MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBORDER MIGRATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

Ndubuisi Isaac[1], Catherine Chinecherem Enekwechi[1]*, Ogomegbunam Perpetua Anierobi[2] and Sopuru Isaiah Omeji[1]

[1]*Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.*

[2]*School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.*

*Corresponding Author: **Catherine Chinecherem Enekwechi**

Abstract: This study examines the complex relationship between trans-border migration management and security challenges in Nigeria. It explores how ineffective border control, porous boundaries, and inadequate migration policies contribute to various security threats, including terrorism, human trafficking, and arms smuggling. The study explores the dynamics of cross-border movement, and it delves into the porous nature of Nigeria's borders and how it facilitates illicit activities such as arms smuggling, human trafficking, and drug trade, exacerbating internal security threats. This study adopts the ex-post facto research design and documentary method of data collection with reliance on secondary sources. The paper revealed that Nigeria is deficient in precise data concerning the presence of foreign nationals within its borders, a situation attributable to the illegal entry of a portion of this population, thereby complicating accurate profiling and registration efforts. Certain undocumented migrants gain entry into the nation through the unregulated borders shared with neighbouring states, which contributes to the inadequacy of their profiles and records.

Keywords: *Transborder migration, Insecurity, Nigeria, Border management, Security challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

Transborder migration and its management have become increasingly critical issues in Nigeria, particularly as the processes of border policy implementation can either promote or impede the opportunities associated with transborder transactions. International Organization for Migration (2017) noted that finding a balance between the completing areas of benefit and the areas of conflicting priorities is one of the most difficult challenges confronting any sovereign state in the world, Nigeria is not an exemption.

As Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, Nigeria faces unique challenges in managing its extensive borders and the movement of people across them, keeping in mind that migration offers great potential to promote the overall development of any Nation (International Organization for Migration, 2017). While harnessing the opportunities that come with border migration, the legitimate interest in safeguarding national security and combating associated crimes must not be taken for granted. It is also worth noting that good border management will help any country balance the state's economic interests and security maintenance (Pluim & Hofmann, 2015; Okumu, 2016; and International Organization for Migration, 2017).

Nigeria, with its vast land area of 923,768 square kilometres, shares borders with four countries: Benin to the west, Niger to the north, Chad to the northeast, and Cameroon to the east (Adepoju, 2019). These borders, spanning approximately 4,047 kilometers, have historically been characterized by their porosity and the ease with which people and goods move across them. While this fluidity has facilitated regional integration and economic activities, it has also presented significant challenges in terms of national security and sovereignty (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012). The dynamics of transborder migration have had a considerable impact on Nigeria's security environment.

The nation has faced several security risks during the last ten years, such as armed banditry, human trafficking, terrorism, and the spread of small and light weaponry. For example, the northeastern Boko Haram insurgency has made use of porous borders to create transnational networks, enlist fighters, and flee to neighboring nations (Onuoha & Ezirim, 2013). Like this, criminal networks involved in smuggling and human trafficking have profited from lax border controls to function mostly unhindered (Carling, 2006). A state's capacity to establish effective border security and control determines how well its territory is protected from any potential dangers.

Nigeria is a sizable country, and the security of the nation depends on the efficient management and control of its borders. The Nigerian border is thought to be porous, and it is commonly believed that the Nigerian government finds it difficult to keep effective border security. It has been extremely concerning to deal with the inadequate management and control of Nigeria's national border. Due to this circumstance, transnational crimes such as the smuggling of illicit commodities, the movement of people without authorization, human trafficking, theft, money laundering, and even terrorism, have increased. (Temisan, 2016).

The activities of terrorist organizations like Boko Haram, which pose a threat to national security, have been greatly aided by lax border security. (Adetula, 2015; Bearzotti *et al.*, 2015). To terrorize and intimidate the people of Nigeria, Boko Haram has created or utilized both national and international armaments and weapon trafficking (Onuoha, 2013). The issue of border security in Nigeria facilitates Boko Haram's ability to carry out multiple successful attacks in Nigeria and other surrounding countries, resulting in the deaths of thousands of people and the displacement of millions (Menner, 2014; Temisan, 2015; Bearzotti et al, 2015; Adetula, 2015; Mailabari & Hamidu, 2015).

One reason the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and other security agencies inside the nation-state are conscious of her security is because terrorist organizations are among a nation-state's adversaries. The Nigerian Immigration Service's (NIS) job is to guard Nigeria's borders.

The level of security awareness at the entry and exit points determines the level of protection in a community, organization, and in this case, the nation-state. The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) is in charge of, among many other things, preventing criminals and anyone who would jeopardize Nigeria's security and development from entering the country. According to UN (2017), Nigeria has been classified as a high-risk country in eight (8) key related crime categories, including drug trafficking, smuggling, and trafficking. And one way to increase national security is through the effective management of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS).

Nigeria has experienced severe insecurity in the past few years, which has been made worse by problems with trans-border migration. The Nigerian government has had challenges in efficiently securing its borders and managing migratory flows due to factors such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, and resource restrictions (Adepoju, 2010; Goujon & Lutz, 2013). Due to this, transnational criminal networks are now able to take advantage of vulnerable border regions, which helps with terrorism, smuggling, and human trafficking operations (Freedom House, 2021; Okunade & Ajibewa, 2018).

Effective migration management and national security are fundamentally challenged by the porous nature of Nigeria's vast borders. Nigeria confronts major challenges in monitoring and controlling cross-border movements due to its 4,047 kilometers of shared land borders with Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Adepoju, 2019). These boundaries' porousness makes transnational criminal activity, smuggling, and irregular migration easier. Easy access to borders undermines Nigeria's sovereignty and makes security risks like terrorism, arms trafficking, and human smuggling worse (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012).

The attacks by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria serve as a prime example of the security problems that come with insufficient border management. According to Onuoha and Ezirim (2013), the terrorist organization has made use of permeable borders to create international networks, enlist fighters from nearby nations, and flee from Nigerian security forces when they feel pressured.

The insurgency's cross-border aspect has made counterterrorism operations more difficult and brought attention to the urgent need for better transborder migration management as part of a national security plan. One other major security issue associated with transborder migration is the spread of light and small guns across Nigeria's borders. The influx of illegal weaponry has fueled violent conflicts, criminality, and general instability throughout the nation, as Onwuka (1982) emphasizes, and this is mostly due to weak borders and ineffective customs regulations.

Ineffective border controls have made it easier for persons and things to cross, which has had a serious negative impact on internal security and the smuggling of weapons. Research unequivocally demonstrates that Nigeria's problems with national and human insecurity have worsened due to porous borders and lax immigration laws. Terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram have no trouble traversing "ungoverned spaces" across Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon to kidnap women and children, carry out lethal attacks on civilians and security targets, plunder property, and seize territory (Asfura-Heim & Welsh, 2015; McKay, 2020).

The Boko Haram insurgency, which is based in Northeast Nigeria, has resulted in over 35,000 deaths and millions of displacements (Council for Foreign Relations, 2020). Particularly in Northwest Nigeria, bandit groups and kidnap-for-ransom gangs carry out regular raids and kidnappings before fleeing to safe havens across borders. According to the Nigerian Defense Headquarters (2021), border porosity facilitates criminal groups' ability to transport weapons freely.

Additionally, trafficking networks that smuggle drugs, weapons, wildlife products, subsidized Nigerian petroleum, and other illicit goods around the region are made easier by irregular migration (McKay, 2020; UNODC, 2021). According to Mberu and Pongou (2010) and Okunola and Ikuomola (2010), border villages lack access to social services, law enforcement, and healthcare, and checkpoints are usually unmanned or understaffed. Low funding, corruption, a lack of agency coordination, and porous borders are some of the main factors behind Nigeria's

border security management problems, according to Oyeniyi (2013). The administration of transborder migration within the Nigerian context is beset by numerous challenges that carry profound implications for national security. The permeability of borders, in conjunction with the escalation of criminal enterprises and insurgent factions, constitutes a substantial menace to the stability of the state. Mitigating these challenges necessitates a nuanced strategy that encompasses the fortification of border security, the reformulation of immigration policies, and the examination of the socio-economic determinants that propel migration.

An all-encompassing strategy that fosters collaboration among a diverse array of stakeholders, including governmental entities, civil society organizations, and international collaborators, is imperative for the effective governance of transborder migration and the alleviation of its ramifications on insecurity in Nigeria. This research delves into the complex interplay between the management of transborder migration and Nigeria's intricate security challenges, investigating the extent to which ineffective border enforcement, porous boundaries, and deficient migration policies contribute to a spectrum of security threats.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

As articulated by Afolayan (2000), a border is delineated as a line that demarcates one nation's territorial, legal, and sovereign jurisdiction from another. Within this defined boundary, nations exert authority and influence over the ingress and egress of individuals and goods. He asserts that a state possesses the capacity to restrict, permit, or prohibit the entry of materials, commodities, and equipment from beyond its borders (Afolayan, 2000). A border is characterized as a line that implies a limitation, according to Weber (2012).

Borders delineate the separations between sovereign states, while boundaries function as indicators within pre-existing national territories. Newman and Paasi (1998) contend that borders are acknowledged to fulfil two primary roles: to protect a territory from both external and internal threats. Asiwaju (1984) encapsulated the notion that a border constitutes a territorial zone of a

state that holds significance and authority, thereby restricting the movement of unauthorized individuals and materials, including smugglers and their contraband. These borders are marked by reciprocal relationships between the host nation and adjacent states. Nonetheless, Zartman (2010) concurs that boundaries are anthropogenic constructs rather than mere physical demarcations.

Furthermore, Caflisch (2006) posits that borders are conventionally perceived as mechanisms for designating areas where a state typically exercises sovereignty. Conversely, Lee and North (2016) delineate borders as a relatively immutable framework of territorial demarcation that can be manifested through natural features such as mountain ranges, rivers, and trees, as well as through artificial constructs including border stones, walls, and fences.

Individuals traversing national boundaries are classified as trans-border migrants. This migration entails departing from one nation to enter another in pursuit of political, social, or economic opportunities, or even engaging in illicit activities. Humanity has historically been in constant motion, endeavoring to colonize the planet and exploit its resources and socioeconomic prospects for individual gain. Over the past two decades, global trans-border migration has experienced a steady upward trajectory, culminating in a 50% augmentation of the global immigrant population, equating to approximately 77 million new arrivals.

The majority of this growth transpired between the years 2000 and 2010, with sub-Saharan Africa displaying the highest annual average growth rate in migration at 2.8 percent (Eneaseato, 2018). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Transborder migration denotes the relocation of individuals across the international boundaries of their customary place of residence for no less than three months but not exceeding one year (12 months), except instances in which the relocation to that nation is motivated by recreational purposes, holiday, social visits to acquaintances or family, commercial activities, medical care, or religious pilgrimage." The estimations derived from census data by the United Nations Population Division reveal that the highest absolute concentration of international immigrants within the African continent is situated in West Africa. Furthermore, in recent decades, there has been a notable escalation in migration patterns within this segment of sub-Saharan Africa about the overall demographic growth.

The magnitude and breadth of transborder movements occurring in sub-Saharan Africa, coupled with the escalating proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the emergence of radical anti-state ideologies and movements, and the increasingly assertive actions of itinerant pastoralists have all engendered mounting apprehensions regarding the multifaceted impacts of these phenomena, particularly as they pertain to the national security of sovereign entities within the sub-region (notably Nigeria, which serves as the economic and demographic powerhouse of the area).

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed in this investigation is characterized as ex post facto. The ex post facto research design, or after-the-fact methodology, is predicated upon the analysis of independent and dependent variables subsequent to the occurrence of the events and the prior existence of the data. Additionally, to procure the pertinent data necessary for hypothesis testing, this study utilized the documentary method. This methodology entails a systematic approach to data collection from pre-existing records.

Materials were amassed from a diverse array of sources, including official documents from governmental institutions and regional organizations, such as treaties, mission statements, protocols, decisions, regulations, program reports, press releases, newsletters, scholarly articles, proceedings of regional conferences, and academic publications. The internet has emerged as a principal source for information acquisition for this study, owing to its accessibility and the logistical challenges associated with traveling to the Border States and towns to gather data.

Border Management and Arms Smuggling in Nigeria

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2019), "Border

management encompasses the administration of strategies about the authorized movement of individuals (regular migration) and goods, while simultaneously obstructing the unauthorized movement of persons (irregular migration) and commodities, identifying those culpable for smuggling, trafficking, and associated crimes, and recognizing and offering protection to victims of trafficking and other vulnerable populations".

The oversight of borders incorporates elements of border security. Every governmental administration prioritizes international borders. The safeguarding of political elites and their assets in national capitals and urban centers situated far from the borders has conventionally taken precedence over the enhancement of border security and the management of borders in a manner that fortifies national security, particularly evident in Nigeria and other African nations.

The omnipresence of threats, such as cross-border criminal activities, has been partially attributed to Nigeria's insufficient border security and deficient border management; Nigeria's border security challenges are distinctive when juxtaposed with those of other countries. Consequently, these borders remain unpatrolled, unmonitored, or uncontrolled. As a consequence, these demarcations are presently utilized as transit hubs for illicit transnational activities, encompassing smuggling operations. Martin Guy (2011) articulated that, rephrased, the majority of Nigeria's frontiers, if not all, serve as locales where transnational criminal activities transpire.

The permeability of Nigeria's borders has exacerbated the nation's security predicament. Given that borders represent the most conspicuous manifestation of a state's sovereignty over its territory, their ineffectiveness facilitates the proliferation of diverse criminal enterprises, thereby posing a significant threat to the security of a state or region. Consequently, the management of borders assumes a pivotal role in a state's endeavours to protect its populace from various threats, including migration, international terrorism, and assorted forms of trafficking, encompassing human beings, narcotics, raw materials, as well as sexual

and labour exploitation (Jihan & Cédric, 2010). Notably, the border regions of Nigeria, particularly those situated in the northeast and northwest, have transitioned to conduits for the smuggling of diverse illicit commodities into the country, rather than functioning as strategically advantageous zones. An efficient border control apparatus is imperative, especially in light of the prevailing security challenges in Nigeria, where armed bandits invade Nigeria's northern boundaries with Niger and Chad, instilling terror among innocent civilians residing in towns and villages on the Nigerian side of the frontier (Makka, 1989).

Nigeria is estimated to possess over 70% of the eight to ten million illicit firearms circulating within West Africa. The recurrent confiscation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) by security and border enforcement officials, the regular utilization of these firearms in incidents of conflict and crime, and the significant material and human casualties reported following their deployment within the country serve as indicators of Nigeria's elevated incidence of illicit acquisition and utilization of SALWs.

For instance, the volume of weaponry surrendered during the 2009 Niger Delta militant amnesty program's disarmament and demobilization (DD) phase illuminated the extent of SALW proliferation within the nation. Approximately 15,000 militants relinquished their arms as the DD phase of the Amnesty initiative reached its conclusion. Throughout the disarmament operation, a diverse assortment of weapons was confiscated, including 2,760 distinct firearms, 287,445 rounds of ammunition of various calibers, 18 gunboats, 763 dynamite sticks, 1,090 dynamite caps, 3,155 magazines, as well as numerous other military paraphernalia such as jackknives, bulletproof vests, and explosive cables.

A prevalent belief exists that only a minor fraction of the militants' armaments was surrendered, attributable to scepticism regarding the government's commitment to amnesty. Security agencies frequently intercept illegal arms trafficking both domestically and internationally, underscoring the alarming prominence that arms proliferation has assumed within the nation in recent times (Wellington, Bestman, 2006).

According to Okumu and Ikelegbe (2010), the issues about border security in Africa exhibit distinct characteristics compared to those in other global contexts. The governance structures and attributes of African nations significantly influence the management of borders. For instance, the border regions are frequently characterized by weak or altogether absent governmental institutions. A considerable number of African countries lack robust border management frameworks (UNICEF, 2006).

Furthermore, Fowler (2003) posits that a substantial security lapse occurs when law enforcement, military, and intelligence agencies fail to engage in effective communication at the borders. Most governments engage in close collaboration at the regional level to enhance border security through coordinated border patrols, intelligence sharing, and various other mechanisms.

Guy (2011) identified that robust coordination across all levels is imperative for the efficacy of border security initiatives. This, in conjunction with inadequately delineated or nonexistent borders, has markedly exacerbated border instability within the African continent. Reports indicate that Nigeria's borders exhibit porosity, thereby facilitating an array of cross-border criminal activities, inclusive of weapon smuggling.

This situation persists despite the endeavors of cross-border security entities such as the Nigeria Police, Customs Service, Immigration Services, and the Department of State Services (DSS), among others, to oversee the legally established border routes. Arms smuggling operations represent a significant menace to both national and international security as they undermine the nation's standing as a sovereign and autonomous entity, adversely affecting the political and socioeconomic advancement of the country, which subsequently incites ethnic militias, youth unrest, terrorism, and other associated trans-border crimes.

There remains considerable skepticism regarding the synergy and collaborative efforts among the government, security forces, and border communities (Mark & Iwebi, 2019). Arms smuggling has persisted as a prominent challenge at the international, regional, and national strata.

A recurring theme that emerges from the diverse analyses of arms smuggling is its encompassing nature, which includes a wide spectrum of weaponry and the methodologies employed in their illicit introduction into a state. For example, firearms and other destructive instruments or devices, such as explosive bombs, incendiary bombs, gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, or mines, are classified as weapons and ammunition of war under the 2006 ECOWAS Convention on Arms Smuggling and Related Materials, which serves as the sub-regional benchmark for the regulation of arms and ammunition among member states in West Africa.

Additional categories of weapons comprise automatic-loading revolvers, pistols, rifles, carbines, assault rifles, machine guns, and light machine guns (Iwebi, 2017; Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Adeola and Oluyemi (2012) assert that Nigeria's vulnerability to the influx of illicit weaponry at its border checkpoints has ensnared the nation in a multitude of intricate challenges. Eliagwu (2003) reported that in July 2002, there were over fifty documented instances of violent confrontations and conflicts throughout Nigeria, leading to thousands of deaths, numerous injuries, and a significant number of cases of displacement.

Adeola and Oluyemi (2012) further contend that Nigeria's susceptibility to the influx of illegal weaponry entering through its border checkpoints has rendered the nation enmeshed in several complex dilemmas. According to Eliagwu (2003), in July of the same year, there were over fifty recorded cases of violent clashes and conflicts across Nigeria, resulting in a substantial number of fatalities, injuries, and homelessness. As the influx of weapons continues unlawfully, the escalating arms smuggling activities along the nation's borders signal grave peril and catastrophic consequences for both national and regional security.

Consequently, the illegal possession of firearms by individuals or groups transforms into a formidable instrument for executing heinous objectives such as armed robberies, kidnappings, inter-cult conflicts, terrorist attacks, etc.

This was evidenced by the incident involving the offspring of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, which culminated in the fatalities of a law enforcement officer and two minors, Akinolu and Akindeko (Odeh, 2003). The primary entities engaged in the formulation and implementation of the border control policy in Nigeria includes the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Nonetheless, the efficacy of border control is often undermined by issues of coordination among these respective agencies (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012). Although aimed at facilitating regional integration, the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons has inadvertently facilitated the operations of arms traffickers on an international scale (Onuoha, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The investigation revealed that Nigeria is deficient in precise data concerning the presence of foreign nationals within its borders, a situation attributable to the illegal entry of a portion of this population, thereby complicating accurate profiling and registration efforts. Certain undocumented migrants gain entry into the nation through the unregulated borders shared with neighboring states, which contributes to the inadequacy of their profiles and records.

Regrettably, the inability to reliably track some of these other nationalities, potentially engaged in unlawful activities, arises from Nigeria's failure to maintain comprehensive documentation regarding their entry, and the analysis consistently illustrates that Nigeria's extensive and porous borders significantly facilitate the illicit trafficking of firearms.

Furthermore, the research indicated that the various agencies responsible for border regulation frequently exhibit a lack of effective coordination. Given that the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), and Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) often operate in isolation, gaps in border security are created, which can be exploited by arms traffickers. The rampant proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) through smuggling has notably intensified a range of security dilemmas in Nigeria, encompassing insurgency, terrorism, and intercommunal strife.

The readily available supply of illegal firearms exacerbates violence and instability, thereby undermining governmental efforts to uphold law and order, particularly in areas already contending with security predicaments. The infiltration of criminal factions and extremist organizations constitutes a predominant security challenge associated with transborder migration.

The porous characteristics of Nigeria's borders have facilitated the transit of weaponry, narcotics, and individuals affiliated with terrorist entities such as Boko Haram and its affiliate, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). These organizations have capitalized on lax border enforcement to construct transnational networks, enlist new members, and orchestrate assaults, particularly in the northeastern region of the country. The failure to effectively surveil and regulate these movements has exacerbated the security landscape, rendering it increasingly arduous for Nigerian authorities to manage and counteract these threats.

The Management of Transborder Migration and Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria underscores the urgent necessity for the enhancement of border management strategies to adequately address the intricate dynamics of transnational security threats and cross-border criminal activities impacting Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following thorough suggestions are put forth to deal with the intricate relationship that exists between security issues and trans-border migration:

Enhancing Border Management Infrastructure: The Nigerian government should prioritize significant investments in modernizing border management infrastructure. This includes the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies such as drones, motion sensors, and CCTV cameras along the country's extensive land and maritime borders. Implementing an integrated border management system that connects all border posts and relevant agencies in real-time would significantly improve monitoring capabilities and response times to potential security threats.

Furthermore, the establishment of well-equipped, strategically located border posts with adequate staffing and resources is crucial. These posts should be designed to facilitate efficient processing of legitimate travelers while having the capability to detect and intercept illegal activities. The government should also consider developing a comprehensive border management strategy that outlines clear objectives, responsibilities, and performance metrics for all involved agencies.

Strengthening Inter-Agency Coordination: It is advised that a centralized coordinating organization be established in order to solve the division and overlap in tasks among various agencies involved in border management and security.

This entity should be able to supervise and coordinate the operations of the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, and other pertinent security agencies.

To improve communication, role clarity, and cooperative methods to tackling transborder migration and security concerns, regular joint training exercises and interagency workshops should be held. Standardized operational procedures would guarantee uniformity in strategy and close weaknesses that could be taken advantage of by criminal elements in interagency collaboration at the borders.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Lastly, all border management and security programs must have a strong monitoring and evaluation structure in place. It is important to regularly evaluate the success of different tactics and initiatives and to put systems in place for ongoing enhancement and situational adaptation.

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