Cross-Border Crimes and Security Challenges in Nigeria

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A b s t r a c t

Cross-border crimes represent a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for financial or economic benefits also socio-political cum religious considerations. It is a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders. Cross-border crimes include human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling or trafficking of weapons, international terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, and illicit trafficking in diamonds, business fraud, to mention but these notable few. Organized criminal groups carry out their illicit activities using major technological tools such as information networks, the financial system, and other sophisticated means, while other crude methods include concealing banned items from one country to the other, human trafficking and major oil bunkering activities with speed boats and vessels. These activities have an adverse effect on the security of the nation. Assessing these challenges forms the focus of this study. Data are obtained largely from secondary sources and as such, content analysis is used to assess the variables under discourse. The result obtained provides the framework for conclusion and policy recommendations on how to improve the management of the Nigerian borders.

Keywords: *Cross border, Crime, Security, and Management*

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Background to the Study

Cross-border crimes are common among countries with porous borders. This is common among most African countries like Nigeria. Organized crimes tend to destroy the political, economic and social relationships among countries. In practice, African states face at least three challenges when tackling transnational crime. The first is how to deal with crimes that emanate from outside their various jurisdictions. The second concerns investigating the crime with a transnational element and the third involving tracing and then recovering the proceeds of crime that have been moved out of the country where the crime occurred (Hatchard, 2006).

Abia (2013) observed that cross-border crimes include a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for financial or economic benefits and also socio-political or religious considerations. It is a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders. These would include human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling or trafficking of weapons, cross-border terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, illicit trafficking in diamonds, corruption, business fraud, to mention but a few.

The consequences are numerous. West Africa has become notorious for instability and armed conflict and is increasingly known for transnational criminal networks. Free movement across borders creates security threats in the sub-region. Smugglers, traffickers, terrorists and armed robbers traverse the sub-regional borders without major challenge (Addo, 2006). Neo-liberal discourses promoting globalization prioritize economic interconnectedness at the expense of border control (Adeniran, 1987; Carr, 2007 and Brown, 2013).

Nigeria has offered several setbacks from cross-border crimes. These crimes affect the state security and economy. Nigeria's economy is not lead back within the West African sub-region due to decades of neglect and misrule has allowed informal economies at the borders to thrive on crime. Nigeria's borders with its many pot-holes are 'used to smuggle people, guns, rice, tokunboh (used) cars, fake pharmaceuticals and other contraband goods'. The North-Eastern part of the Nigerian Border which has the highest concentration of border communities can be listed as the most backward due to most difficult terrain, lowest literacy, highest poverty, and unemployment rate. The combination of these factors could explain why the region has the highest number of border-related crimes including the Boko-Haram insurgency.

Several factors advanced for this increase in border crime rates in Nigeria. Majorly is poverty. In an environment where there is high poverty rate, illiteracy, poor governance, corruption, ethnic violence among others, drug trafficking and drug addiction is growing every day. Illicit drugs are common among the youth of the 21st century who are often between the age bracket 18-40years old (Onuoha, 2013). It is imperative that this problem is examined with the objective of identifying measures to address its negative consequences in Nigeria. Data are obtained largely from secondary sources and as such,

content analysis is used to assess the variables under discourse. The result obtained provides the framework for conclusion and policy recommendations on how to improve the management of the Nigerian borders.

Theoretical Framework

The study focuses on the "Failed state" theory. Proponents note that a failed state is a country with a government that cannot or will not deliver essential political goods (public services) to its citizens (Gros, 2011). The state, usually not yet a nation-state, may hold a seat in the United Nations and function as a sovereign entity in regional and world politics, but so far as most of its people are concerned, the state fails them by its inability to perform state functions adequately. Thus, failed states are those political entities in international politics that supply deficient qualities and quantities of political goods and, simultaneously, no longer exercise a monopoly of violence within their territories (Aguilar-Millan, Foltz, Jackson and Oberg, 2008).

Failed states are those whose power grids have experienced frequent, sustained, and massive breakdown, such that the state authorities are no longer able to project real power on a consistent basis (Gros, 2011). This theory is best suitable to explain the challenges faced by the Nigerian occasioned by the inability to secure its borders and these results in various crimes which thereafter spread to neighboring countries.

Cross-Border Crimes in Nigeria

There are several trans-border crimes in Nigeria. These crimes include includes the narcotics trade and money laundering, and their connections to illegal migration and people trafficking (Styan., 2007). Others are women and child trafficking, smuggling (small and light weapons, food items, vehicles among others).

In parts of North-eastern Nigeria, the movement of people and arms across borders has created severe security problems in recent years. Large bands of gunmen, remnants of rebel wars in Niger and Chad in the last decade, have slipped into Nigeria where they have become bandits, making major highways and many isolated towns and villages unsafe (Onuoha, 2013). In recent times police reports indicate that some of these gunmen from neighboring countries have become involved as mercenaries in an ethno-religious crisis rocking the central state of Plateau. A number of them have been captured fighting on the side of herdsmen against local farming communities in some Plateau districts. Onyekwelu (2012) added that Nigeria's northern border areas are also frequently used by car thieves and the criminal rings that specialize in trafficking young women through North Africa to Europe, where they work as prostitutes.

The area along Nigeria's South-eastern border with Cameroon has been identified over the years as one favored by child traffickers. Studies conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) indicate that coastal and border towns in the southeastern states of Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Rivers are frequently used as staging points by child-

trafficking rings for moving children, mostly by sea, to destinations including Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon. "There are many cases of children and young women taken from Togo, Benin and other West African countries, who are brought into Nigeria and moved to the southeast areas," Chinwe Okonji, a researcher who has investigated child trafficking, told IRIN. "Through coastal and border towns such as Eastern Obolo, Eket, Ibeno, Ikom and Oron, they are transported mostly by sea to the recipient countries" (cited in Opanike, 2015).

The Seme border is a historical coastal town in Badagry between Nigeria and Republic du Benin and the border is as old as the country itself. It is a settlement in Nigeria and very close to Cotonou and Nigeria shares about 1,000km with the Benin Republic. The border area between Nigeria and Benin is actually Seme/Krake border area as against believes that Seme was a Benin territory. The Kraka is also a coastal town in Benin and often safeguarded by the Customs, police and phytosanitary. Seme area comprises of NCS, ANCLA, NQS, NAFDAC, NIS, NDLEA, SSS, SON, NPF, and PHS among others (CEDEAO ECOWAS 2014). The Seme border area has been seen as "an important channel for better regional integration within ECOWAS" (Uchenna, 2016). The area is predominantly inhabited by the Aworis, Ijaw and Eguns and farming, fishing is their occupation.

According to Mbachu (2012), the Nigerian Seme Border is demarcated without any clear-cut policy to back it up and the security personnel safeguarding the area are not efficient. The security personnel- Customs, Immigration, FRSC, Army, Navy are been designated to the various outpost on both sides of the borders but their activities need to be questioned. Furthermore, the challenges of cross-border crime on the security of Nigeria are not adequately researched especially with the current trend in the international community of terrorism. Every country is prone to terrorist attack and Nigeria has been affected highly by the Boko Haram sect in the Northern part of the country. The porosity of the borders around Niger and Cameroon gave way for the influx of external migrants to perpetrate attacks on foreign lands.

Various scholars (Hatchard, 2006; Durkin, 2009; Ering, 2011; Akinyemi, 2013; Aning & Pokoo, 2014), have researched on the safety at the borders and likewise the rate at which crimes are perpetrated but adequate attention is not given to the security personnel across the border areas. Some of the border crimes in Nigeria are identified by scholars to include,

   a)   **Smuggling:** The concept smuggling has been a major issue facing security operatives across the border areas in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole. West Africa is under attack from international criminal networks that are using the sub-region as a key global hub for the distribution, wholesale, and increasing production of illicit drugs (Brown, 2013). Despite the presence of various security operatives around the border area with around 19 checkpoints mounted by the Nigerian Customs, Immigration, NDLEA and the Police, there are daily smuggling of goods at the Nigerian borders.

b) **Drug Trafficking:** The introduction of drugs trafficking in West Africa is has been traced to Nigeria. Being the most populous black nation with high population, the criminal who are not Nigerians often disguise as one. The first arrest was made in 1983 and during Gen. Buhari regime, he introduced the death penalty for drug traffickers (UNODC, 2015; Stephen, 2016). This caused panic among the couriers leading to the push towards Ghana. The border area between Nigeria and Benin served as the alternative route for the traffickers into Ghana before it is later airlifted to the destination. This event led to the establishment of NDLEA to combat illicit drugs but in recent times, the agency has been tarnished as a result of various corrupt practices and sabotaging by its officials (National Security Strategy, 2011; Newspaper, 2016).

The commonly trafficked drugs include heroin, cannabis, cocaine and synthetic drugs. The drug menace became one of Nigeria's major security challenges right at the dawn of independence with discoveries of cannabis farms in the country, arrests of Nigerian cannabis traffickers abroad, and reports of psychological disorders suspected to be associated with cannabis use. In the early 1980s, however, the problem of drug trafficking became a major problem following alleged involvement of military personnel in heroin trafficking in Nigeria (Obot, 2004). Nigeria is a major source of heroin and cocaine. Nigerian drug dealers use large numbers of small-scale smugglers, each carrying a tiny quantity of heroin, sometimes packed in condoms and then swallowed. The major routes of Nigerian traffickers are Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Senegal and South Africa for heroin and cocaine destined for Europe and the United States (Sabrina et al., 1998). Nigeria and Senegal are the sources of the greatest volumes of cocaine seized on commercial air flights (United Nations, 2008).

c) **Arm proliferation:** The proliferation of arms in West Africa is assisted by supplies from current and past conflict zones, corrupt law enforcement and military personnel selling their weapons, and growing domestic artisan production from Senegal, Guinea, Ghana and Nigeria, which passes down established trade route (Vines, 2005). Cyber-crime (419 scams) which Former Secretary of State of the United States, Colin Powell, has referred to Nigeria as "a nation of scammers (Glickman, 2005) is another example of trans-border crime.

d) **Prostitution and child trafficking:** Garuba (2010) identified prostitution and child trafficking as major among border crimes in Nigeria. He maintained that the porosity of African borders had been one major issue affecting the development of the continent, West Africa in particular. There is no effective policy to curtail the rate at which people migrate and transact trade without being duly checked at the borders.

Effects of Cross-Border Crimes and National Security in Nigeria
Cross-border crime represents a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for financial or economic benefits also socio-political cum religious considerations. It is a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders (Owolabi, 2009).

Records available to the Nigeria Immigration Service revealed that there are over 1,400 illegal routes into Nigeria – 1,316 more than the approved number of border control posts. The 84 approved border controls cover 4,047km, the total length of Nigeria's land border. Ogun and Adamawa states, for example, have 83 and 80 illegal posts respectively (Brown, 2013). The activities of smuggling and tax evasion in cross-border movements across Nigeria-Niger border provides the transitional features of border economic activities, interaction patterns in the border regions and flouting of international laws and convention on border crossing to the detriment of the national interest and invariably the national security in that era (Carr, 2011). It also indicated that porous features of the border region and the prevailing economic policies of the neighboring states are tantamount to influence illegal cross-border transactions in goods, currency and other threatening circumstance (Durkin, 2009).

Ering (2011) noted that the implication is that Nigeria is not safe due to cross-border population and its attendant economic activities, cross-border crossing and immigration, ineffective border control and the porosity of Nigerian borders which is a challenge to Nigeria national security and boundary questions. In the north-east, the borders Nigeria shares with Cameroun, Niger and Chad stretch over 1,690, 1,497 and 87 kilometers respectively. The porosity of the Nigerian borders is the main factor encouraging the proliferation of illegal arms and insurgencies in the country.

According to Ezeanyika and Ubah (2012), reported that an arms trade expert, William M. Hartung argues that conflicts in Africa have attracted arms deal and the influx of arms to different parts of North, West and Central Africa that have proximity with Nigeria. Hence, in linking the flourishing arms market in Africa to the strengthening of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria as a challenge of the nation's territorial integrity and national security, he admitted that the proliferation of arms has become a matter of concern owing to the facts that subsist thus: "It's one conflict after another...Because of the nature of the conflict … the concentration of conflicts … the black market in Central Africa is more vibrant than other places" (Garuba, 2010).

Gros (2011) revealed that the situation of Nigeria's porous borders, which serve as conduits for illicit transnational traffic of small arms and light weapons and drugs, is further exacerbated by the limited presence of security and law enforcement officials. If they are present, they are poorly equipped, poorly paid, poorly trained and sometimes compromised or recruited to do the bid of the insurgents. It was also widely reported on accounts of current and former U.S. officials and arms experts that most of Boko Haram weapons were either stolen from Nigerian military stocks or purchased from the thriving Central African arms black market, owing to the insurgents' source of weaponry, its sophistication, and sheer number. The news report further credited a statement to a former US Ambassador in Nigeria - John Campbell, admitting that: "There are hints that sympathizers in the Nigerian Army will deliberately leave doors of armouries unlocked for Boko Haram" (Glickman, 2005) He concluded that the array of small and automatic weapons, grenades, mortars, mines and car bombs "is all Boko Haram's soldiers need to carry out their brand of terrorism.

Border crimes have been one of the issues affecting the security of the country. The various crimes have posed a serious challenge to lives and properties. Findings reveal that lives are been lost on regular bases especially in communities surrounding the border area when there is any gunfight between the security agencies and the criminals. Numerous times, there have been community clashes leading to the death of security agents and also smugglers in this area. This often escalates into expanded conflict as findings show that, there has been the faceoff between security agents and the communities who always try to protect their people. The security agents need to conduct their work diligently but the communities always prove as a stumbling block and it's a danger to the security of lives and properties.

Criminal activities tend to increase daily as a result of border crimes according to a Hatchard (2006). Lahav (2013) added that there have been cases of criminals from neighboring country terrorizing citizens in Nigeria and because of the porosity of the border area, it's easier for the criminals to escape. Research shows that members of the communities, especially in Seme, often lead those criminals along illegal routes that are unknown to the security agencies. Not all routes are been guarded thereby enabling the continuous flow of criminals. For instance, the recent ban on land importation on the vehicle has an adverse effect on those practicing the trade. They tend to have no form of income and would thereafter engage themselves in illegal activities like armed robbery. Robbery attacks have always been foiled by the Police Force in Seme on various occasion but most of them often run into Benin where they can easily mix without been detected.

Border crimes in Nigeria affect the development of the economy. With the increase in cybercrime and money laundering, the economic situation of the country is been affected. Resources that should be used for development of the country is been transferred to other places. Findings from studies conducted by Lahav (2013) show that bags loaded with money are usually smuggled across the Seme borders on daily basis. This revenue which is meant for development but is turned to personal use thereby leading economic woes. With the high rate of corruption in the country, revenue is not shared equally thereby and leaders are not helping as they are the dominant traffickers of money across the borders. Corruption has perpetuated the institutions of public service in Nigeria.

There are cases of drug abuse because of smuggling of nicotine into the country at the borders. The use of hard drugs by youth especially affects their psychological state of mind. They tend to behave in an abnormal way making them not useful to the society. This increases the rate of people in the psychiatric hospital which is not good for the human manpower in the country.

The challenges are unending and it is mostly attributed to poverty and high-level corruption. Most of the border security agents in Nigeria and environ are highly corrupt. Many of the security officers have been accused, such as immigration officials of selling passports to foreigners and police of fleecing passengers at checkpoints. These issues leave much to be desired.

Strategies to Improve Border Security and Management in Nigeria

Border security is a factor of border management. International borders are a security issue for all governments. States are recognized under international law by their capability to maintain their boundaries, secure their territories, and protect their citizens. The ability to secure national borders is one of the criteria used to classify states as strong, weak and failed (Durkin, 2009). A state has a primary responsibility of protecting its citizens from both internal and external threats to their livelihoods. It must be pointed out that the strategic location of a country determines opportunities for illegal activities that exists or can take place in its border areas. Some countries are more threatened by insecurities or mismanagement of other countries borders than their own (Ering, 2011).

Border security means different things: border control, border management, border monitoring, border protection, etc. Usually, border security has been used to mean border control, which seeks to facilitate or limit the movements of people, animals, plants, and goods in and out of a country (Ezeanyika & Ubah, 2012).

Border management is defined as the government functions of immigration, customs, and excise, and police, with the aim of controlling and regulating the flow of people and goods across a country's border/boundary in the national interest (particularly economic development, security, and peace) (Adebayo, 2005). Border management also includes maintenance of boundary beacons that mark the physical limits of the country's territory. Border management is a collaborative process between a country and its neighbors. It cannot be done unilaterally, and it is most effective and efficient when done regionally. Key stakeholders in border management in Nigeria include

    i.   Customs, immigration, police, armed forces,
    ii. Ministry of agriculture; exist for quarantine purposes,
    iii. Airline operatives
    iv. Shipping companies
    v. Border local authorities
    vi. International business companies and individuals; Individuals residents of the borders or travellers across boundaries e.g. traders, relatives, tourists or terrorists)

Despite these operatives, border management in Nigeria remains a concern. Nigeria border security issues are distinctive when compared to the other countries of the world. Because of this fact, these borders are not monitored, patrolled or controlled. Consequently, these borders have become transit points for smuggling and other illegal cross-border activities (Guy and Martin, 2011). The failure of the Nigerian government to manage its borders affects domestic and international economic activities. It is also a threat to national sovereignty and security of the nation. To this end, the study suggests the following measures in improving the border management strategies of the country.

    1. **Increased manpower:** this is concerned with security operatives at the border areas. Recent studies show that the number of security operatives required to manage the Nigerian border areas is inadequate. This calls for the recruitment and training of more

security operatives to manage the Nigeria border. To check corruption, the welfare of border security operatives must be properly guaranteed.

2. **Sanitization and enlightenment of the border security:** constant training and enlightenment must be conducted monthly by the various security agencies. These training and workshops should be held occasionally to enable the agencies to sharpen up their ideas. Majority of the officers are not well trained and often get into positions through illegal means and for them to be prepared to combat crime, training needs to be conducted. These will enhance the capacity of the agency to act effectively.

3. **Technological improvement:** As crime increases with the advent of technology, it is necessary to develop improve skills to manage the emerging challenges. The Nigerian government must introduce modern technology in her efforts to combat crimes across the border area. The technologies are required in areas like cameras, robots, scanners among others. Sniffing dogs are trained specially by drug-related agencies to easily help detect illegal materials. A central database and watch house should be instituted whereby the cameras are been installed in hidden selected places. A new machine that can scan vehicles and humans should be introduced and it will make the job of the security agent easier and reduces crime.

Conclusion
The reoccurring issues of border security in Nigeria necessitate a research on its impact on national security. The challenges are far-reaching. The study has identified various forms of border security issues in Nigeria and their effects on national security and economic development. The concern has majored on the porous nature of the Nigerian borders. This has promoted the increasing number of illegal trade such as smuggling of contraband goods- adulterated drugs, prostitution, trafficking, and so on. The study identified that, although there is security trained by the Nigerian government to tackle these crimes at the border, the problem associated with poverty and corruption affects their lives. This, therefore, is the first place to begin in addressing the problem of border crimes in Nigeria.

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