is chunked out to set up conservancies and other protected areas. The pastoralists have to find a coping strategy to protect their economic activity. One of the coping strategies is to migrate to land areas with pasture and water for their animals. Among these areas as the conservancies and ranches. The pastoralists may forcefully enter the conservancies and ranches to have pasture and water for their animals during drought, resulting in conflict between pastoralists and ranch owners. Further, beyond the conservation-induced land conflicts in conservancies and ranches, the historical land ownership injustices, especially where Africans lost land to white settlers, currently managing most of the ranches in Laikipia County, are another factor driving land conflicts. The Resource Scarcity Theory has been instrumental in examining how natural resource conflicts, such as land conflicts, occur. The theory underpins the objective of the link between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts, as well as the link between other drivers of land conflicts and land conflict in Laikipia County. Conservation diplomacy is a key factor that contributes to land scarcity, hence the competition between ranchers and pastoralists over available arable lands. However, the theory does not address the government's efforts in trying to resolve the land conflict in Laikipia County, hence the need for another theory that captures the government's efforts in resolving the land conflict and challenges experienced in the process. Therefore, Rational Choice Theory informed the actions of the government in resolving conservation-driven land conflicts in Laikipia County in general and Suyian Ranch in particular.

2.2. Empirical Review

In Southeastern Myanmar, Woods evaluated global conservation projects implemented in forest frontiers by the authority of rebel groups. Such intervention can aid in asserting state control over territories that are rich in resources and populations living in those territories [19]. The study argues that the green territoriality concept, which describes efforts of conservation that extend beyond the state, helps counter-insurgency groups. The study was a case of conservation efforts implemented in forested areas occupied by insurgency groups in south-eastern Myanmar. The study specifically

examined efforts led by the military in the forceful displacement of insurgency groups hiding in forested lands that are then taken over by the state for rehabilitation and preservation. The paper emphasises conservation efforts accompanied by assistance to affected and displaced populations. The current study did not just examine the use of conservation diplomacy to resolve instability but also focused on whether there is a link between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts in Ranches in the Kenyan context [19].

In Mozambique, there is an emerging wave of land and resource grabbing under the climate change narrative and policies. Climate change adaptation and mitigation projects such as Climate-Smart Agriculture and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation have resulted in land expropriation [20]. The efforts to promote community-based forest management and other climate-smart agriculture in restoring degraded areas have been blamed for having the potential to reinforce already existing land inequities and social exclusions. The overlap between conservation goals and traditional agriculture is exacerbating land conflict in a state where agriculture employs the majority of the population [20]. In the land-grabbing process, the state plays the role of identifying and reclassifying land under the narrative of conservation and then allocates land to conservationists with commercial goals such as carbon credit earnings. Land reclassification for climate-smart agriculture and conservation ignores local community aspirations, priorities and needs, thereby ultimately negatively affecting households in the rural areas as their land is expropriated. The study was limited to a link between conservation efforts and conflicts in agricultural land use change. This study sought to examine ranch-related conflicts, especially those acquired in the pre-independence period [20].

A qualitative paper based in the context of Congo, Kenya and India noted that the colonial masters claimed control over ancestral lands, thereby eroding the livelihoods of indigenous peoples [3]. Further, the paper noted that the end of colonialism did not result in the return of the customary land tenure that was before colonialism. It is noted that conservation has tended to imply putting wildlife and the natural environment ahead of people. The continued exclusion kind of conservation is harmful to them and is not sustainable. The paper asserts that exclusive kinds of conservation and individualised land ownership are flawed and problematic [3]. Hence, issues on the link between conservation and land conflicts could not be undertaken in depth. There was a need for a more locally contextualised study within Suyian Ranch to ensure an in-depth analysis of the situation. In the article on nature conservation in Kenya, Schetter examined the use of force by non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in nature conservation [21]. The study specifically examined the activities of the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), the largest NGO overseeing conservancies in northern Kenya, over the last ten years [21]. The study revealed that NRT is a state within the state whose control and influence go beyond just

conservation. Further, the findings reveal that NRT's security personnel are a serious force in northern Kenya that not only provides security to the conservancies but also actively participates in intercommunal conflicts by taking sides and violently repulsing the pastoralists who invade conservancies with the blessing of the government of Kenya [21]. In a study of community conservancies, Oburah, Lenachuru and Odadi noted that community conservancies are emerging across African pastoral rangelands to aid in bolstering wildlife conservation and livelihoods at the same time [22]. The process of improving the effectiveness and sustainability of conservancies needs the involvement of the local community. The perceptions of local community socioeconomic outcomes are very critical. In the case of Naibunga Community Conservancy in northern Kenya, the paper examined the perception of the local community as regards conservancy and associated socio-economic benefits to the community [22]. Further, the study evaluated the involvement of the local community in conservancy management. The survey study among 358 households chosen based on multi-stage sampling and key informant interviews revealed that most respondents perceived improved social and economic status due to community conservancy. The community also benefited from access to grazing resources, health facilities and schools. Further, the majority noted that they were involved in the management of the conservancy and conservation itself. Finally, the level of involvement was directly linked to the perception of socio-economic benefits received. The paper speaks to the value of local community involvement in conservation efforts aimed at benefiting the local community and reducing conflict between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts in Kenya. This study sought to digress into privately owned ranches and how their operations are linked to land-related conflicts [22].

Kieti et al. reported that Kenya faces tensions between the competing interests of tourism, conservation, real estate developers and pastoralists [12]. Conservationists and tourists are interested in the welfare of flora and fauna. This interest can only be achieved at the expense of the use of traditional land by pastoralists who are increasingly being restricted in their use of the community land. The paper examined the differing perceptions of the stakeholders and the narrative that gives preeminence to wildlife protection and associated commercial tourism at the expense of the interests and rights of the pastoralist community. The paper reveals that as the land for pastoralism shrinks due to appropriation for conservation, land conflict is bound to rise between conservationists and commercial tourism on the one hand and pastoralists on the other hand. The paper suggests a model of conservation and tourism that allows pastoralists to be involved [12]. In a case in Kenya, Dooks, through in-depth analysis, evaluated how the government is carrying out environmental protection via the conservancies model [4]. The study revealed that the Government of Kenya has, over time, prioritised the conservation of the environment and local communities' participation in conservation. However, the encroachment of the hu-

man population in private conservancies and wildlife-human conflict has become a hindrance to conservation efforts. Further, Dooks looks at human encroachment as a hindrance to conservation efforts, with the current study focused on how the land for conservation efforts was acquired and the link between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts [4].

In a study contextualised in Laikipia, Lekorere examines the competing interests over land parcels by ranchers and pastoralists [23]. The qualitative study based on an in-depth analysis of extant literature revealed that the colonial and post-colonial regimes have attempted to address land issues via customary legislation, formation of land commissions, formation of trust lands and settlement schemes. However, the chief beneficiaries have often been government officials and their cronies, with the local landless population still unconsidered [23]. The study concludes that laws enacted during the colonial period resulted in the dispossession of pastoralists of their land. The land was further transferred to ranchers who bought the land based on a willing buyer-seller policy. Therefore, the title to the lands rightfully belongs to the ranchers. However, the paper suggests that the government, ranchers and pastoralists should adopt community justice systems where the pastoralists and ranchers can benefit from land gains without having to resort to conflicts. Lekorere was based on an analysis of literature, hence the need for an empirical study collecting primary data to examine the link between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts in Suyian ranch in Laikipia [23].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Design, Population and Sampling

The study adopted an exploratory convergent mixed research design to examine how conservation diplomacy relates to land conflicts within Suyian Ranch in Laikipia County. The adoption of mixed methodology enabled the researcher to operationalise and measure variables without losing the importance of the context in research achieved through qualitative studies. Further, mixed methods make it possible to examine the strength of the relationship between variables while still retaining the rich human experiences and constructs that do not need to be related to each other [24]. The mixed methodology had both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The quantitative aspects of the study involved the collection and analysis of numerical data based on a descriptive survey questionnaire, while the qualitative aspect of the study involved the sourcing of qualitative information in the case study via the administration of key informant interviews and further application of content and narrative analysis.

The population is the total of all the elements that share some common set of characteristics [25]. The target population consisted of actors who have an interest in the land con-

licts in Suyian Ranch, Laikipia County. The population census of 2019 showed that 165,447 people were living in Laikipia North and Laikipia West sub-counties of the larger Laikipia county, where Suyian Ranch is located [26]. This target population comprised the local pastoralist community around Suyian ranch, the management of Suyian ranch, the farmers around Suyian ranch, and the local security apparatus in Laikipia County, including the area chief, administration police, and police reservists. In arriving at the sample size of the respondents living around Suyian Ranch, the study adopted the formula suggested by Kothari to select the sample size from 165,447 people living in Laikipia North and Laikipia West sub-counties of the larger Laikipia county. The formulae are given as:

$$n = \frac{N * z * z * p * q}{e * e * (N - 1) + z * z * p * q}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the target population given as 165,447 people, z is normal probability distribution at 0.05 level of significance given as 1.96, and p is the probability that the sample size characteristics are the same with population characteristics taken as 0.5, q is 1 - p and e is the error taken as 10%.

$$n = \frac{1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5 * 165,447}{0.1 * 0.1 * (165,447 - 1) + (1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5)}$$

$$n = 95.98$$

$$n = 96$$

The study thus adopted a sample size of 96 people living around the Suyian Ranch who will participate in the survey regarding the nexus between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts in Suyian Ranch. Further, the study adopted the rule of thumb to select respondents to participate in key informant interviews. Hammarberg hold that for a survey, the sample size should be between 20 - 50 cases in each minor subgroup [27]. Given that pastoralists, Suyian Ranch management, farmers, and sub-chiefs are a subgroup of the larger population, therefore, 10 (ten) pastoralists, 1 (one) representative of the Suyian ranch, 10 farmers, ten (10) administrative police, and five (5) area sub-chiefs, adding up to 36 cases, were selected to provide qualitative data via KII. The distribution of the sample size is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Size.

Respondents	Sample Size
General population	96
Pastoralists	10
Farmers	10
Representative of the Suyian ranch	1
Administrative police	10

Respondents	Sample Size
Sub chiefs	5
Total sample size	132

Regarding the survey, the researcher adopted simple random sampling where 96 people were randomly selected from a list of people living around Suyian Ranch. Simple random sampling falls under the probability sampling category, where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. The researcher then recruited the respondents from the general population to participate in the survey. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the sample size for individuals to participate in the Key Informant Interview. Therefore, the selection of respondents in key informant interviews was based on their knowledge and experiences in the content and context of concern. The pastoralist community around Suyian ranch, the representative of the management of Suyian ranch, the farmers around Suyian ranch and the local security apparatus in Laikipia County, including the area chief and administration police, will participate in the key informant interview (KII). The saturation of data determined the exact sample size for the respondents in the KII, such that when new data no longer adds significant information to the analysis, it's an indication that saturation has been reached and there is no need to collect additional data from respondents.

3.2. Data Collection

The study collected both qualitative and quantitative primary data to answer the research questions. The quantitative primary data were sourced using survey questionnaires that had both closed-ended and open-ended question items. Semi-structured questionnaires have both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Such a tool enables researchers to collect data that can be converted into a quantitative form based on ratings provided. The open-ended section of the questionnaire enables the researcher to ask probing questions to get additional information beyond what is collected in the structured section. The study also collected qualitative primary data using a key informant interview (KII) schedule. The KII schedule was open. The use of KII is recommended when detailed and qualitative data are to be collected from a few respondents. The KII schedule is preferred when a researcher needs to collect narrative responses from the research participants.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher first obtained an authorisation letter from the Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee. The letter was used to apply for a re-

search permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher used the permit to seek permission from the County Commissioner, Laikipia County, to allow the study to be undertaken. The researcher, with the assistance of the research assistants, created rapport with the prospective respondents before the start of the data collection. The KII was carried out orally in face-to-face conversation or on phone calls, where the researcher noted down Key points as the interview progressed. The interview schedule was prepared in advance and rehearsed before the data collection day. The KII was adopted to collect data from respondents picked from the pastoralists, the representatives of the management of Suyian ranch, the farmers, area chiefs and the administration police representatives. The interview with the management of Suyian Ranch, area chiefs, and an administration police representative was conducted by the chief researcher. The interviews with the pastoralist community and the farmers were undertaken by trained research assistants who are conversant with the local dialect and English language. The interview was recorded on a voice recorder for respondents who gave consent to that. The researcher and research assistants also take notes during the interview process. As regards the survey of the general population living around Suyian Ranch, the researcher, together with the research assistants, orally administered the tool to the selected 96 living around the Ranch.

3.4. Data Analysis Plan

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative data that were eventually analysed using content and narrative analysis and descriptive statistics methods, respectively, to establish the relationship between various aspects and data involved. Content and narrative analysis involved the transcription of recorded data during the interview; coding, categorising, and thematic analysis in line with study objectives; assigning meaning to themes and issues; and developing conclusions in line with study objectives. Descriptive statistics analysis, aided by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, included means, standard deviations, frequency distributions and percentages. The completed study will be disseminated first through publication in the University Repository. The researcher will also publish the research in a scholarly peer-reviewed journal with the academic community. The researcher will hold a baraza, spear-headed by the area chiefs, with the locals in Laikipia county to present findings on the relationship between conservation diplomacy and land conflict and present recommendations that would ensure such conflict is resolved. A copy of the research will also be shared with the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation and the Kenya National Library so that any interested party can access the en-

tire report.

4. Results

4.1. Response Rate and Demographics

The study issued 96 questionnaires to residents of Laikipia North and Laikipia West sub-counties of the larger Laikipia County, where Suyian Ranch is located. Of the number issued, 84 were adequately filled and usable for data analysis, making up a response rate of 87.5 percent. The response rate adequacy was in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2009), who held that a response rate of 70 percent and above in a survey is adequate for analysis. Further, the interview was undertaken among 6 pastoralists, 7 farmers, 7 administrative police, and 4 sub-chiefs. The actual number interviewed was based on saturation, where the researcher stopped the interview after sufficient information was collected for the analysis. The study examined the demographics of the respondents based on occupation, gender, and length of stay in the study area. The occupation demographics were categorised into seven strata, including farmers, pastoralists, police reservists, government employees, businesspeople, teachers, and others. The study showed that the majority of the respondents were farmers (32.4%), followed by pastoralists (25.9%), and government employees (including administrative police and sub-chiefs) at 15.7 percent, among others. Most of the occupations were represented in the study, hence the variety of views on links between conservation diplomacy and land conflicts in Suyian ranch. The study also examined the gender of the respondents, with the study establishing that there were 43 (39.8%) female respondents and 65 (60.2%) male respondents; hence, both genders were represented in the study. Finally, the study examined how long the respondents had stayed in the study area. The findings showed that most respondents had stayed in the study area for 6 years and hence had experienced land-related conflicts around Suyian Ranch firsthand. Their long stay also enabled them to understand the link between conservation diplomacy activities and land conflicts in the ranches and conservancies within the larger Laikipia county.

4.2. Conservation Diplomacy and Conflict Nexus

The study sought to examine the relationship between conservation diplomacy and protracted land conflicts in Suyian Ranch, Laikipia County, Kenya. The objective was examined based on data sourced from the administration of the survey questionnaire and the Key Informants Interview. The findings based on the survey are presented in Table 2, where frequency distribution and percentages were adopted to analyse the data.

Table 2. *Conservation Diplomacy and Land Conflicts in Suyian Ranch.*

Question	Responses Category	Freq.	%
Do you know Suyian Ranch?	No	4	4.8
	Yes	80	95.2
	Total	84	100.0
	Rearing animals for beef	20	23.8
If yes, what do you know about it?	have hotels inside	24	28.6
	has good pasture for animals	23	27.4
	It was once our land	13	15.5
	Do not know	4	4.8
	Total	84	100.0
	No	6	7.1
Would you say Suyian Ranch is responsible for the land conflicts witnessed in this area?	Yes	74	88.1
	Don't know	4	4.8
	Total	84	100.0

The study first queried the survey respondents about their knowledge of Suyian Ranch, where 80 (95.2%) respondents had known the Ranch, with 4 (4.8%) not knowing the ranch. Further, the respondents in the KII were also asked about their knowledge of Suyian Ranch, to which all of them reported knowing the ranch and its activities. The study then asked a follow-up question on what the respondents knew about Suyian Ranch. The respondents reported various activities they could link to Suyian Ranch, including the rearing of animals for beef, having hotels and restaurants operating inside, and the ranch having good pastures for animals, with others noting that it was once their land. It was thus clear that the ranch undertook activities that were of interest to the local community.

Finally, the respondents in the survey were asked whether they considered Suyian ranch responsible for land conflicts witnessed in this area of which 74 (88.1%) responded with a 'Yes' implying that they considered the ranch activities (such as rearing animals, operating hotels and restaurants, having good pasture for animals and occupying land formerly owned by the indigenous population) as being responsible for land conflicts in the area. Further, the majority of the respondents in the interview also tended to have the same opinion linking Suyian Ranch activities to land conflicts being witnessed in the areas. Respondent KII/004, a sub-chief, noted:

"The whole issue about the Ranch conflict is deeper than it looks. The conflict between Pastoralists and ranch ownership has a lot to do with historical land injustices where land was taken away from the Maa community in this area....to add salt to the injury, most of the white game ranchers such as Suyian ranch often block the pastoralist community from temporary

grazing of their animals in their lands during periods of acute drought. The herders have often viewed the white-owned ranches as part of their ancestral heritage, hence they invade when stopped from accessing it by ranch owners...."

The responses in the survey and interview were incongruent and showed that Suyian Ranch was linked to land conflicts experienced in the study area. The ranch, via its economic activities (such as rearing animals for beef and tourist hotels) and being on land that was historically belonging to the indigenous Maa community, results in most of the land conflicts in the study area. Further, the act of the ranch owners blocking pastoralists from accessing good pasture for animals during drought was linked to land conflicts in the study area.

The respondents also mentioned that the ranch management activities can be blamed for the escalation in the area. The ranch activities reported to be leading to land conflict in the Suyian Ranch and other owned ranches included reporting the pastoralists to government authorities while asking for protection. The government often responds with lethal force against pastoralists via heavily armed police officers and Police reservists. Further, digging trenches around ranches to stop pastoralists sometimes leads to the death or injury of animals and pastoralists themselves. Respondent KII/002, a farmer, noted:

"I watched closely the events of the ranches that were attacked in late 2016 and early 2017. I can tell you for a fact that the measures that have been taken by white-owned ranches against the herders have partly contributed to the increased attacks. The ranch owners have been known to report the herders to the government authorities, in which case they have often sought protection from heavily armed policemen. These

policemen have often fatally wounded herders on the slightest provocation. Some ranches have also dug long, deep trenches around the ranches to stop livestock from accessing them, with cases of livestock dropping in the trenches, especially in the darkness of the night... These methods have pushed the pastoralists to take revenge in the form of attacks on the ranches."

The respondents in the interview also tended to mention that Suyian Ranch management has been making a lot of income from the lands and not sharing the same with the local population. The respondents mentioned that there are executive hotels within the Ranch that attract tourists who pay high fees. They also mentioned that the ranch keeps sheep, which earns the ranch large sums of income. However, they complained that the ranch was making a killing on the land that once belonged to locals, but cannot share the proceeds with the locals who are often living in poverty. Respondent KII/001, a pastoralist, retorted:

"Look at us? We are poor and often living at the mercy of the gods. When drought comes, it kills our animals, and we are left with nothing. This 'Mzungu' makes a lot of money on land belonging to our ancestors, and they cannot share even a penny with us. They keep a lot of sheep that we hear are fetching better in the export market. They also have luxury hotels on this ranch that attract tourists who pay very high prices. Why can't they just share some of that income with us? They can drill for us boreholes, build schools and other things to help us as a community...."

The interview further showed that the displacement of the locals from the conservancy area was leading to land conflict in Suyian Ranch. The respondents noted that the Ranch had occupied a large track of land in Laikipia county, thereby displacing locals who had no option but to move to more drier lands with little pasture and water for animals. When the pasture is depleted and water points dry up, the pastoralists have no option but to find water and pasture by invading the ranch. KII/004, a sub-chief, noted:

"This rancher's tool fertile lands with rivers running through, while the pastoralists were displaced to drier sections of land. The water points are few and dry up quickly in the drier sections that pastoralists have been banished to. The grass is also not adequate for the animals in those drier sections. The pastoralist is therefore forced to invade the ranch when drought begins biting and the only available pasture and water are in the ranch...."

The respondents in the interview also disclosed that the ranch had closed off large tracks of land via fencing, thus the pastoralists have to go around the ranch, covering long distances to access water and pasture for their animals on the other side of the ranch. Such fencing activities that limit the free movement of pastoralists along traditional tracks in search of water and pasture are another source of conflict in the Suyian ranch. The pastoralist, therefore, sometimes invades ranches on their way through to other pastures and water blocked by the ranch. Respondent KII/010, a pastoralist,

stated:

"Generally, we pastoralists are peace-loving people, but sometimes we are pushed to the corner, with violence the only way out. You can imagine this Ranch sits on acres and acres of land that have been fenced off from us. When we want to access pasture and water on the other side of the ranch, we have to go all the way around the long fence. Sometimes, we just cut through the fence and as we pass through to access pasture and water on the other side of the ranch."

The respondents in the survey also noted that the mode of land acquisition for setting up conservancies was another factor that was responsible for conflict in Suyian, just like in other ranches in Laikipia County. The respondents reported that the ranches were fraudulently acquired from their ancestors, for which they were made to sign treaties that they did not understand, which led to them losing control of such lands to ranchers in the area. Additionally, such fraudulent activities have never stopped, even in the current times. The ranchers continue to extend the acres of land under their control via land acquisition methods that hoodwink the local population. The ranchers often seek to control community lands by making community leaders and local elites sign certain agreements that pass the land control and use to them without going through local community members. Such community leaders and elites are often compromised in such undertakings [21].

The findings based on survey questionnaires and KII have revealed that Suyian Ranch activities are linked to the land conflicts experienced in the area. Of particular concern to the community is the ranch management activities, such as reporting the pastoralists to the government security agencies, who often respond with lethal force against the pastoralists. Such use of brute force against the pastoralists implies that the pastoralist is either injured or their lives are lost, especially in fire exchanges. The management of Suyian ranch has also dug sections around the ranch, leading to injuries to animals belonging to pastoralists. Such activities that lead to injuries and death often stoke anger, resulting in retaliation from the pastoralists on the Ranch, hence more cycles of land-related violence that become protracted. The study also established that Suyian Ranch is not sharing the income earned from economic activities taking place on the ranch, despite the land once belonged to the indigenous Maasai community. The act of failing to share revenues with the community that surrounds the ranch, especially when the community perceive that the land once belonged to their ancestors, also leads to attacks on Suyian Ranch and other ranches in the area.

Further, the study revealed that the Ranch had occupied a large track of land in Laikipia County, leading to the displacement of pastoralists and the local community, who had no option but to move to drier lands with little pasture and water for animals. When the pasture is depleted and water points dry up, the pastoralists have no option but to find water and pasture by invading the ranch. Additionally, the ranch had closed off large tracks of land via fencing, thus the pastoralist

has to go around the ranch, covering long distances to access water and pasture for their animals on the other side of the ranch. Such fencing activities that limit the free movement of pastoralists along traditional tracks in search of water and pasture are another source of conflict in the Suyian ranch. Finally, the findings showed that the mode of land acquisition for setting up conservancies was another factor that was responsible for conflict in Suyian, just like in other ranches in Laikipia County. The findings showed that ranchers continue to extend the acres of land under their control via land acquisition methods that hoodwink the local population. The ranchers often seek to control community lands by compromising community leaders and local elites into signing certain agreements that pass the land control and use to them without going through local community members.

5. Discussion

The findings revealed that Suyian Ranch activities are linked to the land conflicts experienced in the area. The ranch management activities, such as reporting the pastoralists to the government security agencies and digging trenches around the conservancy, have not been welcomed. The dug sections around the ranch result in injuries to animals belonging to pastoralists. Further, the security agencies respond with lethal force, resulting in human injury or even death in certain cases. The pastoralists, therefore, have attacked the ranches such as Suyian Ranch in retaliation for injuries, death and losses suffered from this conflict. Such brute force from security agencies and inhumane handling of matters by Ranch managements stokes anger among pastoralists who find themselves constrained to fight back for their survival through retaliatory attacks on Ranches. The finding has implications for how the government and the management of ranches should deal with pastoralists. The use of brute force seems not to be working and may even aggravate the matter further; hence, alternative mechanisms should be identified, such as peaceful means like an agreement between ranchers and pastoralists on how to share water and pasture, especially during drought. The activity of the Ranch of continuing to acquire and occupy large track of lands in Laikipia county leading to displacement of pastoralists and local community who have no option but to move to more drier lands with little pasture and water for animal results to land conflict in the area. When the pasture is depleted and the water point dries up, the pastoralists have no option but to find water and pasture by invading the ranch. Moreover, the ranch had closed off large tracks of land via fencing, thus the pastoralist has to go around the ranch covering long distances to access water and pasture for their animals. Such fencing activities that limit the free movement of pastoralists along traditional tracks in search of water and pasture are another source of conflict in the Suyian ranch.

The study also established that Suyian Ranch is not sharing the income earned from economic activities taking place on the ranch, despite the land once belonged to the indigenous Maasai

community. The refusal to share the income earned on the land that once belonged to the Indigenous community while their descendants wallow in poverty has therefore resulted in pastoralists taking matters into their own hands to recover their lands. Such endeavours of unlawful land recovery, occupation and control are often met with brute force and inhumane treatment from law enforcement agencies such as the Police service, hence violent conflict ensues in the process. Indeed, Cele and Moyo noted that white settlers in Laikipia seized most of the lands from the community, leading to displacement [28]. The seized lands were used by the white settlers to establish ranches and large-scale horticultural cropping. Wanjiku et al. reported that pastoralists felt that ranch owners were using their lands to enrich themselves at their expense since they no longer offer community sponsorship to schools and hospitals like they used to [29]. Further, the findings agree with Cele and Moyo, who observed that the colonial masters in South Africa dispossessed land from indigenous communities, driving them to infertile soils and with no land entitlements, just like in the case of Indigenous people around Suyian Ranch that lost their lands to conservationists who later on set up ranches. Cele and Moyo further noted that such displacement resulted in social evils such as inequality and poverty in South Africa that is also being witnessed in the Kenyan Context especially around Suyian Ranch [28]. Such social evils have witnessed violent encounters between Indigenous communities and authorities on protected lands in South Africa. The same is also true for Indigenous communities around Suyian Ranch, who often fight back for social evils like poverty and inequality that have resulted from their ancestral land being seized by colonial masters who later turned into conservationists. The finding has implication on rent sharing between conservationists and local community. There should be a benefit sharing mechanism especially for conservation efforts that have impact on the community. The community should see themselves benefiting from conservation efforts in their locality.

Finally, the mode of land acquisition for setting up conservancies was another factor that was responsible for conflict in Suyian, just like in other ranches in Laikipia County. The ranchers continue to extend the acres of land under their control via land acquisition methods that hoodwink the local population. The ranchers often seek to control community lands by compromising community leaders and local elites into signing certain agreements that pass the land control and use to them without going through local community members. The finding is further in line with resource scarcity theory, explaining how natural resource conflicts such as land conflicts reported in Suyian Ranch occur [16]. Conservation diplomacy activities such as environmental preservation happening in Suyian ranch and other ranches and conservancies in Laikipia have contributed to land scarcity when large tracks of land are hived and fenced off for controlled use by a few ranch owners. The indigenous pastoralist community, which is the majority, find themselves boxed into land sections that are often overgrazed and with no reliable supply of

pasture for their animals. This results in competition between Suyian ranch owners and pastoralists over available arable lands controlled by ranch owners. The pastoralist often invades Suyian Ranch and other ranches in Laikipia County to get access to pasture and water for their livestock. The ranch management responds by getting security agencies and digging trenches to repulse the pastoralists, who often get injured and lose some of their livestock, leading to retaliatory attacks on the ranches.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Conclusion

This study sought to examine the contribution of conservation diplomacy to the protracted land conflicts in Suyian Ranch in Laikipia County, Kenya. Based on the findings, the study concludes that conservation diplomacy activities via the setting up of ranches (i.e. Suyian Ranch activities) are linked to the land conflicts experienced in the study area and beyond. The activity of ranch management, including reporting the pastoralists to the government security agencies and digging trenches around ranches, has been linked to land conflicts experienced in the ranch. The heavily armed police officers and police reservists often use brute force on the pastoralists, leading to injuries or even death in certain cases. The pastoralist therefore attacks the ranches such as Suyian Ranch in retaliation for injuries, death and losses suffered, thus conflict hence conflict escalation. Further, the refusal of ranch management to share the income earned on the land that once belonged to the indigenous community (i.e. Pastoralists) while their descendants wallow in poverty has therefore resulted in pastoralists taking matters into their own hands to recover their lands, hence conflict ensues in the process. The finding has implications for rent sharing between conservationists and the local community. There should be a benefit-sharing mechanism, especially for conservation efforts that have an impact on the community. The community should see itself benefiting from conservation efforts in its locality. Additionally, the conservation diplomacy via the setting of Ranches had resulted in a large tract of land (i.e., Laikipia County) being occupied, leading to the displacement of pastoralists and the local community to drier lands with little pasture and water for animals. Whenever the pasture is depleted and water points dry up, the pastoralists have no option but to find water and pasture by invading the ranches. Suyian Ranch, which lost its lands to conservationists who later set up ranches. Such social evils have witnessed violent encounters between Indigenous communities and Ranches in Kenya (i.e., Suyian Ranch), who often fight back for social evils like poverty and inequality that have resulted from their ancestral land being seized by colonial masters who later turned conservationists.

Additionally, the ranches close off large tracks of land via fencing; thus, the pastoralists have to go around the ranch,

covering long distances to access water and pasture for their animals. Such fencing activities limit the free movement of pastoralists along traditional tracks in search of water and pasture, resulting in the inversion of ranches (i.e., Suyian Ranch) as pastoralists pass through the ranches on their way to pasture and water. Finally, the mode of land acquisition for setting up conservancies is also responsible for land conflicts in Suyian, just like in other ranches in Laikipia County and beyond. The ranchers continue to extend the acres of land under their control via land acquisition methods that hoodwink the local population. The ranchers often seek to control community lands by compromising community leaders and local elites into signing certain agreements that pass the land control and use to them without going through local community members. Such activity, done with minimal involvement of the local community, has meant that the community finds itself displaced or stopped from using its ancestral lands. This stokes anger and eventually attacks on ranches within the wider Laikipia county. Even though past studies have tended to link conservation diplomacy activities, such as the exploitation of resources without sharing with the local community, to land conflicts, this study went a step further and identified other conservation diplomacy-related activities that have contributed to land conflicts not only in Suyian Ranch but also in the wider Laikipia County. The activities include excessive force by security agencies against pastoralists, digging of trenches around ranches leading to injury to pastoralists and their animals, fencing off of large tracks of land, thereby blocking traditional paths and tracks for pastoralists in search of pasture and water for their animals and finally, the irregular, continued acquisition of community lands.

6.2. Recommendations

The study thus suggests to the management and ownership of Suyian Ranch and other ranches in Laikipia County to consider a peaceful resolution of the conflict that arises between them and the pastoralists. The use of brute force against the pastoralists only serves to stoke emotions and anger; hence, more retaliatory attacks lead to a cycle of protracted conflicts. The ownership of ranches should consider peaceful conflict resolution, such as getting into agreement with pastoralists as regards access to water and pasture during droughts. The research also recommends that ownership of ranches in Laikipia County should consider sharing revenues generated on the ranch with the local community. This sharing can take the form of corporate social responsibility, such as building schools, scholarships and employment opportunities for the benefit of the locals. Such assistance programs can go a long way in cultivating positive relationships with the local community, hence reducing the cases of violent attacks on the ranches.

Study recommends that the government tone down on blanket use of brute force against all pastoralists when they invade ranches. The government and its security apparatus

should differentiate between genuine pastoralists who just need pasture and water for their animals from violent bandits whose aim is to destroy properties. Such differentiation will enable the government to deal differently with the two groups. The government should also look into setting aside a budget towards restorative justice for the pastoralists and other Indigenous people who lost land to white settlers owning ranches in the pre-independence period. Such compensation should support pastoralists who want to pursue different economic activities away from nomadic pastoralism. The current study was on the effect of conservation diplomacy on land conflicts in Suyian Ranch in Laikipia County, Kenya. Therefore, the findings are more suitable for adaptation around Suyian Ranch and other nearby ranches in Laikipia County, Kenya. Future studies can be based on the same topic but covering all the ranches and conservancies in Laikipia County to enable the generalisation of findings. Further, future studies can examine the opportunities that conservation diplomacy via ranches and conservancies accrue to the local population and the county government of Laikipia.

Abbreviations

KII	Key Informant Interview
NACOSTI	National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRT	Northern Rangelands Trust

Acknowledgments

I also want to recognise the library staff who helped guide me to relevant scholarly materials and literature for my use during the literature review. The contribution of my research assistant, Mr. Michael Ochieng Obuya, cannot go unnoticed. You helped collect the needed data in the field.

Author Contributions

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Funding

This work is supported by the financial resources of the corresponding author.

Data Availability Statement

The data is available from the corresponding author upon

reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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