Regional Migration in West Africa: Trends and Challenges Along Nigeria-Cameroon Borders

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Abstract

The recent development and of course advancement in transportation and communication technology has brought about an increase in activities along the border-lines in order to augment the economic wellbeing of the people along our international borders; it brings about the upsurge in both the immigration and migration issues along these lines. The nature and character of those drifters on border is for different reasons. People with good, suspicious and questionable characters move in many directions along the Nigeria - Cameroon borders either under the guise of visits to relatives, and or trading activities. Increasing bilateral relations between these two countries, even though not under the same economic bloc within the West African sub-continent, Nigeria and Cameroon need to develop formal social and economic relations despite the language and 'ideological' barrier or differences, so as to formalise their relationship and address the security issues that mostly occur as a result of colossal immigration along the two borders after having a long pre-colonial historical relationship but with two different colonial and post-colonial political antecedents. This paper attempts to suggest ways of reducing the many illegalities, like smuggling of small firearms and ammunition along the borders of these countries. One major recommendation of this paper is for Nigeria and Cameroon to develop a unique form of bilateral relations so as to capture and address the local business and economic interactions along the communities found along the borders of these two countries.

Keywords: Regional Migration, Nigeria, Cameroon, Borders, Human security

Introduction

Nigeria shares a borderline with Cameroun along the east and has about 1,700kilometers length of borderline with Cameroon. All totaling outstretches of about 4910 km of borders (Yakubu, 2005; Stohl and Tuttle, 2009; Nte, 2011 in Okeke, V.O.S & Okechukwu, R. 2014). The borderlands are both melting pots and security hot spots. Often neglected in the development strategies of postcolonial states, they are arenas for cross-border crime and represent a dynamic place of historically fostered cultural and socio-economic exchange at the same time (Blum,2014).

These movements are the products of determinants as diverse as local history, community practices, environmental questions, economic motivations, demographic factors and political conflicts. The types of movement that prevail in Central and West Africa in particular are strongly influenced by history.This evolution in destinations is one of the major characteristics of African mobility in the 2000s. This emergence or reinforcement of new territories of emigration is the result of African migratory protectionism as well as the growth in the power of xenophobia, in particular in the former *Eldorado* struck by the economic crisis. Migrations beyond the continent, which tended formerly towards the old colonial metropolis, are now turning to new places, including new linguistic areas. Some of these migrations are forced, provoked by economic considerations or inter-ethnic conflicts. Here history and the contemporary meet: the forced return or *refoulement* of

populations formerly displaced against their will towards prosperous zones or towards their zones of origin is another facet of post−colonial migrations.

> *The duality of threats apparently caused by migration to both national sovereignty and human security are increasing in the post-Cold War. International migration is probably one of the most cited, yet also most contested, areas of national and international security architecture, which emerged at the end of the Cold War, and resulted in a broadening and deepening of our understanding of what constitutes it as a security threat or challenge to countries who shares common history, borders, cultural affiliation (Vietti & Scribner, 2013)*

Immigration and emigration are usually reserved for migration into and out of countries, respectively. Migration may be temporary, with the intention of returning to the country of origin in the future, or permanent or migrants may not have decided between these alternatives at the time of migration. Past and present studies on the human security implication caused by migration show that receiving countries perceive large scale international migration as a threat to their economic well-being, social order, cultural, religious values and political stability (Campbell,2003 in Thompson,2013). Relations between states are also affected as migration of people tends to create political tensions that can impact on inter-state relations.

Uncontrolled migration along borderlines can also put a strain on social service delivery in the recipient country, and increased the proliferation of small and light weapons, trans-border crimes, insurgency, food insecurity, insecurity and educational factors putting enormous pressured on the host government. Although, migration results from series of factors, rarely can only one or two factors alone be attributed to a cause of migration. As aptly put by radel et al, that, it is a "complex process shaped by multiple social, political, economic and spatial drivers" (Radel *et al*., 2017: 3).

These and many other factors have surfaced in the portrayal of migration, as well as its impact along the borders of Nigeria and Cameroun. Additionally, evidence-based studies to back these claims are some of the arguments the paper highlighted. While the paper focused mainly on assessing the human security dimension of migration along these borders, factors that pushed for these migrations, have also been highlighted and discussed. Nigeria-Cameroon border has a length of approximately 1,690 kilometers or about 1,050 miles. The border stretches from the Lake Chad region in the north to the Gulf of Guinea in the south, and passes through diverse terrain, including forest, savanna, and mountains. The exact breadth of the border may vary in different areas along its length, as it is not a straight line but follows natural features such as rivers and mountains.

Objectives of the Paper
The paper objectives are to identify and assess the nature and dimensions of human security threats persisting along the Nigeria- Cameroun borders. In doing this, the paper also identified most prevalent factors that induce migration within this axis. of African sub-region.

Research Methodology
The paper adopted a qualitative research design, which is purely based on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from different sources such as Magazines, Reference Books, Newspapers, Journals and published reports of the government etc. The collated data was coded and analyzed using a thematic method of analysis. From the data analysed, inferences were drawn, and conclusions presented.

Conceptual Framework

Migration
Defining migration (internal or external) is a controversial activity. Migration is probably best defined as the crossing of a spatial boundary by one or more persons involved in a change of residence. Migration is aptly seen as the act of moving from one place to another, typically on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. It can be caused by a variety of factors, including economic, social, political, or environmental reasons. These movement

include internal migration that is, within a country, international migration that is between countries, voluntary migration that is sort of migration that is chosen by the individual and forced migration which occur due to factors such as conflict or persecution.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM,2004) defines migration as 'The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification and criminal elements.' Migration is "a process of moving, either across an international border, or within a State. Encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition, and causes; it includes refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants (ICRC,2011). It is thus a broadly understood phenomenon. While the majority of migrants migrate in search of work and economic and social opportunities, a relatively small percentage of migrants are people fleeing armed conflict, natural disaster, famine or persecution (IOM, 2004).

Causes of Migration

Migration is caused from many different reasons, these reasons can be economic, social, political, or environmental: Some people **choose** to migrate, e g someone who moves to another country to enhance their career opportunities. Some people are **forced**to migrate, e.g. someone who moves due to war or famine. Migration is affected by push and pull factors. Push factors include lack of employment opportunities and fears of disorder or of persecution on grounds of race, religion or politics in the areas people live. Pull factors include favourable employment opportunities, good health and educational facilities, public order and freedom, and a favourable climate, particularly for the retirement in the areas people move to. While the push factors include conflict and wars, environmental factors- like natural disaster, economic deprivation and poverty, political instability, persecution and

human rights abuses and also ethnic and religious conflicts.

Human Security

The United Nations Commission for Human Security (CHS,2003) defines human security as protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are essential to life. Therefore, it means "protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity" (CHS: 2003: 4). **Human security** has been defined as freedom from fear and freedom from want". Then human security looks at ways of dealing with avoiding, mitigating and coping with threats. Moreover, human security emphasizes the interconnectedness of both threats and responses when addressing these insecurities. That is, threats to human security are mutually reinforcing and interconnected in two ways. First, they are interlinked in causing effect in the sense that each threat feeds on the other. For example, violent conflicts can lead to deprivation and poverty which in turn could lead to resource depletion, infectious diseases, education deficits, etc. Second, threats within a given country or area can spread into a wider region and have negative externalities for regional and international security.

Migration and Human Security

Migration from one country to another has been primarily regulated by the decisions of the sovereign regarding who is allowed into and out of their national boundaries. The Global Commission on International Migration highlighted the fact that "controlling who enters and remains on their territory is an integral part of the sovereignty of states" (GCIM,2005). Consequently, one of the primary ways that sovereign nation states have contended with irregular migration is through border enforcement mechanisms. Irregular migration is perceived as an attack on state's sovereignty that brings into question the state's ability to

exercise control over its spatial and territorial domain. Migration can be considered a security issue, relevant for national security and/or human security. It continues by presenting challenges to national security and human security in countries of destination but also countries of origin and transit (Thompson,2013). These challenges come inform of arm proliferation, trafficking of human, terrorism and cross border crimes. It is evident from the recent closure of Nigeria's border by the Nigerian authorities believe that "temporary closure of border will curb the smuggling of rice, drugs and small light weapons. They also hope it will reduce kidnapping and worsening insecurity" especially within the county's borders" (Murtala, 2019).

Issues Influencing Human Security Challenges along Nigeria-Cameroun Borders

Security challenges along borderlines are very serious. It could be observed that many countries lack proactive framework or policies put in place to address these challenges (Koser, 2011). Problems of Human security in African borders appear plethora. It ranges from the crisis of small arms to the ever-increasing violence which the continent is notoriously known for. Migration along the Nigeria-Cameroun border is one of such numerous human security problems. Criminal activities involving migratory people along inland and coastal borderlines in Africa has increased due to the absence of effective and efficient border security protection and much importance has not been accorded to national borders. It has become clear that communities or states that share multiple entry points along Nigeria-Cameroon borders are vulnerable to threats posed at the borders such as trans-border activities led to transnational crimes in Nigeria due to the following. This development also affects the socio-cultural, historical identities of these communities. However, migration as a security challenge can be encourages and sustained through the followings:-

The Porosity of Nigeria-Cameroon Borderlines

The porous borderlines the Nigeria and Cameroun, has many unmanned entry points from Borno to Cross Rivers States. These unmanned entry points encourage migration and cross border crimes between the two countries. However, there are indefinable corridors or regions that served as route to illegal migrants, thereby posing a serious threat to the country's security.

Corruption

Corrupt practices by security operatives along the borders pose a serious challenge to the border security. The corrupt and inept attitudes of border officials resulting in the numerous entry check points also contributed negatively to the border security. It is important to note that these checkpoints are not meant to check passports the immigration or the border guards but to extort money from travelers.

Inadequate Manpower and Logistics Support

Security at the Nigeria-Cameroun borders is poor, the inadequate manpower or personnel makes it difficult for the security operatives to adequately man the national boundaries and effectively patrol these several corridors that lead to the country. The inadequate manpower does not allow for adequate patrolling of these illegal routes as criminals use them as means of entry into the country. Also, the criminals sometimes outsmart the security operatives at the borders due to inadequate personnel and logistics problems.

Poorly Patterned Borders

Nigeria borders are artificial creation of the imperial powers before even the advent of colonialism which continues to pose a serious threat to the country. With the demarcation of the African boundaries during the Berlin conference, without considerations to the culture of the people as can be seen in the cultural ties of marriages, celebration of religious festivities, language and many more. It should be noted therefore, that boundary delimitation affects the cultural and ethnic homogeneity of the border communities to the extent that one cannot differentiate a Nigerian from Cameroonian due to culture and linguistics in which communities with homogenous culture and language are found on

different sides of the borderlines hence makes it difficult to put in place immigration laws when members can just change their identity when they feel like.

Human Security Challenges Caused by Migration along Nigeria-Cameroon

Usually, border security rest on the authority of Interior Minister, he is to initiate and supervise the mode of operation by the immigration service and other security agents in the country to ensure that the borderlines are safe and secure in every nooks and crannies of the country (Hollfem,2012 and Blum,2014). More so, in the States, Local Government Areas and rural communities of this country, the Governors, Chairmen and community leaders serve as chief security officers are to maintain, sustain and report any suspicious movements or illegal entry of people to the higher authority. This can be done by making sure that the law enforcement agencies deployed to their areas do their work diligently. However, sometimes Nigerian authorities seem to be ignorant of what is happening within border communities. Sometimes, some of them may hear about violence and criminal activities but for the fear of death may neglect their action resulting to security disorder by security agents in the country (Ayoob,2009). Usually, this type of security disorder is very disastrous to the security situation in the country. Among such effects of migration are:-

Fueling Religious Conflicts

These have arisen from fact that among various ethnic groups and among the major religions – Islam and Christianity in the country. Religious conflict is a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. Frequent and persistent religious clashes between the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity), present the country with a major security challenge. In all parts of Nigeria, there exist religious conflicts and have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around religious identities. The claim over scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy, local government, councils, control of markets and Sharia among other trivial issues have resulted in large scale killings and violence amongst groups in Nigeria. The greater number of those involve are immigrants from neighbouring countries.

Porous Borders Aiding Criminal Elements into Nigeria

One major factor which has enhanced insecurity in Nigeria is the porous frontiers of the country, where individual movements are largely untracked. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak security system, weapons come easily into Nigeria and Cameroon. Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant groups and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West and Central Africa. In 2017 for instance, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimated that there were more than 500 million firearms in the world, with over 40% of them in Africa. Kar & Spanjers, (2017), Shaw (2017) and UNODC, (2018) Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for unwarranted influx of migrants from neighboring countries such as Republic of Niger, Cameroon, and Chad.

Rural /Urban Drift

The migrations of youths from rural Cameroun into Nigeria border communities tend to move into urban centers should be a concern to insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with very high influx of people from neighboring countries, looking at the country's buoyant economy in comparison to their immediate neighbours. These youths in most urban areas in Nigeria their number has been growing and putting more pressure on environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructures. This has resulted to increase in youth population especially along the Border States with no favourable job opportunities in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into crime and other dangerous vices.

Terrorism

At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, and its primary

bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance. As "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts" which has cost 13.4 per cent of the world gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost more than 1000 lives in the Northern region since 2009 to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram which has been ravaging the northern region of the country. Migration is part of the factors that engender terrorism in these countries and the presence of criminal element from neighbouring countries through unrestricted entry points or taking data of those coming in to ascertain their profile has not been taken serious by security agencies in charge of internal security.

Illegal Circulation of Firearms and Drugs
By the end of year 2000, the global arms in circulation were at alarming rate, according to the United Nations, office on drug and crimes have put the total sum of small and light arms to over 4m in Nigeria alone. (UNODC, (2018) with this statistic, it has proved that Nigeria is a lucrative destination of arm market. Over the years the effect of migration along the Nigeria-Cameroun borderlines has increase the number of arms into Nigeria, this is as a result of the crisis in the Central and North Africa regions and the porous nature of the borders allow huge cache of arms into Nigeria.

International Convention on Free Movement of People
International conventions are usually entered by countries to foster their relationship and to harness areas of mutual interest. Entering into any convention is like surrendering the sovereignty of countries. Countries known to have serious institutional problems are willing to enter into a convention with relatively strong and stable ones. For example, Nigeria has been a signatory to many conventions, such conventions are the ECOWAS free movement of people goods and services and the United Nations convention on migration.

These conventions are very harmful to the sovereignty of Nigeria, criminals, separatists' movements and outlaws can come in free into the country. Once they gain access they settle and start their violent campaign against the host nation. Boko Haram is another side of the coin of migration issue affecting the stability of the country. Nigeria is helpless because the agreement entered in these conventions is affecting our security. "The ECOWAS Protocol A/P.1/5/79 Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment, was adopted in 1979 and has since been revised multiple times, most recently in 2021" (ECOWAS).

Conclusion
With the rising challenges of economic security, social problems and political agitation within both Cameroon and Nigeria, migration will continue to be a major security issue, until the solution to the root causes of migration is found and addressed within West Africa in particular, and Africa as a whole, the continued security challenges found within Nigeria-Cameroon border will be a perpetual issue. However, the government is always trying to control border migration, sophisticated and technology driven equipment have not been deployed to assist the security personnel in screening the migrants.

Migration and insecurity are two sides of the coin; many countries have experienced bitter tales on how migrants threaten the security of countries. Nigeria-Cameroun Borders are the regarded as another entry point for illegal migrants into the country this development has witnessed the increase security challenges in Nigeria especially from the human-factor perspective. As long as migration remains an issue, it will continue to affect the human security in Nigeria

Recommendations
In order to address issues of security challenges along Nigeria and Cameroon borders, the following recommendations are made:
i.   There should be the need for the security personnel at our various border posts to be specially trained on the new dimensions of border threats.
ii. Modern security gadgets should also be introduced in screening migrants at the

borders

iii. Synergy should be created among the border securities of both countries

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