

BORDER INSECURITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA

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PAPER INFO

Received:

November 2022

Revised:

November 2022

Approved:

November 2022

ABSTRACT

Background: Using secondary sources of data, and adopting transnationalism theory, it is discovered that Nigeria's territory and population are vulnerable. Consequently, the border towns and its people become prey to transnational terrorists' organizations; drug barons; smugglers; among others. Some frontline settlers are conscripted into or give support to the criminal elements; engage in illegal smuggling, thereby making the state lose vital revenue from some traders and corrupt state officials at the border posts.

Aim: The study looked at some of the literature on border security and insecurity, terrorism on both a domestic and international scale, the effects of porous border security on people's lives, property, and socioeconomic activities, and the implications for those living in the border region of northeastern Nigeria.

Method: Articles from magazines, newspapers, textbooks, and other resources were compiled. The many authors' viewpoints and contents are studied or addressed in the sections that follow.

Findings: Border insecurity is the factor responsible for the inability of the states to halt the terrorists' activities across Nigerian international boundary in the north-east axis. Government is therefore urged to establish its authority in those frontline states; equip the nation's security operatives; boost cross-border security surveillances; provide social infrastructures for those at the border to make them patriotic and loyal to the state as the panacea for halting trans-border criminality and terrorism in the North-East in particular and Nigeria at large.

KEYWORDS

north-east, trans-border, transnational terrorism, insecurity



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INTRODUCTION

Security of lives and properties is one of the vital functions of Government. Government of states uses its operatives to ensure the security of its territory and citizens. It is because poor management of borders can cause internal and external insecurity that may affect sociopolitical and economic activities or development in the country (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). The aforementioned information seems to be lacking in Nigeria in recent times as evidenced in the frequent cases of terrorist attacks, kidnapping for ransom, herders-farmers conflicts, smuggling of goods and services, human trafficking, etc.

The quest to uncover the rationale for these and its effects on the states are the major triggers/aims of this study. The paper therefore examined some literatures on border security and insecurity, terrorism at both domestic and transnational levels, effects of porous border security on the lives, properties and socioeconomic activities and the implications on the people of North-eastern Nigeria border paradigm.

Border Security and Insecurity

According to Iheanacho and Ohazurike (2019), border security involves defending any state against unlawful cross-border operations such as the importation of illegal goods such as drugs, weapons, and ammunition. Corroborating with the above, Nelson et al. (2010), noted that “the managing of the flow of people, goods and other tangible items across national boundaries” is what border security connote.

Border Insecurity on the other hand is the failure, laxity or inability of the state or government to be in full control of the movement of goods and services in and across its legitimate borders (Agbedahin, 2014). This makes the people, territory and the economy of the state vulnerable to exploitation. According to Wikipedia (2016), insecurity means threat to the general peace of the people which may later be considered as low level of disorder, large-scale violence, or even an armed insurgency (like that of Boko Haram and others for example).

North-East Nigeria

North-East is geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Wikipedia Encyclopedia, however, elaborates that one of Nigeria's administrative regions known as the North Eastern State is the North East geopolitical zone. On May 27th, 1967, it was formed from the Northern area. It had Maiduguri as its capital. The North Eastern state was separated into Bauchi, Borno, and Gongola on February 3rd, 1976. Six further states were created from these three. For instance, the former Borno State was split into the present-day states of Borno and Yobe on August 27, 1991. The former Gongola State was split into Adamawa State and Taraba State on the same day as well. In October 1996, the former Bauchi State was split into the current Bauchi State and the Gombe State. Before the states of today were created

Trans-Border Crimes/Transnational Terrorism

The task of defining trans-border crime and transnational terrorism would not be an easy one, because many elements have been recognized as constituting it. However, according to Ering (2011), transnational and international criminal activity that crosses boundaries is referred to as trans-border crime. These criminal actions are often carried out for monetary gain, socio-political gain, or religious motivations. It is a collection of crimes whose perpetrators and effects transcend national boundaries. These would include, but are not limited to, cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal oil bunkering, illegal diamond trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, drug and alcohol trafficking, illegal drug sales, and trafficking in firearms.

According to Williams (2012), transnational crime undermines and undermines the body politics' inherent defenses, acting as the HIV virus of the modern state. Williams claimed that most states had the ability to contain this threat in the past, but this is no longer clearly the case. This means trans-border crime is not a new phenomenon. Collaborating with the above, according to Moulaye (2009), trans-border crime is a group of criminal activities whose perpetrators and effects transcend national boundaries. Because of the manner that natural resources were managed and how rebellions and civil wars were handled, this type of crime first emerged in the 1990s, when political turbulence, hot spots, and intercommunal conflicts increased throughout a number of nations. A situation like this gradually ruined relationships

between neighbors, made poverty worse, and provided opportunities for criminal groups to form cross-border or even multinational networks.

From discourse above, one can say that transnational or trans-border crime is the illegal cross border activities in terms of transporting of goods and services by both nationalities and aliens of one country to another. Trans-border crime is most often the work of networked gangs of traffickers that receive at times support locally and from well-structured sources across countries (Ellis & Akpala, 2011). International Terrorism is the terrorist attacks that affect people of one or more countries (Böhmelt et al., 2020), like the Boko Haram attack on the United Nations Building in Abuja; or hostage taking that involves other nationalities. Transnational terrorism is the organizing of terrorist activities in one country and executing it in another; or a terrorist group in country 'A' being connected to another terrorist group in country 'B'; and these two or more collaborating together to carry out attacks or support each other with ideas, weapons, recruiting of personnel or sending of finances. Boko Haram from North-East Nigeria has graduated from mere domestic to an international terrorist group as she relates with Islamic State of Iran and Levant (ISIL) which gave her the power to operate as Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), in spite of some internal challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Randolph Bourne popularized the transnationalism thesis in the early 20th century as a result of the growing interconnectedness of people and the diminishing economic and social significance of national boundaries (Wikipedia, 2016). This theory viewed that the increased interaction between non-state actors across the borders has led to several impact on the capability of states. This transnational interaction can take place in one country while the effects are seen in another country as Soehl and Waldinger (2012) observed.

With the idea of diaspora at the forefront, racial dynamics underlying the global division of labor, and the financial turmoil of global capital, this approach highlights the ways in which nations are no longer able to contain or control the dispute or negotiation through which social groups annex a global dimension to their meaningful practices (Wikipedia, 2016). This theory according to Iheanacho and Ohazurike (2019) is appropriate in studying and understanding cross border interactions and activities between states and non-state actors and even among other salient actors. The theory is used in this study because it helps to explain how and why people connect within and across the northern borders of Nigeria and engage in unlawful activity and trade that the government finds challenging to put an end to.

METHOD

The work used secondary sources of data. Articles from news papers, journal, text books and internet materials were collated. The contents or views of the various authors are analyzed or discussed thematically below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nigerian Border Paradigm and Its Security

Nigeria which was colonized by Britain was granted political independence on October, 1st, 1960. It shares large international boundary with some ex-France colonies. The international boundary between the Republic of Nigeria and Republic of Benin is about 773

kilometers; Nigeria and Cameroon boundary span about 1,690 kilometers; Nigeria/Chad border is 85 kilometers through the Lake Chad; Nigeria share 1,497 kilometer border with Niger and then with Guinea on the coastal areas (Mbah, 2012; Umara, 2014; Yenwong-Fai, 2012). These Nigerian neighbours also share international boundaries with other countries that serve as gate way to Europe. For example, Chad is strategically located between North Africa, East Africa and Central Africa where there had been extreme religious and political tension (Mbah, 2012; Yenwong-Fai, 2012).

Along their common borders, Nigeria and her neighbours share lot of socio-economic activities, cross cultural, educational, medical facilities and other bilateral agreements and relations both at official and unofficial levels. For instance, Nigeria and Chad are in the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Coast of Guinea Commission, among others (Mbah, 2012).

The Nigerian state like others is to man and manage its border for maximum security of lives and properties; ensures that trans-border trading is well accounted for as a source of foreign exchange/revenue for the nation; to check and halt illegal weapons, contraband goods from in or out of the country. The Government is to make sure the lives and economy of its citizens at the borders is well protected as well as the welfare of the frontline settler's are catered for. In view of the imperatives above, Nigeria have military and paramilitary organizations that are trained and paid to man those entry and exit routes in the border towns. The Nigeria Custom and Immigrations services and others are at the borders of the North-East. The Military (Army, Air force and Navy) also monitor activities in and across the border for national security and development (Hamidu, 2017).

Border Insecurity and the Challenges of Transnational Terrorism in North Eastern Nigeria

Border insecurity and lack of development of border town settlements, provision of infrastructures and other social amenities etc in Nigerian frontline states has directly and indirectly affected the Northeastern states of Nigeria. Ekpenyong (1993) argued that most of Nigerian frontline towns and states are not well secured. He stressed that alien comes in and go unhindered and without records which posed security threat to the nation's security and socioeconomic development. He opined that unscrupulous elements either from any of the neighbouring countries or nationals of other remote countries and continents use the same border for illegal or shabby businesses such as smuggling of contraband goods and other dangerous substances or chemicals; arms and ammunitions; trafficking in persons etc. which can affect both national, sub-regional and even continental peace, security and development. Corroborating with the above, Mailabari and Hamidu (2015) also noted that most frontline states and border town settlements in Nigeria are not developed and secured when compared to other parts of the settlements in the interior. Such insecurities have therefore led to or caused several unfortunate incidences such as:

- 1) Starting and Boosting of Insurgency/Terrorism: Border Insecurity facilitates radicalization of youths in the Northeast of the country. For instance, Boko Haram that started in Nigeria as a normal Islamic school in the city of Maiduguri with some of its students from across the nation's borders later became a radicalized insurgency group from 2009 following the group's clashes with the military. In 2019, it is obvious that Boko Haram has become a transnational terrorist organization operating beyond the

shores of Nigeria under the name Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP). The terrorists also exploit such border insecurity as opportunities to recruit, camp, radicalize youths both within and across, and execute their plans against their enemies/targets. For instance, the group's strong grip of the Sambisa forest and the Lake Chad basin axis, gives them access to weapons, personnel and income that keeps the group going. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been moving through the Sahel towards Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Indeed, there are indications that AQIM has operational bases in some West Africa countries and has forged tactical alliances with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) and Ansar Eddine in Mali and Niger. These alliances have taken the form of AQIM's provision of training and logical supports to the Boko Haram and other terrorist operatives. Yenwong-Fai (2012) claimed that the militant movement Boko Haram, which has its roots in Nigeria, poses a monumental danger to Nigeria's neighbours since its influence spread across the Nigerian borders. The abundance of permeable borders in the West African Sub Region greatly increases the risks posed by this violent group. Target nations include Chad, Benin, Cameroon, and Niger because of their proximity to Nigeria, demographics, and socioeconomic ties. These borders' openness makes it easier for terrorist activity to spread to nearby nations and beyond; given the relative ease with which terrorist elements can or do cross in and out of those neighbouring countries. It should be noted that citizens of Cameroon and Niger have been suspected of participating in militants and terrorist activities as far back as the 1980s during the reigns of Maita-tsine, and now in the era of the Boko Haram in Nigeria (Taiwo, 2010). This alleged involvement implies that terrorist activities could and has already spread across Nigerian borders and infiltrated the neighbouring countries such as training recruits, planning and execution of terrorist acts. They are also using the neighbouring states as safe havens. Allegations that some Boko Haram migrated to Niger and Cameroon after committing attacks in the northern part of Nigeria buttress the need for swift actions in addressing the problems of trans-border terrorism in Nigeria (Bashir, 2013).

- 2) Proliferation of Arms: Border insecurity in North-eastern Nigeria aid smuggling of weapons in the country. Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) pipelines will continue to exist and the likelihood of effective border management, patrol, and promotion will be severely hampered as long as the northern Nigerian borders are open and ineffectively manned by reasonable security officers. According to Krause (2007), three mechanisms are involved in the illicit trade in weapons: the black markets, covert government-to-government transactions, and sub-state group sponsorship. While private aid from arms dealers or charitable interest organizations is not unusual, this last type typically depends on favorable support from a foreign government. It is clear that the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is in part, a response to demand for personal security when normative social relations collapse or are seen to be on the brink of collapse. Krause (2007) claimed that in parts of West Africa and North-eastern Nigeria in particular, the absence of functional and caring governments has led to the spread of lawlessness and criminal violence. In response, Musah (2002)

stated that many parts of Nigeria are increasingly militarized. Militarization includes the presence of heavily armed checked points along roads. He stated that in Africa, the sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation are many and varied. While the focus of international efforts to reduce proliferation frequently centers on the production and supply of new weapons, a significant source of SALW continues to be the stockpiles that the former Soviet Union, the United States, and their allies pumped into Africa in the 1970s and 1980s to fuel or finance proxy interstate wars. Small Arms and Light Weapons apologists of this postulation claimed have found their way through clandestine networks involving rogue arms broker, primary military companies, shady airlines companies and local trans-border smugglers to exacerbate ethno-religious tension, facilitate the growth of new ones in the country and the terrorists continue with their activities against the state. Consequently, Small Arms and Light Weapons have found their ways into civilian hands from official sources due to a combination of factors, including the breakdown of state structure, lax control over national armouries and poor service condition for security personnel. Armed robbery and other act of terrorism are rampant and coercive across the Nigerian North-east borders; protection and vigilance justice are replacing the incapacitated state security racket. According to Wesley (2007), globalization also makes nation-state's border to become vulnerable to western capitalist manipulation through Military Industrial Complex (MIC).

- 3) **Trafficking in Persons:** Over the years, the Nigerian state has come to the limelight as a country aiding or facilitating trafficking in persons; which may not be unconnected with poor border paradigm and surveillances in the country. Ingwe et al. (2012) attributed the porous border regime of Nigeria as aiding trans-border crimes, particularly trafficking in persons for illicit business in Europe. They claim that the UNHCR, a UN agency concerned with this issue, confirms the Italian Connection story by stating that wealthy and criminally savvy human traffickers currently arrange with parents of girls and women from southern Nigerian states, including the Niger Delta, with the promise of providing them with lucrative jobs that would enable each of them to earn about US\$1,272 in Libya. The criminals first transported the girls and women through the airport in Kano, northern Nigeria, after obtaining fake passports issued under false names. However, they later changed their strategy and began trafficking people through the north-eastern neighbor of Nigeria, the Niger Republic, to Libya before transporting the women to European countries with the intention of using them as slaves or prostitution. Large and permeable borders in Nigeria have been attributed to this serious global crime (IRIN, 2008). This finger-pointing at Nigeria's open borders for people trafficking is not unrelated to more significant concerns involving historical socio-economic and political traumas and shortcomings that Nigeria, like other African nations, have suffered. Human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, hiding, harboring, and trade of people while using coercive control over helpless people. It also includes the abuse of power positions and the exploitation of people's vulnerabilities (UNESCO, 2006). Human trafficking has been an issue around the world for over 12 million individuals who are compelled to work for the benefit of others, but it was most prevalent in north-eastern Nigeria in the middle of the 2000s (ILO, 2005), involving roughly 2.4 million victims.

- 4) Smuggling of goods: Border insecurity made it easier for force migrants in and from the North-eastern Nigeria to smuggle in goods and services. Increasing migration has facilitated the development of cross-border social networks that can be activated for criminal or terrorist purposes (Osinuga, 2013). Smuggling has become more common and varied with the opportunities provided by the rapid increase in volumes of internationally traded commodities. The effectiveness of state controls on its borders has typically depended on the nature of the smuggled commodity, the ease of production, concealment and transport, the availability of legal substitutes, and the nature and levels of consumer demand. Policing efforts in the North-east often fail to eliminate the targeted activity due to the border terrain and some illegal routes in the area. Arguing against the backdrop that there are many technical cross border crimes and terrorism in the West African and North-eastern Nigeria in particular, Addo (2006) indentified categories of cross border crimes and items smuggled into Nigeria from West Africa and other places to include but not limited to: Small Arms; Recruitments of Mercenaries and Child soldiers; Human Trafficking; Narcotics; Money Laundering and Internet. According to him, the porous, complex and disjointed nature of the international boundaries of most countries in Africa and most especially in Nigeria are some of the reasons for the incessant nature of such smuggling crimes.

Implications of Border Insecurity on North-East Nigeria

Among the numerous implications of border insecurity in the North-east are;

- 1) The emergence and unending of transnational terrorism in and beyond North-eastern Nigeria;
- 2) Losing of lives of several people in North-eastern Nigeria as corroborated by Kallon (of the United Nations) who stated that Boko Haram attacks for this ten years has claimed the lives of no fewer than 27,000 civilians in north-east Nigeria (Ajayi, 2019);
- 3) Proliferation of weapons in the hands of civilian people either for self defence or ethnic militia activities;
- 4) The discouraging of direct foreign investment in states like Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, due fear of terrorist attacks and abduction of foreign nationalities;
- 5) The retarding of cross border trade at both official and non-official levels due to the risk involved. For instance, the route from Maiduguri to Gamboru/Ngala to Cameroon and to other north and Central Africa countries; the route from Bama/Banki to Cameroon; as well as the one along the Lake Chad have suffered several attacks of commuters, transporters; where some traders were killed, some abducted together with their goods, hence the military closed those roads for security reasons;
- 6) The attacking of some Nigerian villages/communities along the common border (frontline settlers) suffered attacks, collection of their goods or wealth by both the foreign military personnel for what those MJTF members called ‘assisting the terrorist’ and the terrorist on the other hand, suspecting them of reporting their movement to the security personnel and lastly from cross fire or stray bullets;
- 7) the military claimed that the terrorists also use this terrain to bolster their personnel in terms of weapons and other foot soldiers from Libya, Mali, and even beyond; the military authorities halted agricultural activities in the region, and farmers,

fishermen/women, and pastoralists operating along Lake Chad were also expelled for security reasons;

- 8) The fleeing for safety or joining the criminal gangs by hitherto innocent people. Many innocent persons hitherto dwelling in the frontline states and those doing business along the borders suffered untold hardship from various quotas (military or terrorist assaults, where each of the parties accuse those civilians for siding/supporting the other). Some young men and women in those places either relocate from those frontline communities to safer places or join the terrorists for their survival; and
- 9) The affecting of Nigeria's image, its diplomatic relations and foreign policy both in positive and negative aspects (Ibrahim, 2014). Fighting the transnational terrorism has prompted countries like Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria to relate with each other so as to halt the advances of the transnational terrorist group with several diplomatic visits, the formation of Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) operating along the Lake Chad axis. Juxtapose, Some Nigerian refugees in those countries are said to be maltreated and suspected as terrorists by the people hosting them and security personnel of the neighbouring countries. The refugees were seen as vagabonds and constitute nuisance in and to those francophone countries which prompted untimely deportation of some of them to Nigeria (Nurudeen & Adekola, 2014). Boko Haram terrorism has made several countries to see Nigeria as terrorist battle ground, either to recruit and train terrorists or to capture and take possession, especially the northern eastern axis; as Boko Haram is one of the acknowledged terrorist groups in Sahel and is associated with Al-Qaeda/ISIL (Ibrahim, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Even though the rising spread of terrorism is no doubt one of the security issues facing contemporary world, border insecurity in Northeast Nigeria has created, nurtured and sustained the menace of domestic and international terrorism with lot of casualties in terms of human beings and devastation of cities. This act has increasingly constituted a big threat to peace and security in Northeast Nigeria. Border insecurity is a strong motivating factor which must be checked at all cost by all hands for Nigeria with a promising economy to exist and exert its authority in continental and global power configuration.

To secure and revive the Nigerian state and economy, the under-listed recommendations are imperative:

- 1) Nigeria should as a matter of urgency pay attention to it frontline states and border town settlers as they serves as the gate way from the North-east. This is to particularly provide good security, medical, educational and other facilities to make the people settling there to be loyal and supportive to the state against any alien movements;
- 2) The welfare and wellbeing of the security operatives at the borders, especially in the North-east should not be taken for granted as that may jeopardized the nation's revenue generation, national security and development;
- 3) Authorities are to acquire and deploy drones to the North-east border for maximum security;
- 4) While the recent closure of border by Nigerian authority is commendable, she is required to boost deeper collaborations between the various security operatives in the

- land and border agencies so as to generate intelligent information, as well as the standardization of policies against cross border crimes and transnational terrorism;
- 5) The governments of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger should redoubled their efforts and strengthen border security nexus that will prevent the spread of transnational terrorism and curb proliferations of SALW across their common borders;
 - 6) The Multinational Joint Tasks Forces (MJTF) formed as a response to transnational terrorism, by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon republics should be well funded to perform maximally; and
 - 7) Nigeria should harmonize all relevant local and international legal frameworks for the security of lives on the polity and in fighting global terrorism.

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