

Transborder Crisis and Security Implications for West African Sub-Region

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ABSTRACT

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The transborder crisis in West Africa has had far-reaching implications for the region's security. According to a report by the United Nations, the region is facing "unprecedented levels of security and humanitarian challenges". The crisis has been fueled by the activities of non-state actors such as violent extremists, criminal networks, and armed groups. These groups have forced the closure of thousands of schools and health centers, leaving millions of children without access to education and healthcare. The situation has been further compounded by the impact of climate change and food insecurity, which has led to socio-political instability in the region. Countries along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea have also seen an increase in attacks against their territories, threatening transport routes to landlocked nations further north. Despite these challenges, West Africa and the Sahel still present immense opportunities. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) has urged ambassadors to continue supporting a strategy centered on building resilience, promoting good governance, and strengthening peace and security. UNOWAS has also been working with other UN entities to contribute to conflict resolution at both regional and local levels. The research used secondary data. Collective security theory was adopted. The research recommends cooperation among members states to overcome challenges of transborder security.

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INTRODUCTION

West Africa with its Sahel region is one of the critical spheres of interest, influence, and strategic environmental resource for the developed economies. The region is made up of diverse countries richly endowed with both human and natural resources. Various security threats,

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conflicts and crimes occurring in the West African sub-region especially the Sahel region make the regional states a landscape of fragility with enhanced border insecurity (Hamidu, 2022). Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba, and Casimir Chukwunoyelum Ani (2023), have argued that apart from official entry by major powers to fight terror, these powers also pursue primary strategic interests or agenda in the region. In view of the Malian, Burkina Faso, and now Niger crisis, France's intervention in the Sahel is for the protection of its own nationals and to defend its strategic and economic interests in the region.

West Africa with its Sahel region which is the vast semi-arid region of Africa separating the Sahara Desert to the North and tropical Savannas to the South (Dan-Suleiman 2017). The region is a spacious land of opportunities with diverse challenges (International Peace Institute 2012; Institute for Peace & Strategic Studies 2020). Though the Sahel region has abundant human and natural resources offering tremendous potential for rapid growth, there are deep-rooted challenges giving rise to prolonged conflicts, state failure, coups d'état, jihadist challenge, devastating drought, climate change, food insecurity, violent extremism, ethnic clashes, corruption, and human rights abuses (Moulaye, 2016; Golubski, 2019). Thus, the increasing multiplications and lingering of trans-border mobility, deepening security threats, forced migration, and population displacements have affected the prosperity, development, and peace of the Sahel countries (Boas, 2019; Eizenga, 2019; African Renewal, 2022; Williams, 2019; International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2022).

These sixteen West African countries especially its Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea Conakry, Chad, Niger, Sudan, Gambia, Cameroon, Mauritania, and Nigeria) harvest a range of natural resources, such as gold, manganese, zinc, copper, phosphate, limestone, bauxite, marble, oil, and natural gas. Despite these rich natural resources, these countries remain largely the enclaves of western dominant powers such as France, the UK, Germany, Russia, and the USA (Paczynska, 2020). Trans-border mobility, security threats, the dynamism of forced migration, and population displacements in sub-region between 2012 and 2022 are diverse, multiplied, and complex in numerous ways (Iwuoha, 2020). The establishment and implementation of good governance principles through effective leadership by the sub-regional countries in the use of public funds in constructing industries, employment, reduction of poverty, and security amongst the local population are the central points of this paper.

According to Goyin L., John M., & Micah G., (2016), Africa being a colonial creation came about through the merger of the territories by fiat. Just as it was the case with other countries in Africa, West African territories have some challenges that affected the structure of interregional trade due to colonial and post-colonial economic system. Its land borders are regarded as a melting pot and security hot spots. These borders later become areas for trans-border crime as a result of inadequate provision of the necessary infrastructures by the post-colonial government thereby, constituting a threat to national and sub-regional security. Illegal trans-border migration more often than not is characterized by criminal tendencies which are associated with illegal notorious activities done by individuals and groups across national and international borders for financial, economic benefits and political or religious considerations. Trans-border crime is seen as a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions transcends territorial borders, these include terrorism, human, arms, and drugs trafficking.

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At the same time, emerging crime such as modern piracy, trafficking in toxic waste, counterfeit medicines, precious metals or natural resources have been added to the list of illegal trans-border common crimes of prostitution, drug and arms trafficking. With smuggling activities, tax evasion and illegal movement across especially in Nigeria international borders demonstrated the interaction patterns in the border regions. It also presented how international laws and conventions on border crossing are flouted to the detriment of national/sub-regional security in the area, and how the West African nations are unconsciously losing its economic grip (Collins, 1976). All these are largely attributed to the porous nature of the sub-region's borders and the prevailing economic policies of the neighboring states making it easier for illegal trans-border transactions in goods, currency and other threatening circumstances (Collins, 1976).

Due to neglect and misrule over the years, the unprotected nature of borders is used to smuggle people, arms, rice, tokumboh (used) cars, arms and light weapons, ammunitions, fake pharmaceuticals and other contraband goods (Business Day 2014). The above therefore, implies that the West African sub-region is not safe as a result of trans-border crime due to porous borders and ineffective border control hence affecting its economic base and posing serious challenge to regional security. This paper therefore examines transborder crimes and how it affects the security of the sub-region.

Trans-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 and also sociopolitical cum 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. Organized criminal groups or individuals carry out their illicit activities using major technological tools such as information networks, the financial system and other sophisticated means. They also take advantage of differences in legislation, legal systems and traditions, which often seriously hamper state efforts to respond adequately to the threat of organized or trans-border crimes.

Ortuno and Wiriyachai (2009) have maintained that the past few years have been characterized by a significant increase in global criminal activities such as money laundering, trafficking in human and nuclear technology and material, the trade in human organs and migrant smuggling. At the same time, emerging crimes such as modern piracy, and trafficking in toxic waste, counterfeit medicines, precious metals or natural resources have been added to the list of traditional illegal activities such as prostitution, drug trafficking and arms trafficking.

Most recently, transnational crime has grown in scope and is characterized by increasingly global reach, involved in multiple forms of criminal activity, expanding criminal markets to include large-scale financial fraud and cybercrime. And the syndicates are willing to protect their activities through violent and ruthless means, linked to international terrorist groups and devising novel and notorious organizational strategies to deter capture (Luna 2008).

METHOD

Literature review

Available literature on trans-border crime shows that no region of country of the world is spared of this phenomenon. For instance (Maetens 2007) argued that the problems of crime and violence – the drug trade and trafficking in weapons and others are factors that make the Caribbean countries and their economics most vulnerable. The seriousness of these problems has necessitated governments of this region to explore innovative policy responses at both national and regional levels. The concern is to come out with approaches to address crime and violence in the region.

Ntuli (2000) in his study of Somopho region of South Africa, found out that the Somopho area is fraught with problems of high unemployment levels and lack of physical infrastructure. These have affected the level of criminality in this area and has affected also community development.

The high level of unemployment and poverty provide the basis and excuse for the youth to take to drugs and other crimes in the society.

Ntuli (2000) point was echoed by Demombynes and Ozler 2002 both of whom maintained that the growing level of criminality in South Africa may in future likely discourage investment and stifle long term growth and economic development. The concern is that there are so many socio-economic problems such as poverty and inequality, corruption and high level of crimes in the society, these have the tendency of impacting negatively on South Africa's economy.

Similarly, Kalu (2010) contended that developing countries, especially in Africa, present a peculiar dimension in security demands as a result of poverty, unemployment, hunger, and increased belligerency among component entities that make up the continent. The activities of rebel groups, trans-border criminals, kidnappers, arm-smugglers, cultists and other social misfits add up to the tension that has characterized life on the continent and specifically the West African sub-region. The situation has become more eerie when the issue of demented persons such as serial killers, rapists, drug-abusers, child-kidnappers, prostitutes, ritual killers and paraphiles are taken into consideration. These wide range of crimes constitute social nuisance to the West African sub-region and indeed Africa.

Arising from the argument above, issues of defence and security are salient to sustainable development and national survival. Creating national security awareness has been identified as a new policy initiative to address the diverse nature of instability and insecurity in Nigeria and the West African sub-region (Akinsanmi 2007). Also, Jobe (2010) identified the youths as persons that are at the centre of criminality in the region. The ECOWAS stakeholders' forum on youth policy was seen as a step in the right direction. The forum was on building capacity of youth stakeholders, particularly youth organizations on the implementation of the ECOWAS youth policy. Young people have the potentials which should be channel or harnessed more appropriately toward productive ventures instead of engaging in criminality or criminal activities. The argument is that a well-equipped, knowledgeable, disciplined and sophisticated crop of young people in our countries and the sub-region will not only guarantee sustained socio-economic

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development but will also assure us that the desires of the founders of ECOWAS on the ideals of sub-regional integration can be achieved with time.

In their research article titled “Border Governance and Its Complications in West Africa: What Can Be Learned from Constructivism?”, Victor Chidubem Iwuoha and Casmir Chukwuka Mbaegbu, (2018) argues that neither the ECOWAS Common approach nor single-country unilateralism offers consistent and dependable systems for effective migration governance in West Africa. The authors propose a third approach to migration governance, one in which neighboring or bordering states implement flexible, coherent, and hybrid migration systems based on the specificities of their cultural, political, and economic needs, while adapting to the common regional approach and foregoing their distinct unilateralism. The constructivism-based approach focuses on four dimensions underpinning exclusively flexible and mutually acceptable migration standards: (i) joint transborder security and policing, (ii) joint rehabilitation of dilapidated and porous transboundary areas, (iii) bilateral harmonization of immigration laws and policies, and (iv) protection of immigrants’ social rights.

Another article “Exploring the Implications of TransBorder Crimes for Regional Integration in West Africa” by Abraham Peter, (2022), explores the implications of transborder crimes for regional integration in West Africa. It highlights the dimensions and manifestations of these crimes in recent times that call for urgent attention from all walks of life.

Transborder crimes are criminal activities that occur across international borders. They can include human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, and other illegal activities. In West Africa, transborder crimes have become a major concern for regional security. According to a report by the African Union (2016) cross-border criminal activities in West Africa include weapons smuggling, narcotics, and human trafficking. Another report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020) highlights the following transborder crimes in West Africa: cocaine smuggling from the Andes to Europe via West Africa, methamphetamine smuggling from West Africa to East Asia, smuggling of migrants from West Africa to Europe, and firearms trafficking in West Africa. Today, and as seen in the brief literature presented above, organized crime has diversified and extended beyond borders, undermining the credibility and effectiveness of institutions, jeopardizing criminal justice systems, violating human rights and corrupting political leaders.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the combination of the theory of relative autonomy of the state and failed state theory. The state relative autonomy theory is situated within the ambit of the neo-Marxist political economy paradigm. The theory of relative state autonomy depicts the level or degree of detachment or aloofness of the state in the discharge of its duties such as mediating inter-class and intra-class struggles. Thus, this theory presupposes that in any state or political society, there are two levels of contradiction, namely primary contradiction and secondary contradiction.

Primary contradiction is inter-class struggle or depicts class struggle between two antagonistic classes such as the ruling class and the ruled class or the bourgeois class and

the proletariat (i.e. the working class). Whilst, secondary contradiction is the intra-class struggle, denoting class conflicts within the ruling-class or between different segments of the ruling-class. Marx and Engels demonstrate this intractable phenomenon of class struggle when they declare in the preface of their book, *The Communist Manifesto* that “the history of all the hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx and Engels, 1977). The exponents of the theory hold that a state can exhibit either low or high relative autonomy. A state exhibits high autonomy when there is high commodification of capital or excessive penetration of capital into the economy such that the bourgeois class indulges in accumulation of capital through direct exploitation of the working class or appropriation of surplus value when they enter into social relationships of production (i.e. private capitalism). Here, the state is not interventionist, in other words, it does not intervene in the domestic economy like participating in the productive activities (i.e. public/state enterprises) or controlling or nationalizing means of production. The role of state here, therefore, is to regulate. As such, the state is relatively an impartial umpire meditating inter-class and intra-class struggles through harmonization and reconciliation of class interests. The developed capitalist states of the West are, therefore, considered to exemplify this high relative autonomy, and as a result, exhibit high level of human rights observance and protection (Ake, 1976; Alavi, 1972). Conversely, a state exhibits low autonomy when there is low commoditization of capital or low penetration of (private) capital into the economy in such a way that the ruling class is constantly engage in primitive accumulation of capital through embezzlement of public fund. The state becomes the only avenue for capital accumulation. The state is thus, interventionist for engaging in productive activities of means of productive activities (i.e. public corporation) by nationalization of major means of production. This state does not limit itself to regulatory rule and is hence compromised, such that instead of rising above class struggle it is deeply immersed in it (Ake, 1981; 1985).

West African states like other developing states exhibits a low level of the autonomy of the state as a result of low commoditization of capital. Under the electric mixture of mixed economy, Nigeria experiences the phenomenon of lack of penetration of (private) capital into the economy creating a parasitic petty bourgeois class whose major source of accumulation of capital is the state. Hence, the West African states became the only avenue for (primitive) accumulation of capital through which the governing class (i.e. petty bourgeoisie) produce and reproduce their dominance. The implication of the low autonomy of the West African states is that they are immersed in the class struggle rather than rising above it leading to intense struggle for the control of the state for primitive accumulation and marginalization of everything (Ake, 2001).

According to Patrick (2007:644-662) the term “failed state” is often used to describe a state perceived as having failed at some of basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign government. A failed state is one that has shattered social and political structures. It is characterized by social, political and economic failure. Common characteristics of a failing state is when a central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline. Thurer (1999) notes that failing

states are invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political supports for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos. Not only are the functions of government suspended, but its assets are destroyed or looted; and experienced officials are killed or flee the country. According to Thurer (1999:1-5) failed states in agreement with The Fund for Peace propose the following attributes or characteristics of a failed state in order to make it more precise are:

- a) loss of physical control of its territory, or of the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force
- b) erosion of authority to make collective decision
- c) an inability to provide reasonable public services and
- d) (d) an inability to interact with other states as full member of the international community.

Anyanwu (2005) states that by a failed state we mean a state that is unable to meet the needs and aspirations of its masses. A failed state as opposed to capable state is a state which has failed to provide for its citizen such basics need like adequate security, food, water, electricity, health care, good roads, etc. West African states are by all indications or indices a spiraling into failed state - a state where nothing works. Even those ones that work in other continents once adopted in West Africa refused to work.

Methodology

This research paper relied on qualitative methods. First, we conducted an in-depth review of literature and other secondary information. Second, we conducted field interviews through phone calls, WhatsApp group chats and supporting documents collected. The data analyzed in the study originated from primary and secondary sources.

During the field interviews, telephone calls and group chats with key informants in relevant government establishments and stakeholders dealing with criminal activities that occur across and within Nigeria borders: Airports, Seaports, Immigration Services, Nigeria Custom Services, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security & Civil Defence Corps (NSCDCs), Economic & Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Military Commands and ECOWAS Headquarters in Abuja.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Categories of Trans-border Crimes in West Africa

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWS)

Fire arms are trafficked across the sub region and eventually being used by criminal gangs and rebels or freedom fighters for fighting wars, as in the case of Liberia, sierra Leone and Cote d'ivoire among others or utilized for smuggling, committing highway robberies and kidnapping of passengers within and across the ECOWAS Region.

Mohammed Ibn Chambas, former Executive secretary of ECOWAS puts the estimated number of small arms in circulation in West Africa at 8 million. The weapons are recycled between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and among belligerent in other conflict Zones in Southern Senegal, Northern Ghana, Nigeria and Guinea Bissau. The document which was released by the office of the national security advisor (ONSA) revealed that currently there are about 857 million small arms and light weapons in circulation globally of which 10million are in Africa. One million are suspected to have flowed into Nigeria. Importation of these arms continues unabated which while some are being manufactured locally.

Money laundering

Money laundering is the illegal process of concealing the origins of money obtained illicitly by passing it through a complex sequence of banking transfers and commercial transaction. it is money laundering in Nigeria is usually undertaken by wealthy business tycoons or government officials who have acquired their monies through corrupt practices. UNODC (2016).

Ering (2011) Posited that Financial proceeds from drug related crime and other illegal business activities are laundered into various banks accounts under different identities.

These criminal activities involve many individuals, specifically members of the political class in Nigeria who are privileged to occupy government position to siphon public funds to foreign account at the retirement of the Nigerian citizens.

Nigeria loses US\$ 600 million annually to money laundering (Elumelu,2007). between the mid- 1980 and 1999, the country lost us410billion to money laundering (see vanguard, October 25, 2005), such illegal inflows and outflows of huge amount of money that had contributed to impoverishment of the Nigerian economy cannot be easily perpetrated, without the cooperation, collaboration or at the very least, connivance of the professional particularly financial institutions.

Worse still, money laundering fuels corruption and organized crimes in Nigeria (ortuno and wiriyarchai 2009). Some terrorist groups also use money laundering channels to support their terror activities. The economic and financial crimes commission records in early 2012 showed that the Agency had filed high - profile corruption cases in various high courts across the federation.

Terrorism and jihadists activities

In recent years, Nigeria just like other west Africa nations has played host to terrorists groups such as Jamlat Nusrat al- Islamwalmuslimeen(JNIM) , Islamic state greater sahara (ISGS) Al queda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) AL Murabitam, Ansaru and Boko haram. Adetula (2014a). These groups are capable of carrying out attacks and kidnapping for ransoms.

Boko haram and the Islamic state in West Africa province have been active in the Lake Chad Basin region. Jama'sa Nusrat UL- Isalamwa al- muslimin, the islamic state in the Sahara and Ansaruislam in the Sahel the activities of these groups have implications on the peace and security of the sub - region.Muktar (2021). The activities of the groups

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have led to the death of thousands and displaced many others across parts of West Africa. This has resulted to humanitarian crises in the Northern Eastern part of Nigeria.

According to United Nation office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2013, methods of attacks have included coordinated armed assaults, rockets attacks, assassinations, kidnappings, (including child and female bombers), car bombing, and arsons. Military uniforms and vehicles have been used as tactics to get close to the intended targets.

Some of the recent attacks in Nigeria by the terrorist groups

- i. On July 5, 2022, the kuje prison in the Federal capital territory was bombed and attacked by gunmen and an unknown number of prisoners escaped. The Islamic state West Africa (ISWA) has claimed responsibility for the attack.
- ii. The Islamic state West Africa (ISWA) has claimed responsibility for killings of policemen in Suleja, Niger state on 12 May and 4 July 2022. Suleja is less than 20 kilometers away from the federal capital territory, Abuja.
- iii. On March 28, 2022, there was an attack on Abuja - Kaduna passenger's train. Many killed while more than 60 passengers were abducted.
- iv. On 28 November, 2020, at least 70 civilians were killed and others wounded and abducted in Jere local government Area, Borno state by insurgents and
- v. On 14 April, 2014, 276 were kidnapped from government girls' school at the town of Chibok, Maduguri in Borno State.

Oil Theft

According to Etannibe (2014), Oil theft lubricates corruption in Africa. Illegal oil bunkering has grown to a proportion that has generated a coercive government response to protect a vital asset of Nigeria. Nigeria was Africa biggest oil producer until very recently. In September 2022, Nigeria dropped to the fourth place on the continent due to oil theft. According to the Nigeria National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) Limited.

It is estimated that ten percent (around 55 million barrels) of Nigeria's oil is stolen and trafficked every year. In fact, it is estimated that oil production in Nigeria run at only two thirds of capacity because of theft, vandalism and violence in the Niger delta. Oil theft is putting the country's economy in a precarious situation. An average of 437,000 barrels of Oil is stolen on daily basis by criminals in Nigeria where they illicitly tap pipelines onshore and offshore in the Niger Delta region. Recently, NNPC Limited uncovered an illegal oil connection from Forcados Terminal that was operated for nine years. The company chief Executive Office, Mele Kyari disclosed this at the Senate's joint committees on Gas and petroleum (upstream and downstream) few weeks ago.

The office of the auditor general for the federation in a statement released on the 2022 said that the defund Nigeria national petroleum corporation (NNPC) now NNPC limited failed to account for about 107,239,436,00 barrels of crude oil lifted for domestic consumption in 2019. The report also identified discrepancies between the amounts reported by the NNPC as transfer to the federation accounts and what was reported by the AUGF. It is said that while the NNPC records showed that N 1,272,600,864,00.00 was transferred by the corporation the amount recorded by the accountant general of the federation was N 608,710,292,773,44, showing a discrepancy of N 663,896,567,227.28.

Bunkering is the practice of stealing and trafficking of oil by criminal groups with links to militant groups in the Niger-delta. The stolen oil is loaded to barges or tankers and sold in Nigeria and the surrounding counties like Ghana, Cameroon and Cote d'ivoire, even south Africa Proceeds from the oil bunkering go directly to militants and corrupt officials. Oil bunkering is a crime that enriches a few criminals, insurgents and corrupt officials while impoverishing many, undermining, the rule of law, deepening corruption, polluting the environment, violating human right and depleting natural resources.

The response of Nigeria government to this threat is Nigerian oil industry involve deployment of military, acquisitions of marine vessels, and even cooperation between the state and private security companies. UNODC (2009).

In August 2022, in a bid to curb crude Oil theft, the Nigerian government launched an application to monitor incidence. The NNPC awarded a multibillion-naira pipeline surveillance procurement contract to the former Leader of the movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Government Tompolo. This is to initiate the involvement of non-state actors for protection of oil pipelines and other infrastructure as done in Cambodia and Mexico which produced desired results

Illicit Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking by Nigerian citizens in different countries across the globe has remained a major concern from the government and the citizens. This crime has produced a negative image of the country in the international community over the past decades. As a result, Nigerians has subjected to intensive searches at airport and extensive surveillance all over the world. Akinsami (2007). Because of efforts by the governments to curb drug trafficking, drug dealers and carriers continuously adjust their modes of operation and route. With respect to regional trafficking of drugs. The National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) noted that current trends in illicit traffic of narcotics and psychotropic substances indicates the existence of a thriving drug trafficking route within the West Africa sub - region. Drugs are smuggled through illegal routes along the vast land borders (NDLEA 2008). Data from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, (NDLEA) shows that air transportation remains the most common mode of transportation by traffickers and large consignment are also transported by seas.

The West Africa Joint Operation initiative, a regional enforcement project set up by the America and Nigeria, led to the seizures totally 1,390 kilos of cocaine in Benin, Ghana, Togo, Cape Verde and Nigeria. Nigeria's ports are used largely as transit. Cocaine and heroin are neither produced nor wisely consumed in the country. Cannabis is produced and more wisely used but not often trafficked beyond West Africa Nations largely due to bulk, weight value and demand. Nigeria development is jeopardized because available evidences show that the country is used as a transit route for drug smuggling, particularly for West Africa routes. Addo (2006) On September 18, 2022, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) a major warehouse in a secluded estate in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State where over N 194 billion worth of crack were seized. This is considered as the largest singular seizure in the history of NDLEA operations in Nigeria.

Human Trafficking

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Trafficking in persons is defined by the United Nations on Drug and Crime (UNODC) to mean: “The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use force or other form of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or of the group or receiving of the payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”.

The scope of human trafficking is wide spread in West Africa. Child trafficking in particular spreads across many countries in West Africa including: Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cote Divoire, Guinea, Serria Leone, Gambia and Mali. Available statistics indicated that the enormity of the problem is significant with an estimation of over 200,000 children are being trafficked in West Africa and Central Africa. Over 4,000 children were trafficked from Cross Rivers to various part within and outside the countries. Benin registered over 3,000 trafficked children between 1995 and 1999.

The victims end up as slaves, prostitutes in their destination or some have their important organs like kidneys being harvested illegally. Since the beginning of the year 2022 National Agency for prohibition of trafficking in persons (NAPTIP), kaduna state has rescued no fewer than 615 victims from human traffickers, while 103 victims of human trafficking had down rescued from Osun State.

Internet Fraud

Information and communication technology (ICT) is one of the most remarkable innovations in the 21st century. According to ILEA West Africa, in spite of the numerous benefits of ICT, the increasing trend of cyber fraud has now become a global challenge. It has estimated that cybercrime costs the global economy more than \$400 Billion each year. This situation poses a lot of threat to most nations. In 2013, for example, the activities of internet crime including cyber espionage more than 800 million people worldwide.

According to statistics, Nigeria is ranked first in Africa in terms of online-related crimes. Cyber fraud popularly known as “yahoo” or sometimes tagged “419”, is a newly spread practice which combines internet-based fraud with charms and other supernatural means to commit crimes. The term “419” was derived from a section of Nigeria law that talks about fraud. According to security intelligence, most cyber fraudsters are young unemployed people who usually get themselves involved in activities such as online dating scam, business scam, lottery scam, impersonation, hacking of credit cards and bank accounts, ATM theft and many more. The prevalence of cybercrime in the West Africa sub-region can affect the solid economic development of the nation in several ways especially in terms of direct foreign investment, business transaction or trade, tourism and security. According to the 2017 report of Intercontinental Action Group Against money laundering in West Africa. According to one of Nigeria’s leading financial regulators at an international criminal police organization [INTERPOL] meeting in 2003, 122 out of 138 countries represented complained about Nigeria involvement in financial fraud in their countries. In Nigeria, the recent upsurges in the reported cases of ritual killings have been linked with activities of internet fraudsters who are in their early 20’s and 30’s.

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Smuggling of Goods

Though smuggling is a global menace but it is more prevalent in Africa while Nigeria appears to be the worst hit in the continent according to the 2013 Illicit Trade Report of World Customs Organization. Smuggling is an illegal method of conducting business. Deflem and Kelly (2001) described it as a clandestine activity involving the importation and/or exportation of goods by wrong or unlawful means with the objectives of evading taxes and any other measures prohibiting or restricting the importation or exportation of such goods. People engage in smuggling for selfish purposes, including extra profit by boycotting the appropriate agency in charge of ascertaining the nature of the goods before they are allowed into the country. Adetula (2014). The fight against smuggling have been tough for Nigeria because the country has long unmanned stretches of borders and the ineffective operations of inter-government agencies do not help with proper monitoring at borders.

According to Adetula (2003), the effects of smuggling are usually significant in an economy. The major impacts on the country are: Loss of revenue by the Government through tax evasion, distortion of market prices collapse of local industries and destruction of market for local product and in some cases violent clashes between the customers' officials and desperate smugglers often result to casualties on both sides. With these constant Seizures, the smugglers are undaunted in their nefarious to cripple the economy of this country.

Piracy and Maritime Crimes

Closely related to the problem of oil theft, maritime piracy and insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea centre mostly on theft of crude oil, which is produced in the Niger delta. Also, there have been instances of attacks which took place within Nigerian waters, with Benin and Togo affected throughout the region (ibid, 50). International Maritime Bureau (IMB) piracy reporting centre listed 30 reported incidents during 2013 that were related to Nigeria (up until 22 October) and has also said all Nigeria's waters are risky with several attacks unreported. Out of 68 occurrences of international Maritime piracy reported between January to June 2021, Nigeria had four issues of vessel attack across its waters in the first half of the years.

Factors Responsible for Transborder Crimes

The surge in transborder criminal activities across West Africa over the past three decades can be traced to a multitude of interrelated factors. Various scholarly works, including those by Finckenauer (2000) and the Library of Congress (2003), have identified the underlying conditions that create a fertile environment for these crimes, particularly along Nigeria's borders. One of the most prominent drivers is the widespread poverty and high rates of youth unemployment, which push many individuals into illegal cross-border ventures. This situation is exacerbated by the ECOWAS protocol that allows free movement within the sub-region with minimal documentation and surveillance, facilitating the rise of organized criminal syndicates operating across borders. Additionally, West Africa's political landscape is often marked by weak institutions and governance systems, leaving borders vulnerable to criminal exploitation. Many of the

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borders are poorly demarcated and lie within communities that share homogeneous cultures and languages, making it easier for criminals to operate without detection. Corruption is another major challenge, involving political office holders, judicial, legislative, and law enforcement personnel who may collude with criminals due to poor oversight and accountability. Ineffective inter-agency collaboration further weakens the fight against cross-border crimes, as does the lack of training, poor remuneration, and inadequate funding of border police and other regulatory agencies. Moreover, advancements in communication and air transportation technologies have created new channels for both legitimate and illicit activities. The region's weak economic regulatory frameworks, including inconsistent import, export, and tariff policies, as well as ineffective customs management, contribute to unchecked illegal trade. Compounding these issues are poor scanning systems and limited intelligence-gathering capacities at borders. Finally, political instability, civil wars, armed rebellions, and the rise of banditry both in Nigeria and neighboring countries have intensified cross-border crimes such as arms trafficking, smuggling of goods and minerals, and human trafficking. These complex and interwoven factors highlight the urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated responses to combat transborder criminal activities in West Africa

Implication for Sub-Regional Security

One of the security implications of transborder crimes is that it gives rise to illegal migration. Illegal trans-border migration has varieties of impacts on both the destination and the source countries. This has been largely viewed from the angle of threats and challenges. The unignorable effects of illegal trans-border migration can undoubtedly be seen on both the security and the economic. The implication of illegal migrants in terrorist activities and organize crimes in the destination countries has attest to this fact.

Similarly, it has a consequence of creating unemployment mostly during economic stagnation. Considering security first, transborder crime of illegal immigrants have been linked to the thread of terrorist network, organized crime, human trafficking and drug trafficking. Though not all illegal immigrants are partakers of these crimes, it will be unfair to labeled all of them as such but with the increase threat to security, after one of the world's terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in United States, which two of the pilots were discovered to be illegal migrants, that changed in totality, the perception of Americans about illegal migrants (Wagner, 2006).

Economic woes: Smuggling activities constitutes an adverse effect on the economy of the country. It has been discovered that 90% of the revenue meant to be collected by the National governments in the region is been lost through smuggling. The remaining 10% is not evenly declared to the government as a result of corrupt nature of the security agencies at the border. With the high rate of corruption in the country, revenues are not share evenly, and leaders are not helping matters as they turn out to be the dominant traffickers of money across the borders. A Custom's officer resigned his appointment over asset declaration with the emergence of President Buhari led administration for fear of been arrested and losing the much accumulated government diverted

revenue in his possession, this is evidence that the level of corruption in the country and increased trafficking leads to economic crises (Olagbemi, & Joshua, 2017).

Increase in substandard products that are risky to human health. It has been revealed that illegal trans-border crimes have increased the quantum of substandard health products with adverse effect on people's health. For example, the medicines/drugs that are either, fake, expired or banned from consumption were discovered to be smuggle into the country and distributed to unsusceptible buyers. Because of the state of these drugs, they have cause adverse effects of deteriorating health condition and in some cases instant loss of lives (Olagbemi, & Joshua, 2017).

The use of hard drugs by youths which are often illegally imported into the country has affected their psychological state of mind, it tends to make them behave abysmally rendering them useless to their society. This has increased the statistics of patients in the psychiatric hospital and the mentally retarded.

It tarnishes the image and good reputation of the country internationally. With the discovery, arrest and deportation of Nigerians in countries such as Italy, Libya and Europe alongside the reports of Nigerians in various media outfits of their involvement in drug trafficking, women trafficking & advance fee Fraud (419) have given the nation bad name to an extent that Nigerians internationally walk with their heads low in shame. It has led to them losing their dignity and integrity before the world. Latest of which is the able-bodied male and females that were drowned in the Mediterranean Sea trying to cross over to Italy, then to Europe. This does not present the country in a good light.

CONCLUSION

In view of the fact that border insecurity is to some extent a factor of lack of strategies and of weak state institutions it follows that the first steps to enhance border security is through adoption of national border management strategies and building state capacities to manage their borders. Although African boundaries are difficult for traded goods to cross and easy for cross-border crimes, there are a number of concrete measures that can transform borders into secure areas where people earn decent living, states are not denied revenues, and nations coexist peacefully. Currently, African borders are managed in ways that allow arms and criminals to freely across them. Poor or lack of management of these borders has been a major cause of national insecurity. In order to enhance African border security, a number of far-reaching measures must be undertaken. These include adopting appropriate legal and organizational frameworks, improving infrastructure and adequately equipping personnel and border posts, effectively exchanging information and data, improving conditions of local communities and integrating them into border management initiatives, and clearly demarcating international borders. Recommendations : To enhance border security both operationally and strategically, countries should implement a coordinated and intelligence-led approach. This involves strengthening coordination within and between national border management agencies and engaging in joint and coordinated patrols with neighboring countries through bilateral or trilateral frameworks. Establishing Joint Border Posts (JBPs) or Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) will facilitate real-time

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communication, intelligence sharing, and trust-building between border agencies. Strategic installations of surveillance equipment despite high procurement and maintenance costs and the deployment of Mobile Interdiction Teams (MOBITs) are essential for monitoring long, porous borders. Furthermore, developing intelligence-led border control capacities is crucial for effectively identifying and countering cross-border crimes. On a broader level, states should ensure clear border demarcation, establish dedicated border management agencies, coordinate border activities, and promote cross-border cooperation in security and economic matters. Lastly, involving local communities and adopting integrated border management strategies will provide sustainable, inclusive, and adaptive border governance solutions.

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