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Challenges Of Managing Immigrations And International Border Security In Oyo State, Nigeria

Yusuf, Olanrewaju & Afolabi O. Oluwaseun

Abstract
Nigeria has the largest population and market in Africa with over 167 million people (National Population Commission, 2012), and there are complex issues confronting border security. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, her internal security has been threatened by trans-border crimes. Despite the efforts of institutions charged with the responsibility of managing immigration and combating trans-border crimes of Nigeria's international borders, the challenges being experienced at the Oyo State borders still persists. The system/structure of the institution charged with managing immigration and international border security can enhance performance of officers charged with the responsibility of managing migration, it can also cause chaos in the system. Hence, the systems theory was used as the theoretical framework. The study area was chosen because of the existence of numerous borders and adjoining borderlands. Observations of cross-border movement between Oyo State and neighboring Benin Republic as well as 15 In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with border crossers at Shaki border post and heads of households in Ijio, Okerete, Ofiki, Iseyin, Igangan and Saki borderlands in southwestern Nigeria. Three KIIs were also conducted with immigration officers in the study area. Oyo State has six (6) legal international borders and over 500 illegal borders. The legal and the illegal borders do not comply with global best practices and this has resulted in the porosity of the borders. Sensitization of the residents of border towns to the need to check illegal inflow of people and goods is critical to having secure borders in Oyo State.

Keywords: Border security, trans-border crimes, borderland, cross-border movement.

Introduction

The term "border" was popularized by the Anglo-American literature and it refers to the boundaries which exist between two or more politically sovereign territorial entities. Borders, therefore, serve as the line that links, while at the same time separates one sovereign territorial entity the other. This, therefore, suggests that border could be a source of benefit, and at the same time, a source of detriment to a sovereign State depending on the extent to which such borders are secured. Consequently, States endeavour to put in place all necessary measures in a bid to securing their borders (which may include two or all of land, air and seaports depending on geography of such sovereign State).

The existence of linear boundaries on the African continent has been linked to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. It was at the Conference that the European imperialists, who consisted of Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain, reached a decision to dividem among themselves, the African continent in a bid to increase their sphere of influence. Hence, the period between 1884 and 1914 witnessed various scramble for the African continent and resulted in the partition of the African space. Verbal agreements were reached and maps were designed and subsequently demarcated after a resort to an agreed boundary commission. The delineations encompassed the African countries' land, air and sea as well as underground. Nonetheless, for the general purposes of border control, land

boundaries, airports, and seaports were utilized.

The origin, act and protraction of cross-border crimes on the African continent can be said to have an inseparable connection to the colonial borders (which were inherited after independence) and its instituted administration during the era. The various barriers that existed among countries thereby required taxation, in form of duties, on goods (and services in some instances) that cross the borders. Similarly, the differences in currencies and policies (administrative and otherwise)of competing colonial governments of contiguous countries, in the form of trade restrictions, policies and tax administrations, presented a window of opportunity which gave impetus to tax evasion and motivated engagement in illicit movement of goods and services which can be referred to as "smuggling". In contemporary times, continual cycles of conflict within and between sovereign states on the African continent has left its toll on the African space in the form of a constant refugee influx, arms proliferation, rising unemployment as well as an increase in violence and crimes. The effects of these conflicts have exacerbated the security challenges being experienced at the borders.

Nigeria has the largest human population and market in Africa with over 167 million people according to the National Population Commission (2014). The large population has been accompanied by multifaceted issues which confront effective border security. The steady rise, apparent sophistication and continual perpetuation of border crimes in Nigeria could be attributed to the attendant effects of a large population such as poverty, lack of a viable employment opportunity, insecurity, among others. As identified in the classification of cross border crimes in Western Africa, Nigerian borders have become a major transit and destination points for human, weapons (especially small and light weapons) and drug trafficking. Krasner posited that a nation State which finds it hard to regulate what moves across its borders will eventually be unable to control what happens within it. This line of argument reinforces the dire need for every sovereign State to identify border challenges and institute ways of tackling such challenges in a bid to ensuring effective security at her borders. This has become imperative due to the fact that issues that threaten border security are escalating, daily.

Since her independence from colonial masters in 1960, Nigeria's internal security has been grappling with trans-border crimes which include arms, drugs and persons trafficking; armed banditry, vehicular theft, smuggling, touting, lumbering and illegal migration, unfettered bunkering and transhumance activities of herdsmen who march their herds of cattle across national borders in Africa regardless of existing regulations. Other notable challenges include terrorism, violation of immigration laws, documentation frauds, and more recently, financial crimes. Despite the efforts of institutions saddled with the responsibility of managing immigration and trans-border crime of Nigerian international borders, especially in Oyo State, the above-mentioned challenges being experienced at the borders still persist.

Methodology

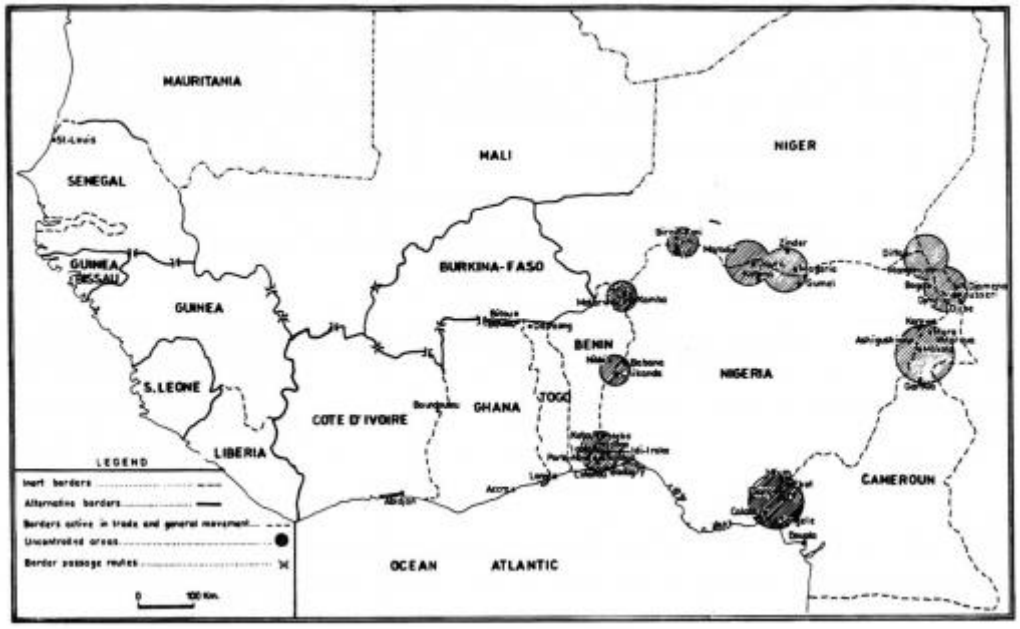
Non-participant observation was used to observe cross-border movement in Ijio, Okerete, Ofiki, Iseyin, Igangan and Saki communities of Saki West Local Government in Oyo State and neighboring Benin Republic for over a period of three months. 12 in-depth interview (IDIs) were conducted with two household heads in six intricately selected settlements in the southwest of Nigeria.3 Key Informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with border crossers at the Saki border post and 3 IDIs with immigration officers in the study area. The study area was specifically chosen due to the existence of several borders and corresponding borderlands in the area. In managing immigrations and international border security, the

system/structure of the institution charged with managing this aspect of government can enhance performance of officers charged with the responsibility of managing migration. Paradoxically, actions of the government can cause chaos in the system of the institution managing borderland security and migrations while at the same time enhance the function of such institution. Hence, Bertalanffy's systems theory was used as the theoretical framework.

International borders in Oyo State

Oyo State is bordered to the west by Benin Republic. There are quite some border control posts along this axis. They include the Ijio Border Control Post, Okerete Border Control Post, Ofiki Border Control Post, Saki Border Patrol, Iseyin Border Patrol and Igangan Border Patrol. All these above-mentioned Control Posts are actually being overseen by the Saki Border Patrol.

Plate 1 ….



Source: *Image 1. Types of border areas in West Africa*

Afolayan A.A. 2013. Trans-Border Movement and Trading: A case study of a borderland in southwestern Nigeria. Ibadan: Ifra Nigeria

Nigeria's internal security appears to have deteriorated in the last decade. The conventional security threats which the country faced have remained unresolved and some of these threats have assumed more worrisome dimensions. Furthermore, new threats have emerged and have compounded the pre-existing threats. A number of the conventional threats which have assumed new dimensions include but is not limited to assassinations, infiltration and proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons (SALW), ethno-religious conflicts, armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, insurgency and human trafficking. Most of these threats have a direct correlation to countries' porous borders. This boils down to border management in Nigeria.

Interestingly, a unifying link in the manifestation of both the conventional and emerging threats is the use and proliferation of SALWs. Accordingly, Nigeria is currently prominently featured in the three-spot continuum of transnational organized trafficking of small and light weapons

(SALWs) in the West African region of Africa using the indices of origin, transit route and final destination. Weapons in circulation in the country have been identified to originate from local fabrication, cache of guns and weapons used during the Nigerian civil war, thefts from the government armouries, smuggling, insurgents (both from within and neighbouring countries) and some multinational oil companies which operate in the resource (oil)-rich but crisis-plagued Niger-Delta region of the country. Whenever and wherever these SALWs are ultimately deployed, human security has been at the receiving end.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria Intelligence Agency (NIA),the Nigeria Police Force, National drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) are the institutions saddled with border security and management. The Ministry handles issuing of visas to foreigners while the NIS, NCS and Police personnel are stationed at various entry points of the country.

In May 2013, Oyo State command of the NCS seized more than 56,000 rounds of ammunition stashed into 277 crates masked as bags of dry cassava. Similarly, 2,176 bags of smuggled rice and an array of consumer and industrial goods were uncovered during the security operation. Also, 56,750 rounds of live ammunition were discovered when a truck was intercepted by security agents along the Igboho Road, Saki Axis of Oyo state. Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP)Mu'azu Mohammed, the Seme border (Lagos State)Divisional Police Officer (DPO),noted that the daily mean population of people seen at the Seme border could be as much as 6,000 persons. Additionally, he opined that of the 6,000 persons, about 60 percent of them are criminals. He further stated, while addressing a joint delegation of the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), that some of these criminals wreck mayhem on innocent travellers, while others engage in smuggling of various consumables through illegal border routes into Nigeria. CSP Muazu stated that among the items smuggled into the country includes small and light weapons (SALW) from war torn countries in West Africa as well as other African countries such as Libya and Mali. The porosity of the borders has also not helped matters.

The Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) has called attention to the increasing danger posed by proliferation of illegal routes across the Nigerian borders. The porous routes have enabled smugglers gained easier access and have enhanced their operations in the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo state. Chief Lasisi Ayantayo, one of the community leaders interviewed in the Oke-Ogun area of the state,posited that the activities of smugglers have exacerbated on the Ilesa-Ibariba, Iwere Oke, Ejio as well as Iseyin-Ayetoro routes. He called for increased security surveillance of some, if not all, of these routes to check the atrocious activities criminals who use such routes to smuggle cars and contraband goods into the country unchecked.

The absence of fixed frontiers in border areas has largely contributed to the persistence in smuggling activities across the country and has made it difficult to control entry and exit points in border areas. Despite repeated warnings, huge seizures running into billions of naira annually (and jail terms in some cases), the activities of smugglers remain unabated in many parts of the country. According to the area Controller of Customs Oyo/Osun Command, Richards Oteri, there are only two approved border stations in Ayegun and Ighokoko to cover more than 8 local governments with more than 500 illegal border routes. This is a staggering revelation. With 500 illegal border routes, migration into Nigeria through the Oyo state international borders would obviously continue unabated.

Field reports show that the various institutions charged with the responsibility of enforcing security at the Nigerian borders are faced with the challenge of

being grossly under-resourced. This challenge therefore, nullifies their efforts at improving security at the borders and their capacity to mitigate cross-border crimes. Their constraints involve a conglomeration of intertwined factors which include outdated and decrepit border facilities, insufficient legislative and judicial support for thorough rules enforcement and, the deficit in their capacity to act in accordance with modern and contemporary standards. Furthermore, corruption has been "institutionalized" by the various agencies tasked with border security. Respondents opine that lack of proper motivation, in terms of low remuneration and bonuses for the security personnel, is a key reason for wide spread corruption among the border security agencies. In addition, cross-border crimes are exacerbated by the border residents who collude with perpetrators on one hand, and are the smugglers on the other. Lack of proper sensitization on effects and punishment of cross-border was also identified by a security agent as a major challenge to border security. He opined that residents of borderlands are, in most cases, oblivious of the consequences of cross-border crimes hence, the residents themselves engage in illegal border activities while being ignorant of the ultimate consequences.Border security at the international borders in Oyo State can thus be described as being at variance with global best practices at ensuring border security.

Conclusion

Oyo state has six (6) legal international borders and several illegal borders. Assessing the international borders in Oyo State is a serious task. This is due to the fact that the number of illegal borders poses challenges of manpower deployment and proper monitoring hence slowing down the paths to an ideal secure border in Oyo state. Similarly, legal border security can be described as being far from the globally acceptable minimum requirement for ensuring border security. Thus, security at both the legal borders and the illegal borders are not in line with global best practices and this has resulted in the porosity of the borders and posed security risks to human security, Oyo state and Nigeria as a whole. If uncontrolled passage of people and goods to and from Oyo State, Nigeria is left unchecked, it has the tendency to create a very serious doubt on the sovereignty of Nigeria in the long run.

Recommendations

Interpersonal links between cross-border movers and the persons they interrelate with across the border are facilitators to trans-border movement. Suffice to say that trans-border movement would be impossible without an interaction between two or more border communities. One way to stem trans-border movement therefore is to sensitize the residents of border town to the need to checkmate inflow of people and goods. This should be followed by the promulgation of appropriate laws and policies which are geared towards boosting the security architecture at the borders. Furthermore, boosting of security architecture should be preceded by a review of extant frameworks in a bid to assessing the existing trends in border issues and its management.

Improvement of logistics and equipment such as increase in the number of patrol vehicles, will enhance the operations of the Oyo State Command of the NIS and will be boost to tackling cross-border crimes and migration while helping in identifying illegal routes around the various border towns in Oyo state. Consequently, Inter-agency collaboration is important in tackling border post issues. Furthermore, government should improve the road networks connecting the various border posts. This will not only endear the community to the government security outfits in the area but would enable efficient monitoring of movement in and out of the various borders.

Building a working relationship and collaborating with neighbouring countries is critical to good and effective border management. This is largely because

organized crimes thrive majorly in countries where prevailing conditions are conducive and convenient for illegal operations thus putting contiguous countries at risk. Similarly, contiguous countries will also bear the repercussions of the push factors attendant of irregular migration which includes natural and man-made disasters, all forms of war, poverty and unemployment. Therefore, collaboration, which is at the core of an integrated approach to contemporary border management, and information sharing will be integral to managing the Oyo state international borders.

Finally, the border should be properly demarcated to enable effective policing and management. Introduction of standard toll system, as seen in other international borders, will enhance proper documentation and management of the borders.

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