Trans-Border Crimes and Nigeria's National Security

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Abstract

Over the years, Nigeria has become a hub for trans-border criminal activities such as; banditry, drugs and human trafficking, oil bunkering, small arms and light weapons smuggling, armed robbery and kidnappings, money laundering etc, which in turn constitutes a threat to national security. These threats do not only endanger the lives and properties of Nigerian citizens but also, the survivability and development of the country with negative impact on the rule of law, economic activities and growth, human rights and general societal advancement. This study set out to examine trans-border crimes in Nigeria and its implication on national security. The study relied extensively on secondary sources of data. The secondary data were sourced from textbooks, Journals, magazines, periodicals and internet, reports etc. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively in order to arrive at a synthesis and make valuable deductions. The study revealed that; the causes of trans-border crimes are traced to factors which includes; poverty, unemployment, decline in social values and other societal issues. From the foregoing, some recommendations were proffered which includes; the need for the Nigerian government as a matter of urgency to address the issue of trans-border crimes in a holistic and coordinated manner, invest in capability to trace, detects, and freeze or confiscate criminal proceeds or assets, creation of employment opportunities to alleviate poverty, strengthen international cooperation in the fight against trans-border crimes as well as training and re-training of security personnel on the modern trends in migration and border management.

Keywords: Trans-border Crimes, Security, National Security

Introduction

The quest for security is no doubt a known primary concern of every political community from time immemorial. Thus, the search for security must have been one of the several drivers or motivation for people to aggregate into tribes, kingdoms and nation state or to join international organizations (Padelford 1978:83). Crime is one of the social problems that people face at different period of their historical existence. During the early stages of man's existence, the quest for security was given expression in form of fruits gathering and periodic hunting expedition for the purpose of meeting the basic socio-economic requirements of the people. Also, people's preference for rocky and mountainous topography as shelter was largely informed by physical security consideration. Similarly, the practices of building fortifying walls around residential structures were largely motivated by the security need of the people (Gambo, 2008:3). However, modern society has witnessed far reading transformation which has created complicated security problem for it; one of the major security problems facing the West African sub-region today is that of trans-border crimes. Nigeria obviously the most influential and the most populous country among its neighbors in the sub-region continue to face severe national security challenges due to trans-border criminal activities.

Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria's internal security has been threatened by trans-border crimes such as human trafficking, kidnapping, trafficking in arms and drugs, armed banditry, smuggling, vehicle theft, illegal migration, illegal lumbering, oil bunkering, financial crimes and the activities of herders who move their herds across national borders regardless of any regulations. To make matters worse, Nigeria, like others countries within the sub-region have porous borders. This was corroborated by Adetula (2008:67) who posited that: 'Arguably, Nigeria's porous borders as well as the buoyancy of her economy relative to that of her neighbors are bound to attract migrants especially from the less developed countries within the sub-region''.

According to Babatunde, (2009), Nigeria has a total of 4,047 km of land border. Benin Republic (773 km), Niger (1,497 km), Chad (87km) and Cameroon (1,690) and a maritime boundary with Equatorial Guinea. Also there is a coastline of at least 853 km. There are lots of trans-border trades and other activities between Nigerians and citizens of these countries, particularly Benin Republic. In the mist of these commercial activities, criminals take advantage of the ease of passage guaranteed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol on free movement of persons to commit crimes, these border routes have been largely responsible for substantial part of the criminal activities mentioned.

Trans-border crimes affect national security and have effects on the stability and integrity of the nation. As observed by Mac Namara (1968). If trans- border crimes are not checked, the stability of government might be compromised and people may flee from border areas, thereby causing refugee crisis and the challenge of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Smuggling affects local industries as well as depriving the state of revenue. All these have serious implications, creating a vicious cycle of insecurities leading to less development and further insecurity. Unfortunately issues such as poverty, unemployment, lack of basic infrastructure for quality livelihood and declining societal values which abound in Nigeria today have all combined to foster trans-border crimes and criminality. Through the federal government has established various agencies to curb the menace of trans-border crimes like the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), etc, the effort is not adequate at the moments. Against the foregoing, the aim of this paper is to examine trans-border crime and its impact on Nigeria's national security with a view of providing suggestions on how the menace could be mitigated or addressed.

Theoretical Framework

A number of social theories can be used to explain the origin, extent, distribution and management of crime within an environment but the application maybe restricted to stages of development of society. Structural functionalists consider crimes to be an inevitable part of the society. Through public outrage and legal punishment, the majorities of people in a given society recognize, accept and adhere to a shared set of moral guidelines and rules (Archibong, 2016:11). Without crimes, there would be no legal system or shared morals in our society, however, when crimes rate becomes uncontrollable, the people's trust in the state is weakened with the risk of a decline in strength of commitment and patriotism.

According to social learning theory, juveniles learn to engage in crime in the same way they learn to engage in conforming behavior through association with or exposure to others. Primary or intimate groups like the family and peer group have an exceptionally large impact on what we learn, in fact, association with delinquent friends is the best predictor of delinquency other than prior delinquency. However, one does not have to be in direct contact with others to

learn from them; for example, one may learn to engage in violence from observation of others in the media or physical observation of others from afar.

This study will adopt the theory of differential association which is a social learning theory developed in the 1930's and 1940's by Edwin Sutherland. This particular theory also talks about the fact that people are not naturally born criminals but learn criminality through association with others who are criminally minded. According to Sutherland (2010) "All behaviours, lawful and criminal are learned. He observed that, most important part of learning takes place within intimate personal groups or friends. He further noted that, what is learned depends largely on the intensity, frequency and the length of association. These claims match the character of trans-border criminals because they are usually close associate to forestall backstabbing and betrayed. This theory further posits that trans-border crimes flourish in societies where there are delinquent people, people in dire need and where there is so much gap between the rich and the poor. All these are prevalent in Nigeria today.

Typology of Trans-border Crimes in Nigeria

Trans-border crimes in the West Africa sub-region has changed rapidly in recent years through the use of technology, the loosing of travel restrictions and through criminal diversification which has drastically increased the threat to international peace and security (Wakili, 2014; Sunday and Okechukwu, 2014). The predominant trans-border crimes in Nigeria which government and law enforcement agents try to contend with are illustrated and discussed below;

   a. **Drug Trafficking**
       According to UNODC (2014), Drug trafficking is among the most alarming form of trans-border crimes. Drug trafficking, typically refers to the possession of an illegal drug in predetermined quantity that constitutes that the drug is going to be sold. The trade in drugs or narcotics is believed to be gaining ground in the West African sub-region. The introduction of drugs trafficking in West Africa has been traced to Nigeria. Though Nigeria is not a major hub for transnational drug trafficking, it is a transit route for hard drugs being transported to Europe, Asia and America. According to Kenney, (2007), "the Latin American countries are cultivators, producers and primary processors of cocaine, the European countries source the psychotropic, while the Caribbean and some African countries like South Africa, Lesotho and Nigeria are the producers of Cannabis". He further noted that the United States of America is the highest consumer of hard drugs.

The first drug trafficking related arrest in Nigeria was made in 1983 and during Gen. Buhari regime; he introduced death penalty for drug traffickers (UNODC, 2015). This caused panic among the couriers leading to the push towards Ghana. The border area between Nigeria and Benin served as the alternative route for the traffickers into Ghana before it is later airlifted to the destination. This event led to the establishment of the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to combat illicit drugs. According to Adetula (2015), arrests have been made in Chad and Equatorial Guinea of some Nigerians alleged to be dealing in drugs. Some of these drug traffickers often employ other people to carry out their activities thereby making it difficult for security agencies to detect their movement. These mule or couriers often move undetected and they can be elderly individuals, children, pregnant women, clerics, important personality in the society among others. The drug couriers are also on several occasions not aware of being in possession of the drugs. They are often told to deliver a parcel to somebody on the other side of the country. Others are made to swear oaths making it difficult to divulge information when

caught (UNODC, 2015). In an environment like Nigeria where there is high poverty rate, illiteracy, poor governance, corruption, ethnic violence among others, drug trafficking and drug addiction is growing by the day. Illicit drugs have become very common among the youths in Nigeria.

b. Illegal Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs)

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is a term used in Arms protocols to refer to two main classes of weapons. Small Arms are usually seen as hand held small caliber firearms usually consisting of handguns, rifles, shotguns, semi-automatic and full automatic weapons and man-portable machine guns. Arms trade refers to the exchange of weapons of war between manufacturers, middle persons and the consumers 'of arms (Oshita, 2010: 168). However, the trade becomes illegal if transactions happen between unauthorized persons. Africa has witnessed armed conflicts in Libya, Mali and Sudan in recent years. These conflicts have led to illegal arms trade and consequently, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in the West African sub- region. This has increased the number of weapons that have entered Nigeria from across the borders due to the porous nature of the borders. The issue of small arms trafficking in West Africa is serious and a source of concern to the security agencies and a threat to Nigeria's National security.

c. Human Trafficking

The trafficking of humans for the purpose of domestic service, prostitution, organ harvest and other forms of exploitative labour has been a widespread phenomenon in the West African sub-region and Africa in general. Over time, it has become a worldwide phenomenon. The trade has taken a transnational dimension spreading to all the continents. Although it is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world and the world's third largest criminal enterprise, after drug dealing and arms trade, existing knowledge about the trade, particularly in the parts of Africa is fractured and fragmented (Lipede, 2007:3). Despite the inhumane nature of the trade, criminals still indulge in it because it is very lucrative. According to United Nation figures, human trafficking generates approximately $9.5 billion annually for the criminals in the business.

In human trafficking, the worst hits are women and children who are trafficked to other parts of Africa, Europe and America for prostitution and forced labour. According to Okoro (2007), parents agree, and sometimes earnestly solicit, to place their children or wards in the homes of richer or more connected individuals. The latter may be relations townsmen, tribesmen or even total strangers. Some of the factors that make trafficked persons vulnerable are poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and greed. Another factor that has made the illicit trade to thrive is the abolition of visa requirement for nationals travelling within the sub-region in compliance with the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. Since traffickers do not have to procure visas for their victims when moving them from one country to another within the sub-region, a major impediment is off their way.

d. Money Laundering

Money laundering according to Ering (2011) is the practice of engaging in financial transactions to conceal the identity, source or destination of illegally gained money. It could also be defined as the process of taking any action with property of any form which is either wholly or in part the proceeds of a crime that will disguise the fact that property is the proceeds of a

crime or obscure the beneficial ownership of said property". According to Sanusi (2001:96), ''Money laundering is a term used to describe the various methods adopted by both organized and unorganized criminal syndicates to legitimize the proceeds of their criminal activities, by concealing their true origin and ownership, and thereby enabling them to employ such funds for further activities''. He further noted that money laundering is a derivative, or a second- order financial crime. This implies that for money to be laundered; a basic criminal activity must have taken place.

Money laundering is a serious problem in the Nigerian landscape. It has become a prominent practice by Nigerian elites who often syphon the countries resources and funds into their oversea accounts. The crime of money laundering is transnational. This is corroborated by Fwa (2007:142), when he posited that "the phenomenon of money laundering is an aspect of organized crime that transcends national borders''. He also noted that money laundering is of strategic importance to organized crimes generally, and corruption in particular. If transnational money laundering is not checked, money meant for investments in Nigeria will be taken out and this will further worsen the challenge of joblessness which may compound the current security problems. This simply means that if money laundering is curtailed reasonably, it will check corruption. It also presupposes that more money will be available to enhance the local economy and reduce unemployment and poverty.

e. Smuggling and Vehicles theft across Nigerian Borders
Smuggling is an age long transnational criminal activity that takes place all over the world. However, the smuggled goods and the intensity of smuggling differ from one crime to another. Smuggling refers to cross border trading in banned or restricted goods. Similarly, if import duty is not paid on a dutiable imported good, smuggling is said to have taken place. Smuggling of used vehicles popularly known as *tokumbo* cars is a serious menace. The smuggling of *tokumbo* cars into Nigeria apart from being criminal, costs the government huge revenue that could be derived from import duty.

Vehicles theft is another cross-border criminal activity flourishing along the Nigeria borders. Organized criminal gangs steal cars from Nigeria and take them across the border to sale. Similarly, vehicles are stolen from across the border and moved to Nigeria for sale. According to Onuoha, (2013), "a larger percentage of vehicles stolen using a case study of Nigeria find their way to our neighboring countries particularly, Benin, Togo, Chad, Cameroon, Niger Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Burkina faso''. He noted that, these stolen vehicles are taken across the borders, most of the time with Nigerian number plates and then presented for registration. This make tracing of such vehicles very difficult if not impossible. Since the criminals pass through bush path, it becomes very difficult for the Nigeria Customs Service to track them down and seize such vehicles. Smuggling generally and vehicles theft are criminal activities and therefore impinge on the security of the country. Therefore, ways of curbing these criminal activities must be found to ensure national security and economic prosperity

f. Sea Piracy and other Maritime Crimes
Piracy is typically an art of robbery or criminal violence at sea. The term can include acts committed on land, in the air, or in other major bodies of water or on the shore. It does not normally include crimes committed against persons traveling on the same vessel as a perpetrator (e.g one passenger stealing from others on the same vessel). The term has been used throughout history to refer to raids across land border by non-state agents. Piracy or pirating is the name of

a specific crime under customary international law and also the name of a number of crimes under the municipal law of the number of states. It is distinguished from privateering which is authorized by national authorities and therefore a legitimate form of war like activities by non-state actors. Privateering is considered commerce raiding, and was outlawed by the Peace of Westphalia 1648 for signatures to that treaty. Those who engage in act of piracy are called pirates. Piracy off the coast of Nigeria has become an ever increasing problem in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigerian pirates steal crude oil off tanker ships and sell them on the black market. In April 2013 the African Union began funding extra security forces and increase security in the Gulf of Guinea but this has had little or no effect on piracy in the region. According to Ogbor, (2011), the pirates that operate in Nigerian waters are both Nigerians and people from Benin, Togo and Ghana.

g. Oil theft and Bunkering

Oil theft/bunkering in Nigeria has continued to occur at an alarming rate. In the Niger Delta, illegal oil bunkering, long prevalence in the Delta has become a sophisticated operation that no longer requires the cooperation of oil company staff to operate equipment at wellheads or allow access though, there are still reports that many of them are involved. The bunkers tap directly into pipelines away from oil company facilities and connect from the pipes to badges that are hidden in small creeks with mangrove forest cover. Most times, both in the riverine areas and on dry land, the police and military are involved in the process or are paid off to take no action against those tapping into pipelines.

Numerous studies have highlighted the magnitude of oil theft and bunkering in Nigeria. According to a report by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigeria lost approximately \$825 million between 2018 and 2019 due to oil theft and illegal bunkering activities (NNPC, 2019). This staggering loss represents a significant drain on the country's revenue and compromises its ability to invest in critical infrastructure and social welfare programs. The root causes of oil theft and bunkering in Nigeria are multifaceted. Some scholars like Igbuzor, (2011) argue that poverty and unemployment play a crucial role in driving individuals towards engagement in illegal oil-related activities. High levels of poverty create an environment where people are more likely to participate in such criminal activities as a means of survival. Furthermore, According to Garuba, (2010), corruption within the Nigerian government and security agencies has been widely acknowledged as a facilitator of oil theft and bunkering. The involvement of influential political and military figures in the illicit oil trade has further perpetuated the problem.

h. Terrorism and Trans-border Banditry

According to Imobighe (2006:18), "terrorism can be said to represent the indiscriminate and random use of different levels of violence against an opponent or the ancillary interests of such an opponent, with whom one has an adversarial relationship in order to strike fear on the latter and impose one's will on it, or tailor its action towards a desired goal". Terrorism can be considered as the most sophisticated form of violent crime. Trans-border terrorism therefore refers to acts of terrorism that are planned, coordinated, and executed by extremist groups across international borders. These groups take advantage of weak border controls, porous borders, and cross-border ethnic or religious affiliations to carry out their attacks. Nigeria's proximity to countries like Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin has made it vulnerable to trans-border terrorist activities.

Trans- border banditry, on the other hand, involves criminal activities carried out by armed groups that operate across borders. These groups engage in various illegal activities, such as raiding of villages, kidnapping, smuggling, human trafficking, and arms trade. Bandits often take advantage of weak border security and limited law enforcement capabilities to conduct their operations.

The trans-border terrorism and banditry in Nigeria have been linked to various extremist organizations and criminal networks. For instance, Boko Haram, one of the most notorious terrorist groups in Nigeria, has established strong links with jihadist movements across the Sahel region. These affiliations enable them to carry out cross-border attacks and seek sanctuary in neighboring countries (ICG, 2021). The activities of bandits in Nigeria have also shown trans-border connections. The movement of stolen goods, including livestock and other valuable commodities, often extends beyond national borders, with networks spanning multiple countries.

Causes of trans-Border Crimes

According to Alemika (2009:15), "transnational crimes could be caused by deprivations such as mass poverty, unemployment, low income and wide income inequalities, which motivate people to seek for illegal incomes that cannot be legitimately earned". When all these factors are present, those with criminal minds are likely to take crime.

a.   Poverty

Poverty, which in Nigeria is generally more acute in the rural areas than in the urban centres has been on the general increase since 1980, when 28.1% of the population or 17.7 million people were considered poor (Benched at one US dollar a day). By 1985, the figure had gone up to 34.7 million or 46.3% of the total population (Barkindo, 2007:21). The poverty situation in Nigeria is precarious not only in terms of income poverty but also in terms of food insecurity. Findings have revealed that, the living condition of people in the Nigeria is not conducive as there is disequilibrium in the revenue sharing leading to an increase in poverty rate, the rich are getting richer and the poor are always at the receiving end.

Nigeria poverty rate is very high that even the minimum wage rate of civil servants which presently stands at 30,000 naira/month is not enough to cater for their immediate families. The implication therefore is that, people often engage themselves in other activities in order to make ends meet. This situation not only encourages rural-urban drift but the escalation of human trafficking in an effort to reduce the mouths to feed. Recently, one Mr. Chiana Solomon was arrested by men of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), FCT command for attempting to sell his eight (8) year old son for 20 million naira. When he was paraded and interviewed by news men, he said, the economic hardship being experienced in the country led him to consider selling his son. He said; he has six (6) children without a means of taking care of them. He further said he intended training the remaining children with the proceeds from the crime if he had succeeded. This is one case among many whereby, poverty has pushed people into criminal activities to survive.

b.   Unemployment

The kind of unemployment that could spur trans-border crimes is that of educated youths in the country. It is sad to note that there has been an increase in the number of tertiary institutions in the country since about the last four decades. However, there is no commensurate provision of jobs for the graduates of these institutions. Furthermore, there was no reasonable growth in the private sector to enable the sector to employ the numerous graduates that are

seeking for jobs in the country. In addition, the supposed embargo on public sector employment imposed since 2020 has not been lifted till date.

According to the Nigerian bureau of statistics (NBS), (2023), the unemployment rate in Q2 2023 was 4.2%, this is an increase of 0.1% from the figure recorded in Q1 2023 (4.1%). The rate of unemployment among persons with post-secondary education was 8% in Q2 2023. The Unemployment rate among youth aged (15-24 years) in Q2 2023 was 7.2% having been at 6.9% in Q1 2023. The Unemployment rate in urban areas was 5.9% in Q2 2023, an increase from 5.4% in Q1 2023. This statistics are not good at all as it relates to employment in the country. Nigeria is now faced with a large number of youths both domestic and from contiguous countries who have grudges against the society and are enlightened enough to participate in inimical acts including trans-border crimes.

c.   Porosity of the Borders

Over the years, the Nigerian government has been confronted with the problem of ensuring effective border security. The porous border situation has led to increase in criminality particularly transnational crimes like smuggling of illegal goods, illegal movements of persons, money laundering, theft, kidnapping and terrorism. The ineffective control and management of the borders have become a serious concern to citizens especially those living around border towns. While Nigeria's border problem is related to colonial history, its porosity has been exacerbated by the failure of succeeding governments to properly administer these borders.

As Onuoha noted, "the high level of insecurity on African borders is largely due to the way they are administered and managed, and less to do with how colonialists drew them" (Onuoha., 2013). Despite the spirit of enterprising and promising neighborliness, the borders linking Nigeria and some countries within the sub-region have become problematic because of the activities of internationally reputed criminals engaging in smuggling and trafficking of virtually everything from human trafficking, ammunition, arms, and drugs manufactured goods, agricultural produce, prostitution, and child labour to religious fanaticism, terrorist attacks and insurgency (Adeolu, L.G., & Fayomi, O., 2012)

d.   Rural-Urban Migration

It is true that there is rural-urban migration in most countries in West Africa, particularly Nigeria. In Nigeria, people migrate from rural areas to the urban centers because of a number of factors. One is the lack of basic infrastructures such as electricity, water, goods roads telecommunication facilities, among others. Another is lack of white collar employment opportunities other than farming. Even the issues of educational centres and internet cafes are enough reasons to lure people to the urban areas. According to Barkindo, (2007), "the development of urban centres gave great impetus to rural-urban migrations. Since most of government expenditures are in, or related to, the urban centres, there is human migration to the towns." The people that migrate to the towns belong to all strata of the society, including criminals and prostitutes, all in search of jobs. Since jobs are never enough to go round everyone, the new comers become ready source of recruits for criminal activities such as armed robbery, smuggling, drug and human trafficking. These newcomers include citizens from neighboring countries who view Nigeria as better developed and with more opportunities.

f.   Declining Societal Values

Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed declining societal values mainly as a result of hardship due to increasing poverty in the country. It is common knowledge today that society no longer questions people's sources of wealth. A very poor individual could acquire sudden wealth and instead of people treating such a person with suspicion and disdain he or she is celebrated and even given chieftaincy title in certain communities. This then serves as a source of encouragement to people to get rich at all cost; that is to say the end justifies the means. The society's growing indifference to greed and illegally acquired wealth is opposed to the traditional Nigerian societal value system that cherishes integrity, transparent honesty and contentment (Dambazau, 2007:5). Therefore, the declining societal values are a major threat to the war against trans-border crimes. The solution to this could begin at the family level, where parents are expected to show good moral examples to their children and wards. Similarly, Nigerian leaders need to live by example and shun corruption. In this way, the younger generation will want to live decently and so they will find crime unattractive and desist from it.

g.   Inadequate Manpower and Equipment for Security Agencies

It is a fact that the Nigerian security agencies tasked to fight crimes generally and trans-border crimes are not adequately equipped for the assigned tasks. The agencies being referred to are the Police, Customs Service, Immigration, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), NAPTIP and the Military. The complaints from these agencies as to why they are unable to perform their duties effectively at any point in time have been poor financing, inadequate equipment and training. These agencies do not have enough patrol vehicles, communication equipment, arms and ammunition and in some cases, no detection equipment such as radars, scanners and intelligence gathering devices.

Manpower shortages are a major challenge for fighting trans-border crimes. Because the Nigerian borders are so long and vast, it is usually difficult to have enough manpower to cover every necessary area. Adequate provision of necessary manpower and logistics is one way of ensuring reasonable level of border security. In order to ensure proper security outfits responsible for border security.

h.   Climate Change

Climate change affects Nigerian neighbors like Niger Republic and Chad more than it affects her but Nigeria experiences the aftermath more than them. Climate change has effect on Nigeria's national security. Climate change in the West Africa can be seen in the regular droughts, desert encroachment and ground water scarcity in northern Nigeria and Nigeria's northern neighbors' leading to famine. This phenomenon has led to an influx of cattle herdsmen to the country from Niger Republic and Chad. According to Ogaba (2010), "most of the robberies are committed by the herdsmen who were forced to migrate by the effects of climate change in their country". The incessant religious crises in the country have also been traced to these illegal immigrants. The impacts of climate change are presenting obvious threats to the security of the nation, especially those related to trans-border crimes. Climate change therefore, poses a potential danger of leading to unprecedented local/regional disruptions in social systems with resultant adverse impacts on fragile nations' security (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2009).

Effects of Trans-border Crimes on Nigeria's National Security

Trans-border crimes refer to criminal activities that occur across international borders. Trans-border crimes have become a significant threat to Nigeria's national security, as they affect the country's economic, political, social, and cultural spheres of life. The effect of trans-border crimes, such as arms smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering, piracy, oil bunkering, drug trafficking, terrorism, banditry; etc on Nigerian national security cannot be overemphasized. These criminal activities have far-reaching consequences that threaten the socio-economic development, stability, and governance of the country.

Trans-border criminals contribute to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which further exacerbates existing security threats in Nigeria. The illicit flow of weapons and ammunition across the counties porous borders occurs as a result of arms smuggling. As reported by Stohl and Tuttle (2009); Nte (2011) and Abdulkareem (2012), about 59% of these Small Arms and Light Weapons, are in the hands of civilians, 38% are owned by government armed forces, 2.8 % by police and 0.2% by armed groups. To make matters worse, none of the security agent currently possesses the training, resources or personnel to perform their duties effectively due to lengthy and porous nature of Nigerian borders (Alli, 2012). Nte (2011) posits that there is a direct link between the acquisition of weapons like SALWs and escalation of conflicts into a full-blown war. These weapons often find their way into the hands of violent non-state actors, including terrorist groups and bandits, enabling them to carry out attacks with greater ease and intensity. The consequence of this is the erosion of law and order. In other words, the widespread proliferation of small arms contributes to the alarming levels of armed crime, and militancy in Nigeria (Nte, 2011 and Adetula, 2008).

Criminal networks that are involved in drug trafficking and other illicit activities operate in a clandestine manner, undermining the rule of law and compromising the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in Nigeria, many of them have been involved in bribing, compromising, and even eliminating law enforcement officers like the police, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Immigration officers, Customs etc just to have their way. An example is the case of the once decorated police officer, DCP Abba Kyari who got himself compromised by drug traffickers and was arrested and is being prosecuted by the NDLEA. This leads to a weakened security apparatus and making it difficult to tackle other security challenges within the country. Furthermore, with the acclaimed high patronage of hard drugs in Nigeria, it becomes imperative for the country to fight the menace and possibly eradicate the trade in the country, this is because drug trafficking threatens national security, since it spurs other forms of crimes. If the youths are exposed to hard drug, that could lead to a dysfunctional society with its attendant security challenges.

Trans-border crimes have also led to the destabilization of communities and displacement of populations in Nigeria. Human trafficking, for instance, leads to the exploitation and forced labor of individuals, often resulting in human rights abuses, the ever growing issue of organ harvest and social unrest. Expatiating on the issue of human trafficking further, Hamidu and Nuhu (2015) stated that, in a country where legitimate economic opportunities were far less lucrative, criminal activities such as child and women trafficking, female prostitution and child slavery, presented enormous temptation.

The activities of terrorist groups, bandits, and pirates also create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, causing displacement and disrupting daily life in affected areas. There are lots of

Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) Camp scattered all over the country especially in the North due to the activities of these terrorist and bandit groups. The existence of these IDP camps is a threat to National security itself as they have been alleged to be breeding ground for criminals. Criminal gangs also most times infiltrate the camp and commit various atrocities against the people in the camp and within the communities where these camps are located. Furthermore, the activities of terrorist and insurgent groups across international borders have seriously compromised internal security and weakened the country's democratic institutions. Nationals, mainly from countries in the Sahel and Western Sahara, have been linked with religious uprising in Nigeria. The exportation of religious extremism into Nigeria adds another dimension to the challenge of insecurity in the country. The porous borders in Nigeria provide an avenue for foreign actors to influence and destabilize the political landscape, making it challenging to achieve political stability and national unity. The interconnectedness of trans-border crimes, such as drug trafficking, terrorism, and banditry, poses a threat to regional stability. The porous borders and lack of effective cooperation and coordination among neighboring countries make it easier for criminal networks and extremist groups to operate across borders. This allows them to establish transnational networks, share resources, and evade law enforcement efforts, further complicating the security situation in Nigeria and the West African sub-region.

Trans-border crimes also have a detrimental impact on the economy of Nigeria. Money laundering, for example, diverts resources away from legitimate economic activities, undermining financial institutions and hindering economic growth. Some of these illegal funds are used to buy weapons and fund insurgency in the country thereby affecting national security. Nigeria's major source of revenue is exportation of crude oil; According to Mele Kyari, the group chief executive officer (GCEO), NNPC Limited, "Nigeria loses $1.9 billion monthly to crude oil theft". Piracy and oil bunkering disrupt maritime activities, leading to significant losses in revenue from the oil and gas sector, which is a crucial component of Nigeria's economy. Furthermore, the illegal importation of counterfeit goods produced in neighboring countries, arms, and drugs across international borders deprives the country of significant revenue and harms legal businesses. From the foregoing, it can be seen that trans-border crimes have led to death of thousands of Nigerians and have devastating effect on national security

Conclusion

Trans-border crimes is a serious source of security concerned to nations all over the world, consequently this paper set out to examine trans-border crimes in Nigeria and its implication on national security. It has been discovered that trans-border crimes have severe implications for Nigerian national security and that of its neighboring countries. Drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering, vehicle theft, piracy, oil bunkering, terrorism, banditry and other forms of trans-border criminal activities contribute to instability, undermine governance, compromise the rule of law, and hinder socio-economic development. The cross-border nature of these activities creates complex challenges that require regional cooperation and coordination. By addressing these security risks collectively, the other countries in the West African sub-region and Nigeria can work towards creating a safer and more stable environment for their citizens and promoting regional peace and security. On these grounds, all the dimensions and sources of this crime must be forcefully combated.

Recommendations

The spate of trans-border criminal activities undermines Nigeria's national security. Thus, in the light of the foregoing, this study proffers the following recommendations to address the problem of trans-border crimes and its impact on Nigerian national security.

1. Government should adopt a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach in tackling the menace of trans-border criminals. This should involve enhancing border security and surveillance, improving intelligence sharing and cooperation with other neighboring countries.
2. Government should address the root causes of trans-border-crimes such as socio-economic inequalities and governance challenges, this is essential in preventing and mitigating the spread of trans-border crimes in Nigeria.
3. Government should as a matter of urgency strengthening law enforcement capabilities, by properly equipping all security agencies especially those involved in border security.
4. Government should formulate and implement robust legal frameworks and institutions that ensure synergy amongst various agencies to combat trans-border crimes effectively.
5. The Nigerian government must invest in capacities to trace, detect, analyze, freeze and confiscate criminal assets.
6. Government should diligently prosecute suspects, offenders or their sponsors engaged in criminal activities to a logical conclusion irrespective of who they are in the country.
7. Governments should formulate and properly implement policies and put in place relevant infrastructures to create an enabling environment for job creation so as to reduce poverty and attraction to domestic and trans-border crimes in Nigeria. Provision of infrastructures in rural areas will also keep people in their villages and reduces rural-urban migration, thereby mitigating the multiplier effects of criminality.
8. Finally, government should through the relevant agencies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA) continuously carryout sensitization on the dangers of crime and its implications

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