



## **Transnational Security Threats and Border Management: A Study of Cross-Border Crime Challenges at the Nigeria-Niger Border**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the complex dynamics of transnational security threats and the corresponding border management strategies at the Nigeria-Niger border, with a focus on cross-border crime challenges. The overarching theoretical framework employed in this research is the Theory of Transnationalism, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of countries in the contemporary global context. The study draws on a rich body of secondary data from various sources, including academic publications, government reports, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. These sources provide insights into the multifaceted nature of cross-border crimes such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, arms proliferation, and terrorism, which have the potential to destabilize both Nigeria and Niger and have far-reaching consequences for the broader West African region. The analysis of the data reveals the intricacies of cross-border criminal networks, highlighting the role of porous borders, economic disparities, and political instability in facilitating criminal activities. In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of a comprehensive understanding of transnational security threats and the vital role of effective border management in addressing them. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on border security in the context of transnationalism and offer valuable insights for policymakers, security agencies, and international organizations working to combat cross-border crime and enhance regional stability in West Africa.

**Keywords:** Border; Security; Cross-Border Crime; Insecurity; Transitional

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## Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, the management of international borders has emerged as a critical component of national security and global stability. As nations grapple with the complex web of transnational security threats, the ability to effectively address challenges at their borders has become a litmus test of their resilience and capability. Globalization has enabled criminals to roam freely across borders and even to conduct illicit business with impunity, threatening socioeconomic progress and the security of people and property. However, it should be underlined that Nigeria is not immune to this rising phenomena, which necessitates an increased requirement for security and protection at our borders. Security has always been a big worry in every country in the world, established or developing. Perhaps it is the assumption that social, economic, and political advancements are determined by peace and security. All governments see security as a top priority (Omolara, 2013). In Nigeria, the need for heightened security measures is particularly crucial due to the presence of various security threats such as terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime. These challenges not only pose a threat to the stability and development of the country but also hinder foreign investments and economic growth.

The issues that African governments have in managing their borders are exacerbated by globalization, which is breaking down conventional borders via technological improvement and the restructuring of international relations. At the time, crimes are done without regard for boundaries, and massive volumes of items are traded over online. The internet has not only made border management and combating cross-border crime more difficult, but it has also essentially dissolved borders by enabling imports without passing through customs. Trans-border crimes are claimed to have emerged with the advent of colonialism, which reorganized nations and communities into new nation-states with defined boundaries patrolled by law enforcement agents to defend the polity and its economy. Nigeria is a colonial construct, with the southern and northern protectorates merging in 1914. Nigeria came to share a 4745-square-kilometer international land boundary with Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Nigeria has marine borders



with Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome & Principe, and Togo. The territorialisation of Nigeria state, like other partitioned territories in Africa, provides significant issues that have influenced the

structure of interregional commerce as a result of colonial and postcolonial economic systems (Osimen, Anegbode, Akande, and Oyewole, 2017). These issues include the fragmentation of markets, as each region operates with different economic policies and regulations. This has hindered the growth of a unified national market and led to disparities in economic development among regions. Additionally, the legacy of colonial borders has created ethnic and religious tensions, further complicating interregional commerce and cooperation.

Cross-border crime has caused significant setbacks in Nigeria. These crimes have an impact on the state's security and economy. Nigeria's economy is not leading back within the West African sub-region because decades of neglect and misrule have enabled informal enterprises to grow on criminality at the borders. Nigeria's borders, with its numerous potholes, are 'used to transport people, firearms, rice, tokunboh (used) automobiles, phony medications, and other illegal commodities'. The north-eastern part of the Nigerian border, which has the most border villages, may be regarded as the most backward due to the most difficult terrain, lowest literacy, largest poverty, and highest unemployment rate. These factors might explain why the region has the highest frequency of border-related crimes, such as the Boko Haram war (Joseph and Bassey, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of proper infrastructure and limited access to basic services exacerbate the challenges faced by the communities in this region. The combination of these factors creates a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and insecurity, making it crucial for targeted interventions and support to uplift the region and address its unique set of challenges.

Despite the efforts of cross-border security agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), and others, Nigeria's borders have been described as porous, allowing all manner of cross-border or trans-border criminal activities such as human trafficking, smuggling, drug trafficking, arm robbery, money laundering, and illicit arms trafficking, resulting in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. For example, it is estimated that 100 million of the 640 million small guns circulating globally are discovered in Africa, with 30 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West



Africa alone (Abdulkareem, 2012; Adetula, 2015). The presence of such a large number of small arms and light weapons in Africa poses a significant threat to regional stability and security. These weapons not only fuel conflicts and violence but also hinder development efforts and

exacerbate socio-economic inequalities in the region. Additionally, the easy availability of these weapons increases the risk of their misuse by non-state actors, further destabilizing the region.

The Nigeria-Niger border acts as a conduit for illegal trade, including the smuggling of products, guns, narcotics, and people. These illicit operations not only result in huge income losses for both nations, but they also contribute to the growth of organized criminal networks and obstruct normal economic activity. Because of the porous nature of the Nigeria-Niger border, radical and terrorist organizations have been able to infiltrate there. These organizations take use of border weaknesses to carry out cross-border assaults, participate in arms trafficking, and establish safe havens for planning and carrying out terrorist operations, posing a direct danger to national and regional security.

From the above, this study seeks to examine Transnational Security Threats and Border Management: A Study of Cross-Border Crime Challenges at the Nigeria-Niger Border. Our exploration of this critical study seeks to achieve several objectives. First, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of cross-border crime challenges, drawing from a diverse array of incidents, from the trafficking of illegal narcotics to the smuggling of humans and firearms. By examining these various security threats, we hope to underscore the gravity of the situation and emphasize the urgent need for effective border management strategies. In the study, we embark on a journey through the complexities of cross-border crime and border management at the Nigeria-Niger border. By doing so, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of transnational security challenges and inspire innovative solutions that can be applied in regions across the globe. The Nigeria-Niger border serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges facing the international community, emphasizing the importance of effective border management in a world where security knows no borders.

### **Concept of Trans-Border Crime**



The nature of cross-border crime has significantly altered in recent years as a result of the use of technology, networks, the relaxation of travel restrictions, and criminal diversification. Crime networks are sophisticated, and breaking them is a major undertaking for police departments

throughout the world. This is due in part to the fact that the leaders of these organizations have significant connections and the means to bribe officials. Transnational crimes are defined as crimes that have a real or prospective impact beyond national borders, as well as crimes that are intra-state yet violate core international community principles (Boister, 2003). Transnational crimes pose a unique challenge for law enforcement agencies, as they require international cooperation and coordination to effectively combat them. These crimes often involve activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime, which can have far-reaching consequences on a global scale.

In the words of the UNODC, "Transnational crime by definition involves people in more than one country maintaining a system of operation and communication that is effective enough to perform criminal transactions, sometimes repeatedly" (UNODC Report, 2005, p. 1). While it is true that the instability of West African governments and the inadequacy of state institutions tasked with combating the drug epidemic have contributed to the recent increase in TOC, the involvement, active or passive, of state authorities in the area and elsewhere cannot be ruled out. There have been instances where state authorities in West Africa and other regions have been implicated in facilitating or turning a blind eye to criminal activities. This complicity further exacerbates the challenges faced in combating transnational organized crime, making it crucial to address corruption and strengthen governance structures to effectively tackle this issue. For example, the arrest in Ghana in January 2004 of an international smuggling group that had imported 675 kilos of cocaine with a street value of USD 140 million resulted in the suspects being freed on bond of only USD 200,000, provoking a public outrage in the press (Aning, 2007).

However, "trans-border crime" refers to a variety of unlawful and infamous operations carried out across national and international borders by people and groups for financial or commercial gain, as well as sociopolitical or religious purposes. It is a group of criminal crimes whose



perpetrators and consequences transcend national boundaries. Human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling or trafficking in weapons, cross-border terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, illicit diamond trafficking, corruption, and commercial fraud are only a few

examples (Asiwaju, 1992; Ering, 2011). Transnational organized crime poses significant challenges to law enforcement agencies worldwide. The complex nature of these criminal activities requires international cooperation and coordination among countries to effectively combat them. Additionally, the economic and social impacts of transnational organized crime can be devastating, undermining stability and development in affected regions.

### **Border Management**

Border management is within the purview of border security, a new dimension of security architecture that has yet to be fully investigated in terms of how it affects both physical and human security. This discourse clarifies crucial topics such as security, national security, border management, and border security against this backdrop. A comprehensive examination of the patterns and links adds to our knowledge of these words, calling into question whether border securitization is a public benefit or a barrier in the context of national security concerns (Willie and Samuel, 2020). Understanding the impact of border securitization on physical and human security is essential in today's global landscape. By delving into the patterns and connections between security, national security, border management, and border security, we can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and implications of such measures. This examination prompts us to critically evaluate whether the prioritization of border securitization truly serves as a public benefit or if it inadvertently creates barriers that hinder national security efforts.

Globally, border security is considered to be viewed through the lens of insurgencies, terrorism, undocumented migrant flows, drug and arms trafficking, and other criminalities affecting border administration and control (Adeola and Fayomi, 2012). These challenges have led to the implementation of various measures and technologies to enhance border security, such as increased surveillance systems, biometric identification systems, and cooperation between countries through information sharing and joint operations. Additionally, border security policies



often involve a delicate balance between ensuring national security and upholding human rights, as strict border controls can also lead to issues of discrimination and violations of asylum seekers' rights.

Borders and their formation, whether at the political, economic, or social-cultural levels, are important control mechanisms. The current situation of a rise in migrant flows from war-torn Syria to chosen destinations in Europe captures the dynamics of security application (Pursey, 2015), as the issue is for what reason and why some countries are more preferred as a destination than others. This phenomenon can be attributed to a combination of factors such as geographic proximity, existing social networks, and economic opportunities in certain European countries. Additionally, the varying levels of border control and immigration policies across different European nations also play a significant role in shaping the preferences of migrants.

According to the International Organization for Migration in Willie and Samuel (2020), border management effectively defines a state's territorial boundaries that must be secured and made safe for the benefit of internal security, which in turn determines a nation's sovereignty and capacity to meet its statutory obligations to those who belong, relating to how prohibited persons and harmful substances may be stopped. The end of the Cold War marked the arrival of globalization, which has brought various benefits but is not without flaws (Straw and Glennie, 2012). Because of technological advancements, criminal businesses and terrorist operations may now traverse national borders with more ease than previously possible. This worldwide phenomenon was responsible for the 9/11 terrorist assault on the United States of America and continues to plague most nation-states' security architecture. It has been correctly recognized that what happens at the borders determines a state's national security architecture, which either makes or breaks it (Okunade, 2017). As a result, it is critical for every state to prioritize the protection of its borders and border management. Effective border management is crucial for every state in order to safeguard its national security. The increasing ease of crossing borders has made it imperative for governments to enhance their border protection measures. Failing to do so can leave a nation vulnerable to various threats, including terrorism and illegal activities.



## **Theoretical Framework**

This study employed Theory of Transnationalism as theoretical framework of analysis. Randolph Bourne popularized the notion of transnationalism in the early twentieth century as a result of greater interconnection among people and the diminishing economic and social relevance of nation-state boundaries (Transnationalism, 2016). Transnationalism refers to the process by which immigrants build and preserve multi-stranded social links that connect their communities of origin and host countries (Rosemberg, Boutain, and Mohammed, 2016). These social links can include maintaining relationships with family and friends in their home country, participating in cultural events and organizations from their home country, and engaging in transnational economic activities such as remittances or investments. Transnationalism challenges the traditional understanding of citizenship and national identity as individuals navigate between multiple cultures and countries while maintaining a sense of belonging to both.

According to this theory, the increased engagement between non-state entities across boundaries (as a result of globalization) has had a number of consequences for state capabilities. As a result, frequent cross-border operations or exchanges have an impact on the internal policies of state actors (which might diminish the role of states). This transnational contact might occur in one country while the consequences are seen in another (Soehi & Waldinger, 2012). This theory "emphasizes the ways in which nations are no longer able to contain or control the disputes or negotiations through which social groups annex a global dimension to their meaningful practices; the notion of diaspora brings to the fore the racial dynamics underlying the international division of labor and the economic turmoil of global capital" (Transnationalism, 2016). The theory of transnationalism highlights the increasing interconnectedness of social groups across national boundaries, challenging the traditional notion of nation-states as exclusive containers of identity and power. In contrast, the concept of Diaspora sheds light on the racial dynamics that shape the





global distribution of labor and contribute to economic instability driven by global capital. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of how globalization impacts social groups and their meaningful practices.

The Theory of Transnationalism can be applied to examine transnational security threats and border management in the context of cross-border crime challenges at the Nigeria-Niger border. This theory provides a framework to understand and address security threats that transcend national boundaries, and it can be particularly useful in analyzing the complex dynamics of cross-border crime. The Theory of Transnationalism helps in understanding that cross-border crime challenges, such as smuggling, drug trafficking, and human trafficking, often involve networks that operate across borders. By applying this theory, one can delve into the intricate web of criminal organizations and their transnational connections.

Transnational security threats often involve non-state actors like criminal organizations and insurgent groups. This theory can be used to examine how these non-state actors exploit weak governance structures and porous borders to carry out their activities. The Theory of Transnationalism considers the impact of globalization on security dynamics. In the context of border management, it helps in analyzing how global economic, technological, and communication networks facilitate cross-border crime and challenge traditional border security measures.

### **Nature of Border Routes in Nigeria**

The main nations that border Nigeria are Chad (87 kilometers) in the northeast, Benin (773 kilometers) in the west, Niger (1,497 kilometers) in the north, and Cameroon (1,690 kilometers) in the east. Effective border monitoring is extremely challenging because the majority of these border locations are either in the bush or mountains (Mustapha, 2004). These geographical features make it difficult to establish and maintain proper surveillance systems along the borders. Additionally, the remote and rugged terrain can provide hiding spots for illegal activities such as smuggling and cross-border crimes.



There are hundreds of clandestine routes in Nigeria that connect or lead to neighboring African nations along these key borders. Nigeria has extensive borders, with hundreds of pathways connecting it to neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, as well as Mali, Libya, and Sudan. Locals say that there are well over 250 pathways from the Damaturu/Maiduguri axis that connect

or go directly to Cameroon, Chad, or Niger. These channels are usually unknown to security services, are unattended and unguarded, and hence serve as leaky conduits for the trafficking of guns and ammunition into Nigeria. It is discouraging and regrettable that the "merchants of death" have discovered tactics to outwit security forces at borders and on sidewalks. Because the weapons are small, light, and foldable, they are easily concealed and transferred on camels and donkeys' backs in specially manufactured leather or thatched bags primarily intended for the illicit "expedition" that is unexpected, unforeseen, and therefore undiscovered. Similarly, certain cattle and grain merchants in the country's North-East sub-region use techniques to conceal a store of weaponry and ammunition in empty gasoline tanks, under vehicle engines, and inside grain bags, generally unnoticed by security authorities at the impacted border points. The "grains" are delivered in enormous quantities via trucks, trailers, and old model pickup vans and jeeps, with little attention paid to them by security officers (Sagir, 2010). These smuggling techniques pose a significant challenge for security authorities in effectively detecting and preventing the illicit transportation of weapons and ammunition. The lack of scrutiny given to the delivery vehicles, combined with the large quantities of grain being transported, allows for a convenient cover for illegal activities.

### **Issues and Perspectives of Trans-Border Criminal Activities**

The international community is seeing an increase in transnational crime, in which criminal activity in one country has an influence on another or perhaps several others. Drug trafficking, human trafficking, computer crimes, terrorism, and a variety of other crimes may include people acting beyond the borders of a country that has a vested interest in putting a stop to the activity and prosecuting the culprit. Contemporary transnational crimes make use of globalization, trade liberalization, and booming new technology to commit varied crimes and instantly transfer



money, products, services, and people for the goal of committing violence for political reasons (Dan, 2013). These crimes often involve complex networks of individuals and organizations operating across multiple countries, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to effectively investigate and prosecute them. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology

has enabled criminals to constantly adapt their methods, making it a constant challenge for authorities to keep up with the evolving nature of transnational crimes.

According to Ortuno and Wiriyachai (2009), the last few years have seen a considerable growth in worldwide criminal activities such as money laundering, trafficking in human and nuclear technologies and materials, trafficking in human organs, and migrant smuggling. Simultaneously, new crimes such as contemporary piracy and the trafficking of hazardous waste, counterfeit medications, precious metals, or natural resources have been added to the list of classic criminal enterprises such as prostitution, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking. Transnational crime has lately expanded in scope and is defined by an increasingly global reach, involvement in many types of criminal activity, and the expansion of criminal markets to encompass large-scale financial fraud and cybercrime. These developments have been facilitated by advancements in technology and the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy. As a result, transnational criminal organizations have become more sophisticated and are able to exploit loopholes in international law enforcement efforts.

As things stand, no location is immune to the worldwide reach of transnational criminal syndicates. Since the Cold War's conclusion, we've seen international organized criminal organizations expand outside their conventional boundaries, seize new possibilities, and migrate more easily into other geographic regions. The biggest international organized criminal groups have operations in the United States, Latin America, West Africa, Southeast Europe, Asia, Russia, and other locations (Ering, 2011; Park, 2006). These criminal syndicates have demonstrated their ability to adapt and exploit various economic, political, and social factors in each location where they operate. Their operations often involve drug trafficking, human



smuggling, money laundering, and cybercrime, among other illicit activities. As globalization continues to connect the world more closely, it is crucial for governments and law enforcement agencies to collaborate internationally in order to effectively combat these transnational criminal networks.

Cross-border crime has existed in West Africa since the 1970s. Initially, they appeared as individuals or groups of traders, businessmen, and women smuggling products across borders. Human trafficking, for the sake of domestic servitude and unlawful sexual activities, finally took on worrying proportions when global syndicates joined such operations as drug peddling and car-jacking, among other things (de Andrés, 2008). These global syndicates brought with them sophisticated networks and resources, enabling them to expand their criminal activities across multiple countries in West Africa. As a result, the region has seen an alarming increase in organized crime and the exploitation of vulnerable individuals for profit.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Nigeria-Niger border is a critical border that is prone to a wide range of international cross-border crimes, posing substantial hazards to both nations. In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of transnational security threats and border management challenges at the Nigeria-Niger border. The findings shed light on the various forms of cross-border crime that affect the region, including smuggling, human trafficking, and terrorism-related activities. It is evident that these issues pose significant risks to the security and stability of both countries.

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

- i. Enhance the capacity and capabilities of border security agencies through improved training, better equipment, and increased personnel.



- ii. Promote cooperation and coordination among various law enforcement agencies from both Nigeria and Niger, as well as with international partners to combat transnational crime effectively.
- iii. Upgrade border infrastructure, including the construction of modern border posts and the deployment of technology such as surveillance cameras, drones, and biometric systems.
- iv.
- v.
- vi. Promote economic development in border regions to reduce the incentives for engaging in cross-border crime. Encourage trade and investment to create job opportunities and reduce poverty.
- vii. Involve local communities in border security efforts by raising awareness, fostering cooperation, and providing incentives for reporting suspicious activities.

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