BORDER SECURITY GOVERNANCE AND THE CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE SECURITY IN NIGERIAN STATE: AN INQUIRY INTO NIGERIA-BENIN BORDER

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Abstract

The Nigeria-Benin Republic border is one of the sources of insecurity to the Nigerian state due to its porosity. The paper then examined the effective security challenges at the Nigeria-Benin Republic border. Ex-post facto research design, which relied on secondary sources inquiry and structural functionalism theory, was adopted in the paper. The paper looked at the danger of inadequate security of Nigeria-Benin border to Nigerian National security and security challenges at the Nigeria-Benin Republic border. The paper revealed the challenges of management, ECOWAS protocol on free movement, lack of development of border communities, and historical ties committed in Nigeria. The paper recommends proper regular training on border security management of the involved security personal and demarcation of the border with built wall with Iron Gate rather than bamboo sticks.

Keywords: Nigerian State, Border, Border security, Governance, National security.

Introduction

The importance of security to human existence has made human beings conscious of any means through which insecurity would occur that may affect his/her life. Globally, security along countries borders has become imperative because the relative security of every country to a large extent depends on their secured borders. The increased insecurity of most countries happened due to the porosity of their borders with attendants' effect rate of criminal activities. Akinyemi (2013) asserts that the rate of criminal activities has increased particularly since the end of the Cold War and in the wake of globalization, has made border security assume heightened importance at the present time of the world.

As Blum (2014) points out that borderlands are both melting pots and defence hotspots, that is why frontiers are the razor's edge on which contemporary questions of war or peace as well

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as the life or death of nations are hang in the balance (Ani, 2012). The Nigeria–Benin Republic as one of major borders situated at Seme in the side of Benin and Idiroko in the side of Nigeria has no gate rather the demarcations were done with bamboo tricks which could not guarantee any security or serious scrutiny to stop people from entry and exist of Nigeria (Oke, 2013). The chance of hoodlums, terrorists with the devilish intentions entering Nigeria is made easy due to the nature of the demarcation.

The Nigeria-Benin border is badly organized in such a way that the various security operatives/agencies, namely - the Nigerian customs service, Nigeria Immigration Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, and the police, operate from mere containers instead of offices made of proper buildings (Afolabi, 2013; Oke, 2013). Trans-border communities being routes of passage for smuggled goods include small arms; it makes trans-border communities occupy strategic positions in respect of the country's security (Aluko, 2012).

So the nature of demarcation and poor border security has led to the endless penetration of the Nigerian states by the cross-border criminals and merchants of death through the porous nature of Nigeria – Benin border, which make effective security difficult if not impossible because when the security agencies discover a particular route which the smugglers pass and mount surveillance teams in such route, the cross-border criminals would easily adopt new entry and exit point(s). Therefore, this paper set to x-ray the challenges facing the security of the Nigeria- Benin border and make recommendations for identify security challenges of the said border. The research design of the study is ex-post facto, which adopted a secondary source of inquiry.

Conceptual Clarification

Border Security: Two words made up the concept, border security. Firstly, border and secondly, security. The border refers to a form of the line that demarcates or divides areas, lands, or countries. In other words, a border is something which can be stick(s) or planted life stick(s), erected wall(s) among others used to the formed line(s) or countries. While security is an activity or activities carried out to prevent and protect areas, countries or human beings against attacks, dangers and damage. Metz (2000) sees security as protection and preservation of all the society consider being important and valuable, protecting individual and groups from bodily harm. In their contribution to the understanding of security, Okonkwo and Efeurhobo (2015) view security as a state of life free from danger, fear, threat, apprehension, and doubt. According to Otto and Ukpere (2012), safety also refers to the existence of peace, safety, happiness, and the preservation of human and physical capital, as well as the absence of crisis threats to human injury. Similarly, Anegbode and Along (2015) security mean the absence of threats is peace and political stability.

Therefore, from the explanatory exposition of the two words - border and security, the concept of border security is a detective and preventive management of the transnational illegal influx of people and contraband goods and other related activities along countries borders. Border security, according to Okumu (2011), includes geographical control of the border by military or special border patrol protection force patrols; immigration by internally enforcing laws; migration by control ship to transnational and movement of people; improving immigration

and migration law enforcement by asking questions that aid in screening people crossing the border; and improving inspection.

Border Security Governance: This refers to the act of administering security along state's borders through constitutionally mandated institutions/agencies with properly trained security personnel to provide the needed security to ensure legal migrants influx, genuine socio-economic transactions and other related activities. It is the act of using instituted border security agencies to provide the needed, effective and efficient security operations along state borders to prevent criminalities and illegal activities for creating peace, security and development in the state.

Theoretical Framework

The structural-functionalism theory is adopted in this paper. The theory draws its perspective mainly from the ideas of August Comte, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim, which has the notion that society is a system (Jeje and IIim, 2016). Structural-functionalism theory sees society as a social structure made up of parts. All the parts are expected to function together interdependently and cohesively for the whole society by which equilibrium and peace can be maintained within the society. Change in one part has implications on the whole structure. Functionalists argued that society fails to survive because certain essential tasks should be performed by the government and its institutions were not done.

Thus, the functionalists' perspective is a useful analytical tool to describe society and identify its structural part like security institution and its functions at a particular time. However, the theory is being criticized for disregarding social change, that it supports existing social arrangement. Spencer asserted that "border is the first line of defence against terrorism and the last line of a nation's territorial integrity (Onuoha, 2013). Hence, the porosity of the Nigeria-Benin border is due to the dysfunction of the border security governance. The inability of the border security personnel to provide effective policing along the border has led to the porosity, which made it possible for cross-border criminals to have access to Nigerian territory to commit a heinous crime such as small smuggling of arms, kidnapping, banditry, transnational human trafficking, armed robbery among other related activities, which threaten the peace, security and development of Nigerian state.

The Linkable Nature between Peace, Security & Development

The importance of the tripartite of peace, security and development in a society cannot over-emphasize because they are essential to the positive transformation of any society based on their nexus.

➢ **Peace** simply means free from trouble and emotional disturbance. Esosuakpo (2015) gives encompass definition of peace as "a moment, time or period where an individual lives without trouble, fear, having settled mind, freedom, from external attacks and forces, starvation, poverty, sickness, bad governance, free from social antagonism, emotional disturbance and other factors that affect the existence of man".

➢ **Security**: it simply refers to the condition of not being threatened, which is safety. In other words, security is a situation of being safe, free from anxiety, being confident and protected. Security could be seen as free from threat and emotional disturbance, which can promote self-confidence for individual development and contribute to the development of one's society.

> **Development:** Here, development means transforming a people geared towards improving the people's quality of life within a specified period of time (Okonkwo and Efeurhobo, 2017). Ake (2001) development is the process by which persons create and orient themselves, their lives and circumstances to achieve high levels of civilization by their own choice and values. Seers in his articulation opined that development is the elimination of poverty, unemployment and inequality in society (Okonkwo and Efeurhobo, 2015). Also, development is seen as the transformation of a state through its institutions to ensure its more responsive to desired modern change to improved life expectancy and the physical environment (Onyesom and Iwegbu, 2015)

From the above-conceptualized concepts of peace, security and development, the nexus among the tripartite is cleared and understood. Emphatically, to ensure dimensional development to occur in any society, there is a need to create an avenue for peace and security, which could promote development. Therefore, peace and security are ingredients for development, just as security could bring about peace and peace could bring about security and development. In a society where there is no peace, by implication, there is an absence of safety, happiness, and protection of men and physical resources, which is a state of insecurity that threatens development. This is because resources supposed to be directed to (national) development are being channeled to provision of security e.g Nigeria Senate approved #1.3 billion for purchase of teargas (Channelstv 2021). Also, the incidence of insecurity has made Nigeria lost #12.566 billion in March 2016 due to Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) facilities (Eboh 2016).

In the same way, risk/danger discourages foreign investors from investing in an insecure society. The instability caused by Niger Delta rebels has instilled terror in foreign investors. For example, on January 11th, 2006, oil workers Mikko Nichevi (Bulgaria), Harry Ebanks (Hondurtes), Anold Loundry (American), and Waston Clark (Britain) were abducted for ransom (Amaize, 2007). Similarly, gunmen assaulted a bullion truck at Ubulu-okiti along the Benin/Asaba expressway in Delta state, killed a female in a bus with a stray bullet from the armed robbers' weapons (Ahon, 2021). All the aforesaid cases of insecurity are the aftermath of the absence of peace and lack of desired development, which are unacceptable. The said situation is an indication of the government failure to meet up with its primary responsibility, which is the provision of basic needs of the people. The diagram below illustrates the nexus between peace, security and development.
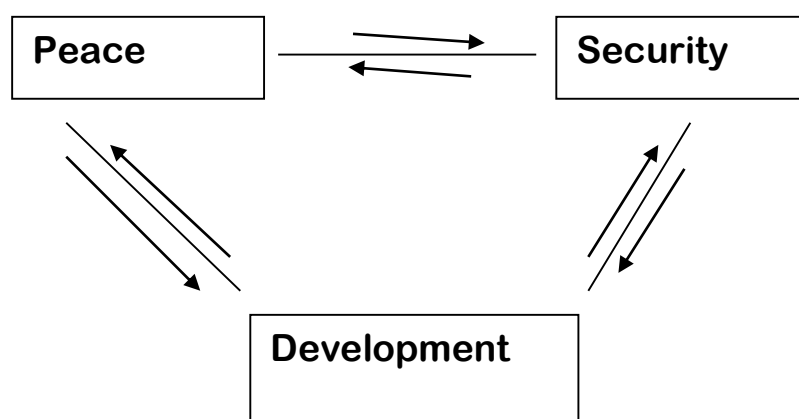
Figure 1: **The above diagram shows the nexus between peace, security and development**
Hence, lack of peace emanating from insecurity and lack of development jeopardize national peace, security and development, which bring about kidnapping, suicide bombing, militancy or youths restiveness, poverty, robbery. In furthance, insecurity makes governance difficult and slow rate of industrialization in a society. While considering insecurity in Nigeria state, Ikelegbe (2020) noted that violent criminality had become rampant and very profitable engagement, which is now an avenue for employment, income, and illegal wealth increasingly attractive to unemployment and youth.

Security Governance in Nigeria-Benin Republic Border
Nigeria covers 23,768 square kilometres with more than 3,650 kilometres land and maritime borders (Imobighe, 2003; Sani, 2012, Oji & Okeke, 2014).Nigeria has 1,500 kilometres of land boundaries with Niger and Chad in the north, about 1000 kilometres with the Benin Republic in the west, 1,700 kilometres with Cameroun in the east, and 700 kilometres of Atlantic coastline (Imogbighe, 2003; Nte 2011; Sani, 2012; Abayomi, 2013; Adelaja, 2014). Geographically, Arinze & Simon (2016) noted that Nigeria is among the countries in the world with the highest amount of porous borders which serve as either unchecked or unmanned entry points for illegal guns into the country.

Considering the security governance of the Nigeria-Benin order, Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and Police, and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) are security operatives/bodies constitutionally mandated by the Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended and other Acts of Parliament with the task of manning and monitoring entry and exit of goods and people in Nigeria. Despite the security architecture outfits put in place, insecurity still reigns in the areas. West Africa Network for Peace (2013) noted that Nigeria responsible for about 70% of illegal small arms in the West Africa sub-region. Adetula (2015) noted that the Nigeria Customs Service did most of the small arms seized along the Nigeria –Benin border.

Furthermore, to have effective border management, Nte (2011) claimed that the Benin Republic and Nigeria jointly managed the Seme border in South-West Nigeria in terms of collective security management under bilateral ECOWAS initiatives to manage the borders efficiently. According to Adetula (2015), border policing between Nigeria and Benin is the first in West Africa. Despite the policy patrol's establishment, there was an increase in cross-border crimes, prompting the Nigerian government to shutter its boundary with the Benin Republic in 2001 and 2003, respectively. The Nigeria government claimed that many complaints had been made to the Republic of Benin authority about the threats which the cross-border crimes posed for her (Nigeria) economy as well as Nigerians' lives, properties and investments (Adetula, 2015). The Comptroller General, Nigeria Custom Service Col. Ali Hameed (Rtd), once canvassed for the need for complete closure of the Nigeria-Benin Republic border (Okon, 2017). The Comptroller General said that closing the border could be inevitable because the Nigeria Customs Service is finding it even tougher to man the region due to smugglers' intentions and the effects their operations have on the economy and the development of local industries.

The Danger of Ineffective Security of Nigeria- Benin Republic Border to Nigerian National Security

Here, **national security** is seen as the absence of threat to a nation and its people(Anegbode and Along, 2015).National security may also be described as a state where residents of a country live in a free, prosperous, secure atmosphere and have access to services that enable them to meet their basic needs (Enahoro, 2004).

Hence, national security is seen as security challenges that are not what a nation should condole because it is detrimental to peace and development. Every country must be conscious of its border security because of the importance to the enthronement of peace, development and stability. However, Nigeria-Benin Republic borders security measure is contrary in terms of effective security due to its porosity. Alabi and Mobolaji (2017) submitted that Nigeria-Benin Borders are not properly manned because there exist illegal routes connecting the Benin Republic with Nigeria were discovered. The Seme border, as popularly called, which is also the Nigeria—Benin border, as noted by Adeleye (2017), has about 219 illegal routes known to the border-communities boys. The border-communities boys and leaders in the border above mentioned lead the traffickers through bush parts that security operatives do not know of. They inform the traffickers of the movement of the border patrol officials because of the financial benefits their role offers.

The danger of ineffective security is detrimental and non-negotiable phenomenon in human society due to its negative effects in areas of; socio-economic, political, food and Health. So, the security challenges at Nigeria-Benin border is huge considering national security as the smuggled small arms and light weapons are used to carry out armed banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and other internal conflict-related activities in Nigeria. This is why Nte (2011) reported that the constant supply of smuggled armed into Nigeria, particularly via the porous Nigerian-Benin border, is a major cause for concern because of its disastrous effects on Nigerian national security.

Considering the Nigeria-Benin border porosity as a passage for a criminal hideout, Adetula (2014) noted that after the criminals have carried out daring and murderous operations in Nigerian cities, they usually flee into the Benin Republic through the porous border where they hibernate in preparation for their next adventure. In addition, the porous nature of the border the Benin-Nigeria border remains an easy escape route for erring politicians and transnational criminals and the influx of illegal aliens. Blum (2014) points out that transnational criminal activities across the border include trafficking of small arms and light weapons, narcotics and human being trafficking, as well as cross-border attacks, after which the criminals often easily retreat to the other side of the border to evade prosecution. Asiwaju (2005) also noted that the menace of cross-border armed banditry, violent automobile thief, and human trafficking has the public's attention to the well-known problem of policing Nigeria's international boundaries in recent years. The Nigerian security operations often report cases of arms struggling, armed banditry, and human trafficking along with the Nigerian 773 kilometres (460-miles) contonou-Badagry road (Adetula, 2014).

No double that porous nature of the pose mentioned above threat to Nigeria. Adeluta (2014) asserted that the poor management of the Nigerian-Benin (Seme) border poses a serious threat to the Nigerian economy. Among others the Nigerian goods particularly her cheap fuel are frequently and massively smuggled into Benin republic. The question that emanates is what are the challenges that lead to the ineffective security of the aforesaid border?

Causes of Security Challenges at the Nigeria-Benin Republic Border

➤ **Poor Border Security Management**: Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Customs Service, National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and the Nigeria Police are bodies constitutionally mandated by the Nigeria 1999 constitution. However, Boko-Haram's operations and unprecedented cross-border criminalities have led to the addition of special task groups from the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force, State Security Agencies, and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps to the forces responsible for policing the country's borders. The implication of the involvement of these bodies without traditional mandate and training in border management has caused the poor border security management, as issue of corruption of high rate at the border due to illegal check point for extortions. It has uncovered that most security agencies are often compromised to permit illegal flow of goods and people (Akinyemi 2013; Nte, 2011; Gbemre 2016). It asserted that some of the checkpoints are not meant to check passport to extort money from people. In addition, Lamptey (2015) noted that "the work of border security official is hampered by logistics and poor government remuneration creating avenue for corruption.

➤ **ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement**: This protocol permits free movement of persons, goods, and services, creating a vacuum that criminals exploit to facilitate cross-border criminalities. The cross-border criminals/traffickers exploit loopholes in the state capacity to monitor cross-border trade in the region and relax national borders that intend to enhance regional integration to perpetrate their nefarious activities (Adelaja, 2014). The ECOWAS though as noted by smuggling of arms, ammunition and their items into Nigeria. Akiyemi (2013) borders have become a safe passage for people without identities as ECOWAS protocol in unrestricted movement has been abused to mean an entry without legal document.

➤ **Lack of Development of Borders Communities:** the people in the border communities have inadequate access to good social infrastructural facilities. Blum (2014) observed that border communities along the border under discussion suffer poor infrastructure, a lack of access to educational facilities and low development in general. The said situation has made life difficult for border communities in term of their survival and livelihood, which pushes them into illegal and criminal activities along the border for survival.

➤ **Historical Tie:** Nigeria–Benin border communities share a lot in common linguistically and racially, which explains the dynamism of cross-border migration (Afolayan, 2000; Fayomi& Adeola, 2012; Blum, 2014; Isiyaku, 2017).

Emphatically, during the Berlin conference, when the border was fixed in 1889, it divided the Shabe Yoruba tribe. The majority became part of French-Dahomey (Benin) while some Eastern Shabe villages joined British Nigeria (Afolayan, 2000; Blum, 2014).This historical link weakened the Nigerian-Benin border's security governance,

particularly when combined with Nigerian policy of good neighborliness, as noted by (Fayomi and Adeola, 2012; Adam, 2012), which informed Nigeria's involvement in joint commercial, manufacturing, and agricultural projects with Benin counterparts.

> **Vastness of the Border**: The border between Nigeria and Benin Republic covers huge landscape, which makes it impossible to be manned by the available border security operatives. Arinze and Simon (2016) noted that Nigeria-Benin Republic border is among the countries borders in the world with the highest amount of porous borders and serve as either unchecked or grossly unmanned entry points for illegal guns into Nigeria. Generally, Adams (2012) noted that 1475 official border sites and estimated 2000 unofficial border sites exist across Nigerian borders. The porous nature of Nigerian borders, which Nigeria-Benin Republic border inclusive has been regarded as a major challenges to effective security in Nigeria, which Menner (2014) and Gbemere (2016) attributed to the vastness of Nigerian borders

Conclusion

Nigeria has suffered and still suffering insecurity due to challenges of effective security, which ineffective border security management of the Nigeria-Benin Republic border as one of the sources of insecurity. Many small arms, contraband goods and illegal migrants' influx into Nigeria have been traced to the Nigeria-Benin Republic border as a result of the challenges of effective security. Therefore, the inability of the Nigerian border security architecture to provide effective policing along the border has led to the porosity which made it possible for border criminals to have access to Nigeria territory to commit heinous crime such as smuggling small arm arms, kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery among other related activities. Hence, peace, security and development have become almost impossible in Nigerian state, because the three elements are tripartite for societal transformation.

Recommendations

> Nigerian government should re-organize the border security architecture that will take the security personnel through a new orientation based on re-training. The border should be demarcated with built wall(s) with an iron gate rather than the bamboo sticks.
> The historical tie of the communities of the two countries around the border should be exploited by the two countries governments positively by re-organization and strengthen neighborhoods crime-watch.
> There should be enlightenment by Nigerian government on the importance of the nexus between peace, security and development to spur Nigerians particularly the border communities to share crime related information with the border security operatives to carry out preventive operations.
> Government should develop the border communities in terms of socio-economic infrastructures such as good roads; street lights, well equip schools across all levels and skills acquisition centers for the people residing at border communities.
> The government should increase the size of Nigeria border security personnel and motivate them economically to reduce corruption cases among border operating security and modern border security equipment.

➢ As an alternative to the violation of the ECOWAS policy on freedom of travel, the Nigerian government can motivate border security operatives by enacting legislation that instructs them to be rigorous in their border checks.

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