The Dilemmas of Trans-Border Crimes and Nigeria's National Security

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Abstract

Nigeria faces herculean tasks of securing her borders which serve as both bridges and barriers for integration and cooperation; therefore, allowing cross-border movement becomes imperative. However, despite efforts to secure Nigeria's national borders, the safety of people and property appears to be a mirage. This paper examines the dilemmas of trans-border crimes on Nigeria's national security. Using secondary sources of data, failed state theory and descriptive analysis, it argues that the precursors to trans-border crimes are multi-dimensional. It contends that due to the growing network of trans-border criminals, Nigeria's national security has been impeded. It posits that unofficial and unmanned border areas contribute to increase in crime rate. The paper concludes that unless effective and workable framework is created to address the problems of trans-border crimes, these crimes will continue to jeopardize Nigeria's national security. The paper recommends amongst others that Nigeria should put mechanisms to adequately manage its borders.

Keywords: *National security, **Trans**-border crimes, **Free** movement, **Transnationalism***

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Background to the Study

Trans-border criminal activities like drug trafficking, smuggling, arms trafficking and proliferation, human trafficking, and money laundering have increased the threat to global security. This has sparked new discussions and strategic thinking among academics, diplomats, and security experts, particularly in West Africa. Nigeria, a major regional player, is not immune to these dangers because it has recently faced a number of security issues that have affected its national security. According to Ya'u Mukhtar (2021), a country with a safe border is also one with a secure nation; as such, serious risks to a country's national security and sovereignty will arise from inadequate border management.

With its dimensions and threat to international peace and security, trans-border crime is one of the evolving issues that the international community has been dealing with since the end of the Cold War. With the advent of globalization, trans-border crimes have grown in scope and velocity (Simon, 2011). States now recognize they are more interdependent than ever before and cannot survive in isolation. The opening of borders between states has been aided by the current worldwide trend of interdependence between and among them. In one way or another, countries with different levels of socioeconomic, political, and cultural development come together to form regional arrangements, which has further contributed to the facilitation of transnational criminal activity (Opanike, Aduloju & Adenipekun, 2015). For instance, dealers of cars that are typically stolen in Nigeria are frequently willing to sell any kind of vehicle in the Benin Republic and other neighboring states. This increases the difficulty of tracing and recovering, which raises the crime rate.

Trans-border crime is increasing due to porous borders and unpatriotic security actions, impacting a country's security standing and destroying social, political, and economic ties. African states face challenges in handling offenses from outside their jurisdictions as well as investigating transnational crimes and recovering criminal proceeds (Hatchard, 2006 cited in Aduloju, 2021). Money laundering, the trafficking of illegal immigrants, and the trade in drugs are just a few of the crimes linked to trans-border crime (Styan, 2007). Others include the trafficking of women and children, the smuggling of food items, small arms and light weapons. Another example of trans-border crime is cyber-crime, for which Nigeria has been compared to a country of scammers by former US Secretary of State Colin Powell (Glickman, 2005). Current international agreements also link prostitution to child trafficking as a major issue.

Numerous academics have conducted studies on border security and the frequency of criminal activity. However, given the current trend of terrorism and other forms of transnational organized crimes in the international community, insufficient attention is paid to the challenges that cross-border crimes pose to Nigeria's national security. This paper set out to investigate how transnational crimes affect Nigeria's national security. It is hoped that this paper's recommendations will help reduce the threat of trans-border crimes not just in Nigeria, but globally.

Conceptual and Theoretical Review
Border
Borders are sets of opposites that have always existed; they can be bridges, channels of trade and communication, or they can cut off, delimit, and act as barriers (Robinson, 1998 cited in Osimen & Odeh, 2023). Border control and security are complex and multifaceted, involving formal and informal, global and local, agency and public interests. Border management refers to policies, practices, and guidelines controlling movement of people and goods across demarcated zones or border crossings. As Reimann (2001 cited in Osimen & Odeh, 2023, p.6) argues "in Europe at the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century border security arrangements in the traditional, particularly military sense, are neither feasible nor politically desirable." Border security must be as flexible and adaptive as the new contexts and threats which will arise. Referring to international borders, the 29th Report of the European Union on the proposal for a European body guard (2001) asserts that:

> borders are natural points at which to make checks on entry to a country, not only on people but on goods for customs, health, plant health and other purposes; and to enforce rules on prohibited and restricted goods. The border is also a natural focus of police activity, as it provides an opportunity to check people arriving and it is also the place where by definition the act of smuggling takes place. Border control therefore have a role to play in combating illegal immigration and various forms of cross-border crime ranging from small smuggling to organized crime and international terrorism (cited in Osimen & Odeh, 2023, p.6).

The above is what Nigeria's borders connote. These borders exist all over Nigeria geographically connects; countries such as Republic of Benin, Republic of Cameroon, Republic of Chad, Republic of Niger (Okunade, 2017). Oscar Martinez's categorization provides a helpful framework for examining border relations when attempting to understand what a border actually entails (Martinez, 1994). He separates borderlands into four distinct modes or stages:

  i. Borderlands that are militarized and strictly regulated; political and military tensions make cross-border trade difficult, if not impossible. The border is sealed, and the "borderlands" on either side view one another as foreigners.
 ii. Co-existing borderlands: although facilitated by international agreements, interactions are challenging because control is obviously given precedence over permeability. There is some exchange, but for military or political reasons, long-term cooperation is not desired.
iii. Borderlands that are interdependent: Interdependence offers borderlands numerous chances to build social ties across boundaries and permits substantial transculturation to occur." Semi-open borders allow for cross-border economic linkages, but cautious monitoring is necessary, especially when it comes to issues like crime and immigration. The border is open as long as the interests of the states are not jeopardized, but contacts are frequent, trade and exchange across the border take on a complementary character, and a common borderland mentality develops on both sides.

iv. Integrated borderlands: shared sovereignty; all trade, capital, and communication barriers and impediments have been eliminated; a shared cross-border identity is formed on a cultural and political level.

Despite the fact that the definitions above are 'ideal,' it is easy to assign real-world examples to each of these four phases, which Martinez envisions as stages in an evolution. The Berlin Wall, which represents the 'Iron Curtain,' the bipolar Cold War frontier, serves as a historical example of point (1) above. Additional instances are the border between Korea and the 'Green Line' which divides.

Trans-Border Crimes
It is just as challenging to conceptualize trans-border crimes as it is to investigate other social science concepts. This challenge arises from the fact that the terminology has become embedded with numerous elements. For example, the task of defining or describing trans-border crime would not be an easy one, because many elements have been recognized as constituting it, asserts Ering (2011). Ering, amidst this muddle, asserts that "trans-border crime represents a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for socio-political and religious considerations, or for financial or economic benefits" (Ering, 2011, p.74). It is a group of illegal activities whose perpetrators and effects transcend national boundaries. These crimes would include the following: terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, illicit diamond and drug trafficking, money laundering, arms smuggling, and business fraud, among others. In other words, acts that break the laws of more than one nation are referred to as trans-border or trans-national crimes (Passas, 2003; Ering, 2011; Sunday & Okechukwu, 2014). Since their operations extend beyond national borders, they are frequently referred to as trans-national organized criminal gangs. Fagge, Danguguwa and Muhammad (2021), citing the United Nations Convention against Trans-national Organized Crime (2000), posits that:

> *Trans-border crimes are the crimes that have actual or potential effect across national borders and the crimes that are intra-state but offend fundamental values of the international community. The term is commonly used in the law enforcement and academic communities (Fagge et al., 2021, p.176).*

Organized criminal groups exploit technological advancements and legislative gaps for illegal activities like money laundering, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling. They exploit information networks and financial systems, while variations in laws and customs hinder national efforts to combat transnational or organized crime. According to Ortuno and Apiwan (2009) international criminal activity has surged in recent years, including money laundering, nuclear technology, human organ trafficking, and migrant smuggling. New crimes like prostitution, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking have been added, posing threats to West African nations' security. The characteristics of transnational crimes in West Africa due to the use of technology, the relaxation of travel restrictions, and the diversification of criminal activity has changed quickly in recent years, significantly increasing the threat to global peace and security (Sunday & Okechukwu, 2014). This is not unrelated to the fact that terrorism is on the rise in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel region.

Trans-border crime has grown globally, involving various criminal activities and expanding markets like cybercrime and financial fraud. It involves crimes that violate international community principles and cross-national borders, such as terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, diamond trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and business fraud. These syndicates use brutal tactics and have ties to international terrorist organizations, making them difficult to apprehend (Luna, 2008, cited in Nwokah, 2022).

Nigeria's National Security: A Conceptual Review
Traditionally, national security has been approached from a military and strategic standpoint, especially in the context of the Cold War. For instance, national security, according to Hartmann (1983, cited in Orhero, 2020), is the culmination of all a state's essential national interests. However, the idea differs among states in direct proportion to each one's willingness to engage in conflict or war at any given time, just as a vital national interest is one for which a nation is willing to use force or war, either immediately or ultimately. According to this definition, one of the most important methods for ensuring national security is for a state to amass more arms and weaponry. Consequently, the primary referent goal that shaped security discourse and policy worldwide was the preservation of the state.

It has long been acknowledged that national security needs to be reformulated with the needs of people at its core, even though the Cold War era was characterized by a militaristic and state-centric conception of the concept. The conventional understanding of national security has been criticized for overlooking non-military threats, such as terrorism, disease, poverty, and natural disasters (Edem, 2010). Dambazau, (2007) defined National security as a state's capacity to pursue its interests and defend its values against external threats. Encouraging fundamental principles can improve the safety of citizens' lives and belongings, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive approach to security (Okene, 2010).

Onimisi (2014) established that national security is often understood in terms of a country's military might or its fight against both external and internal aggression. That is, when there are no longer any military threats or political pressures, a country is considered secure. On the other hand, Adebakin and Raimi's (2012) analysis of national security considers important factors such as political, economic, food, health, environmental, individual, and community security. But a country like Nigeria has a unique security threat that is based on the previously mentioned factors. National security refers to a country's ability to protect its citizens from threats from economic, social, political, military, or infectious nature, while advancing society's basic needs and interests. It is crucial to defend a state's interests and value, which can be found in its constitution, government actions, and policies. National security is likely to fail when citizens' security is in jeopardy, as it is essential for a nation's growth and welfare (Onuoha, 2008).

Theoretical Underpinning
This paper is anchored on the theory of 'failed state', which was first advanced by Jackson and Rosberg (1982), Migdal (1988), Gros (1996), Fukuyama (2004), Kaplan (2008), among others (as cited in Nwokah, 2022). A failed state is a state that fails to fulfill its fundamental

obligations due to a broken social and political structure, lack of public utilities, corruption, population displacement, and a sharp decline in the economy, often characterized by a weak central government. Failed states are those where state authorities struggle to project power due to power grid breakdowns. They are often caused by collapsing political power structures, anarchic internal violence, and disintegration of state institutions, leading to anarchy, paralysis of governance, and unauthorized cross-border travel (Gros, 2011; Anyanwu, 2005).

This theory is relevant to this paper because it explains the challenges faced by the Nigeria's inability to secure its borders that has resulted in various crimes. A failed state is one that has shattered social norm, bad political structures economic failure and insecurity. The theory attributes the increase in trans-border crimes like terrorist attacks, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and people trafficking to Nigeria's inability to adequately manage her national borders as a sovereign government. These crimes that have spread to neighboring countries have serious impact on Nigeria's social and economic sectors, leading to national security challenges.

The Environment and Fragments of Trans-border Crimes in Nigeria

Nigeria has emerged as the new center for all types of trans-border crimes, including smuggling, internet fraud (419), and the trafficking of women and children. Trans-border crimes in Nigeria, facilitated by the porous border, have impacted security protocols by allowing criminals to carry illicit activities. Reasons include regional framework, economic hardships, and political unpredictability. Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS, a West African integration protocol, has led to the ratification of multiple protocols, but criticism has been raised for allowing the easy smuggling of weapons, drugs, and contraband. This has led to international security agencies investigating and prosecuting individuals involved in trans-border crimes, negatively impacting national security (Nwokah, 2022; Ering, 2011).

Smuggling

The majority of security professionals surveyed said that various types of crime are common along Nigeria's land borders. They ignite themes of lawlessness on the frontier, rebirth, illicit trade, and disobedience to the government. Nigerian Customs, Immigration, NDLEA, and Police have established 19 checkpoints to combat border crime in Nigeria and West Africa. Despite numerous security personnel and the porous nature of border regions, international criminal networks continue targeting the region for illegal drug production and distribution. The Nigerian government has attempted to close borders to curb smuggling activities, but this has not significantly reduced trans-border criminal activity, endangering national security (Brown, 2013; Nwokah, 2022).

Drug Trafficking

Nigeria is credited with introducing drug trafficking to West Africa. Given that Nigeria is the most populous black nation, criminals from other countries frequently assume the identity of Nigerians. During the administration of General Buhari, who instituted the death penalty for drug traffickers, the first arrest was made in 1983 (UNODC, 2015; Stephen, 2016). The NDLEA was created to combat illegal drugs in Nigeria, with some Nigerians involved in

trafficking being arrested in Equatorial Guinea and Chad; the organization has faced unethical actions and official sabotage, and some Nigerians have been involved in drug trafficking in other African nations. These 'mules' often travel unnoticed and are unaware of their possession of drugs. Drug trafficking and addiction are increasing in African nations, particularly in the 21st century, where poverty, illiteracy, corruption, and ethnic violence are prevalent (UNODC, 2015; Adetula, 2015).

Advanced Fee Fraud and Money Laundering
The term '419' originates from Nigeria's fraud penal code, and it gained popularity during the economic downturn that peaked in the 1980s. The dozens of small groups and independent operators engaged in the 'business' that has grown into an online scam are difficult to assign a specific stereotype mode of operation to because their activities take many different forms, from illicit proposition for collusion in money-laundering to seemingly legitimate business solicitations (Garuba, 2010, cited in Nwokah, 2022). In order to deprive specific and gullible victims of their assets and resources, criminals frequently take advantage of the sophisticated internet and phone/fax capabilities as a less expensive form of communication (Addo, 2006, cited in Nwokah, 2022). One argument that will be made is that the rise in internet fraud is facilitated by the increased level of globalization. Early internet use is intended to help children, ages 9 and 10, interact better and complete tasks more quickly. However, there is a drawback: children who use the internet frequently experience the impulse to engage in criminal activity.

A common starting point for advanced fee fraud in Nigeria is an unsolicited letter from a Nigerian official asking the recipient to assist in sending large sums of money out of the sender's nation (Durkin, 2009, cited in Fagge et al., 2021). Frequently, these senders emphasize that unless the funds are transferred outside of the nation, he is unable to receive them directly into his account. To use their best fraud term, the emails include details about the deceased. Problems frequently occur, and the recipient is frequently urged to pay certain fees such as those for insurance, delivery, levies, and bribery, to name a few. Further requests are made and the same is true for their victims when these funds are subsequently paid by the victim.

According to the paper, people have been seen driving around with large amounts of cash in their cars and are constantly willing to bribe their way out of the country. Nigerian governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha was charged in the United Kingdom in 2005 for money laundering, a practice prevalent among Nigerian elites. The money was stacked alongside clothing and other valuables, making it difficult to detect. Money laundering is a popular practice among Nigerian elites, who often siphon off national resources and funds into their overseas accounts (Ering, 2011; Addo, 2006, cited in Nwokah, 2022).

Factors that Aid Trans-Border Crimes in Nigeria
Poverty
According to Adeniyi (2017), Nigerians face a high poverty rate due to an imbalance in revenue sharing, causing living conditions to be unfavorable. The wealthy accumulate wealth, while the impoverished are impacted. Civil servants' minimum pay is insufficient, leading to smuggling activities and exploitation of security personnel.

Porous Borders

Nigeria's border issue has its roots in colonial history, but the inability of subsequent governments to manage these borders effectively has made it more porous. The high degree of insecurity on African borders, according to Onuoha (2008) has more to do with how they are managed and administered and less to do with how colonialists drew them. The borders separating the two countries are the most problematic due to the activities of internationally renowned criminals who smuggle and traffic almost anything, from manufactured goods, agricultural produce, prostitution, and child labor to religious fanaticism, terrorist attacks, and insurgency. This is in spite of the enterprising and promising neighborliness of the two countries (Adeolu & Fayomi, 2012).

According to Nwokah (2022) Nigeria and other African states use drones and ropes at checkpoints to control trans-border movements. This allows people to move freely between member states, leading to cross-border crimes like human trafficking and the movement of weapons and drugs. Nigeria's wide national borders create around 100 illegal border areas for criminal activity.

Corruption

According to Osimen and Odeh (2023), corruption is the primary cause of Africa's underdevelopment, including in Nigeria. Corruption is a widespread issue that has an impact on a country's prosperity and well-being and is a primary cause of poverty. In Nigeria, corruption has permeated every aspect of society, from high-ranking government officials to common citizens. Leading government figures were recently detained and made public for embezzling money intended to buy weapons to fight the terrorist attack by Boko Haram in the North. Moreover, in the late 2000s, it was discovered that high level elected officials and security personnel were involved in a number of cocaine and heroin trafficking seizures. This suggests that international drug trafficking cartels pose a threat to the formal and traditional governance and security systems of many West African countries (Aning, & Pokoo, 2014). According to Nwokah (2022), security agencies in Nigeria have been linked to and held accountable for plots involving cross-border crimes. This implies a complete collapse of border controls and a danger to national security.

Institutional framework

The ECOWAS protocol aims to promote free movement of people, goods, and services in West African countries, fostering trade, commerce, politics, and social gatherings. However, it has also been used by criminals for nefarious activities, posing significant security risks, including the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and creating a space for exploitation (Nwokah, 2022; Opanike et al., 2015).

Trans-border Crimes and Nigeria's National Security: The Paradox of a Failing State

Within the Nigerian political system, the significance of a study on the impact of transnational crimes on national security cannot be understated. This is due to the fact that the majority of Nigeria's states that are experiencing armed conflict are situated near national borders. Concern should be expressed over the rise in conflicts between crop farmers and herders in

Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Zamfara, and other states, which have resulted in over 1,300 recorded deaths (International Crisis Group, 2018) including various attacks carried out by Boko Haram in the states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, which have international borders with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Nwokah, 2022). The kidnapping of more than 110 schoolgirls on February 22, 2018, in Dapchi, Yobe State, approximately 75 km south of the border with Niger, may have something to do with Nigeria's near complete lack of proper security and proper border management (Nwokah, 2022; Osimen & Odeh, 2023).

The Directorate of State Security (DSS) has confirmed that there is reason to believe that the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) network, working with Fulani herders from neighboring countries, is responsible for the killing of 73 people on New Year's Day 2018 in Benue State's Logo and Guma local government areas. The chaos is still going on and has reached neighboring states like Zamfara, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau, Nasarawa, and others, drawing attention to Nigeria's increased security alert (Eselebor & Okunade, 2020). Transnational social networks can have major negative effects on national security, as demonstrated by cross-border crimes in West Africa like drug trafficking, human trafficking, and livestock poaching (Adetula, 2015). Political leaders and government officials in Nigeria, for example, have accused migrants from other West African countries of a variety of crimes related to the sub-region. This includes law enforcement officials.

Boko Haram's attacks have escalated, posing a global threat to Nigeria and its neighbors. During the 2014 Regional Summit on Security and Terrorism, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan highlighted the group's global scope and its opposition to Western education (Leadership Newspaper, 2014 cited in Osimen & Odeh, 2023). The group's targeting of state symbols, organizations, and structures demonstrates its intent to overthrow the government and cause chaos. The insurgency, which claimed over 13,000 lives in 2013, has affected governments in West and Central Africa. Boko Haram's actions pose a significant threat to Nigeria's political stability, economic growth, national security, and human security. Boko Haram's logistics are made easier by Nigeria's porous borders, allowing goods to be smuggled into the country. The insurgency has also led to oil theft, piracy, and maritime insecurity, putting Nigeria's economic interests and national security at risk. The insurgency has become one of the top three terrorist groups globally (Katsouris & Sayne, 2013; Eselebor & Okunade 2020; Nwokah, 2022).

The issue of maritime piracy and insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea is closely linked to the problem of oil theft. Crude oil is mostly produced in the Niger Delta, and stealing it is the main focus of piracy activities in the Gulf of Guinea (Adetula, 2015). The Niger Delta is a major hub for the rapidly expanding illicit fuel market in West Africa, where oil smuggling is high (UNODC, 2013). Additionally, there have been reports of robberies and attacks against fishing trawlers. The majority of the attacks occur in Nigerian waters, though there are also attacks throughout the region and serious effects in Benin and Togo. Adetula (2015) posits that almost all of Nigeria's border entry points were being used for illegal arms transfers, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and illegal migration.

Nwokah (2022) argues that, migrants from nearby African countries have been linked to theft, armed robbery, civil unrest, and other forms of insecurity. For instance, in order to stop illegal immigrants from entering the country and possibly participating in the 2015 national elections, all of Nigeria's land and maritime borders were closed for a few days. In Africa, there has been an increase in cross-border crimes, child slavery, and human trafficking. Smugglers and illegal drug dealers are drawn to Nigeria's sizable market. Among the primary suppliers to the flourishing human trafficking industry in Africa are Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin (Adetula, 2014). Without a doubt, the rapidly expanding illegal cross-border trade in narcotic drugs and human trafficking poses risks and threats to Nigeria's peace and security. Both the quantity and intensity of violent conflicts in Nigeria have increased as a result of the proliferation of weapons. Approximately, 70% of the illicit small arms in the West Africa sub-region come from Nigeria (West Africa Network for Peace-building, 2013). Through the cooperation of foreigners and Nigerians, these weapons are sourced from both inside West Africa and other parts of the world.

Additionally, smuggling of illegal weapons is become a widespread practice in West Africa that involves certain international networks. The proximity of Nigeria's land and maritime borders to several of the conflict zones in West and Central Africa has intensified the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons. These crimes have a significant impact on Nigeria's security and require cooperation from both domestic and foreign partners.

Eselebor (2008 as cited in Osimen & Odeh, 2023) averred that the situation has resulted in countless losses of life and property, serious contamination of the land and water, and the emergence and spread of a violent culture, inter-communal conflicts, and terrorism in Nigeria. There is no part of Nigeria these days where the employment of high-tech weapons does not contribute to hostilities and violence. The majority of these weapons' cross-national borders through air, land, and sea undetected. Leaks from national armories, frequently the consequence of criminal gangs working together with the armed forces and security services, and the theft of weapons by dishonest peacekeepers during the conflicts in West Africa are two more potential sources. Significant amounts of weapons are also produced locally in Ghana and Nigeria. Militias dispersed throughout West Africa and the Sahel region as a result of the Arab Spring and the Libyan civil war (Opanike, et al., 2015; Nwokah, 2013).

Nigeria is experiencing a surge in criminal activities due to the influx of migrants from neighboring countries including illegal solid mineral mining and foreign exchange transactions. In the northeastern border region, cattle theft, land rights violations, and other violent crimes like armed robbery and car theft are common. Today the increase crime rates in urban centers like Jalingo, Jimeta, Yola, Gashua, Dikwa, Mubi, Gembu, Damaturu, and Maiduguri is also linked to the presence of immigrants (Adetula, 2015, Nwokah, 2022). Adetula (2015) argues that child trafficking has increased in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Central Africa, with traffickers operating an international network that reaches European cities and most West and Central African countries. Children from source nations, such as Benin and Togo, are transported to Nigeria, where they are enlisted by traffickers in Burkina Faso and Mali. These children are then transported to Cote d'Ivoire to work on cocoa plantations.

Most of these organized crimes undermine government capacity, draining resources, legitimacy, and national security, leading to widespread insecurity and frustration in Nigeria's macroeconomic structure (Alemika, 2013). Three core beliefs underpin the significance of national security. That is, the value of individual safety in a world full of diverse threats, the sanctity and inviolability of human life, and the universality and dignity of human life. Therefore, the three fundamental instincts of self-preservation, self-extension, and self-fulfillment are the foundation of national security.

Implications of Trans-Border Crimes on National Security
Threat to lives and Property
Border crimes pose a significant threat to national security, causing frequent gunfights between security forces and criminals. These conflicts often result in the deaths of smugglers and security personnel, posing a danger to lives and properties. Despite security agents' diligent work, communities continue to pose a stumbling block, posing a significant threat to the security of lives and properties.

Increased Crime
Various border communities in Nigeria are witnessing increase in criminal activity due to the porous nature of the region. Locals, particularly in these areas often guide these offenders via unapproved routes, allowing them to continue unhindered. For instance, the Seme Police Force has successfully stopped robbery attempts, but most of them head into Benin, where they can blend in unnoticed. This has led to a significant increase in border crimes and terror against Nigerian citizens.

Economic Decline
It has been suggested that the rate of smuggling plays a significant role in Nigeria's economic decline. For example, smuggling has resulted in the loss of 90% of the revenue that Nigeria Customs was supposed to collect. Because the agencies involved are corrupt, the remaining 10% is not evenly declared to the government. Furthermore, the nation's economic status is impacted by the rise in money laundering and forms of trans-border crimes.

Empirical data indicates that money-filled bags are frequently smuggled across borders, causing economic problems. Leaders are the main actors in cross-border money trafficking industry because of the pervasiveness of corrupt practices in the Nigeria. Nigeria's economic crisis is rooted in smuggling and other corrupt activities as resources that ought to be allocated for the nation's development have been moved elsewhere.

Increase in substandard products that are risky to human health
The rise in substandard health products, such as expired or unsuitable drugs, poses a significant risk to human health. These drugs can cause serious health problems or even death when taken improperly. Despite decreased flow during Professor Dora Akunyili's tenure as NDLEA boss, expired medicines still enter the market through smugglers, and consumed among youth. These hard drugs can lead to psychological effects and abnormal behavior, affecting society and the nation's human resource capacity.

Conclusion

The paper was set to examine the extent to which trans-border crimes can affect Nigeria's national security. This paper explains that Nigeria's national security is seriously threatened by trans-border crime, especially smuggling and arms trafficking. In northern Nigeria, there is an increase in banditry and other trans-border crimes as a result of the growth in smuggler activities and arms trafficking. It is hoped that the recent appointment of new Service Chiefs offers a chance to thoroughly examine Nigeria's National Security Policy and Strategy. Rebuilding border entrances and exits is a step toward revitalizing national security thereby reducing trans-border crimes. Highly placed individuals have contributed to resource transfers and violations of human rights in Nigeria, underscoring the necessity of an all-encompassing strategy to build a viable national security.

Recommendations

1. To minimize threats, the Nigerian government should undertake non-military, soft power initiatives like financial diversification, federal government reforms, and regional competitiveness.
2. To handle particular threats, a thorough assessment of security institutions' use of force should be carried out.
3. The government should enact measures to modernize border regions and hasten development in order to prevent subversive criminals from abusing young people.
4. Since border communities can give security authorities important information, they should make sure that national borders are properly policed.
5. To assess the degree of migration risk and choose the best course of action for law enforcement, a thorough mapping of the borders is required.

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