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Trans-Border Crime and Nigeria Security: A Study of Seme Border (1999-2017)

By Olagbemi Mobolaji & Joshua Alabi
Covenant University

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Keywords: *trans-border, security, crime, nigeria, smuggling, trafficking.*

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I. Introduction

The end of the Cold War saw the emergence of a new phenomenon in the international community – featuring among the list of such evolving issues is the phenomenon of trans-border crime with its dimensions and threat to global peace and security. The dimensions and momentum of trans-border crimes have increased with the emergence of globalization(Simon, 2011).Today, states have realised they cannot exist in isolation and are now increasingly interdependent. This current global trend of interdependence between and among states has encouraged the opening of borders among them. Countries with varying degrees of development in socio-economic, political and cultural spheres are merged together in one form of regional arrangement or the other and this has further helped in facilitating the activities of transnational criminal activities(Opanike, 2015).

Crime in contemporary society has been a phenomena destroying the continuous growth in relation between countries. The 9/11 attack on world Trade Center in America has pin-pointed an era of change in security. Criminals usually plan their attacks months or years prior to the planned time to attack, and this makes it's difficult to find the parent region of the attacks. Crimes that are usually perpetuated in a particular region usually have linkage with another country outside. In regards to the case study of this work, crimes that occur in Benin usually have linkage with individuals in Nigeria to be effective. Vehicles for example that are usually stolen in Nigeria, often have dealers ready to sell any vehicle in Benin Republic. This makes it difficult to trace and retrieve thereby leading to increase in crime rate. Trans-border crime rate is rising in modern time especially with porous borders and unpatriotic activities of security agencies and this has been a major problem to security condition of countries in relation to other countries. The seriousness of the problem lies in the complexity of these organizations and their activities, their global penetration and the threat they pose to democracy and legitimate economic development — these organizations clearly undermine the concept of the nation state(Shelly, 1995). Organized crimes tend to destroy the political, economic and social relation among countries. In practice, African states face at least three challenges when tackling transnational crime. The first is how to deal with crimes that emanate from outside their various jurisdictions. The second concerns investigating crime with a transnational element and the third involving tracing and then recovering the proceeds of crime that have been moved out of the country where the crime occurred (Hatchard, 2006).

There have been numerous crimes associated with trans-border crime. Trans-border-crime includes the narcotics trade and money laundering, and their connections to illegal migration and people trafficking(Styan., 2007). Others are women and child trafficking, smuggling (small and light weapons, food items, vehicles among others). The proliferation of arms in West Africa is assisted by plentiful supplies from current and past conflict zones, corrupt law enforcement and military personnel selling their weapons, and growing domestic artisan production from Senegal, Guinea, Ghana and Nigeria, which passes down established trade route (Vines, 2005). Cyber-crime (419 scam) which Former Secretary of State of the United

Author α σ: Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State.
e-mails: olagbemi@stu.cu.edu.ngm, Joshua.alabi@cu.edu.ng

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States, Colin Powell, has referred to Nigeria as "a nation of scammers(Glickman., 2005)is another example of trans-border crime. Prostitution and child trafficking is also a major issue linked in current international agreements.

The porosity of African borders had been one major issue affecting the development of the continent, West Africa in particular. There is no effective policy to curtail the rate at which people migrate and transact trade without being duly checked at the borders. Various scholars have researched on the safety at the borders and likewise the rate at which crimes are perpetrated but adequate attention is not given to the security personnel across the border areas. The Seme Border is demarcated without any clear cut policy to back it up and the security personnel safe guarding the area are not efficient. The security personnel- Customs, Immigration, FRSC, Army, Navy are been designated to various out post on both sides of the borders but their activities needs to be questioned. Furthermore, the challenges of cross-border crime on the security of Nigeria are not adequately researched upon especially with the current trend in the international community-terrorism. Every country is prone to terrorist attack and Nigeria has been affected highly with the Boko Haram sect in the Northern part of the country. The porosity of the borders around Niger and Cameroon gave way for the influx of external migrants to perpetrate attacks on foreign lands.

The study therefore set out to assess the concept of trans-border crime and also discuss the various factors leading to the crimes. It also interrogates the effect of the crimes on Nigeria's security and the possible solution to curb the crimes. This study employed the use of Primary and secondary sources of data collection in the gathering of data. The primary sources of data was collected through in-depth interview (IDI) from key informant knowledgeable on the research area and these are officers of Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Police Force, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and Nigeria Immigration Service. Other people interviewed includes experts in the academic field, who added quality to the research.However, secondary sources data was collected from textbooks, journals, newspapers, seminar papers, monographs, internet materials and documentary sources and reports.

II. Overview of Transnational Organized Crimes

Available literatures show that no country of the world is spared from trans-border crimes as it is been witnessed globally but the effect differs. Under the Organized Crime Convention, transnational organized crime (TOC) is any serious transnational offence undertaken by three or more people with the aim of material gain(UNODC, 2010).US department of Justice (2008) posits that, "international organized crime refers to those self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate internationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of corruption and/or violence". The United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime seeks to provide a unified definition that is likely to serve as the benchmark for identifying transnational criminal organizations when it posits that:

Organized criminal group" shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. "Serious crime" shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty. "Structured group" shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure.... An offence is transnational in nature if. (a) It is committed in more than one state; (b) It is committed in one state but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another state; (c) It is committed in one state but involves an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one state; or (d) It is committed in one state but has substantial effects in another state(Shelley, L., Picarelli, J., Corpora, C. , 2003).

Transnational organised criminals refers to those self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of corruption and/or violence, or while protecting their illegal activities through a transnational organizational structure and the exploitation of *transnational* commerce or communication mechanisms and there is no single structure under which transnational organized criminals operate. They vary from hierarchies to clans, networks, and cells, and may evolve to other structures (National Security Strategy, 2011). Transnational organized crime is a complex security threat that demands a multi-layered approach and response. Organized crime groups rarely have strong ties to the state outside of the use of corruption to protect themselves and examples range from Nigerian fraud rings to Albanian people smugglers to Indonesian pirate groups (Picarelli, 2010).

There have been various series of argument among scholars as to the similarities and differences

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that exist between international crime and transnational crimes. Both concepts have been seen to mean the same but as argued by Albanese(2012), "unlike traditional crimes that occur within a single country, transnational crimes are distinguished by their multinational nature and cross border impact". Furthermore, it was pointed out that, international often arises as a result political just cause or religious motives. The crimes are often committed to disorganize standing protocols and not often profit gain based.

Louise Shelly in her work, border issues: transnational crime and terrorism explains that, countries are not always capable to fully protect their borders. The problems of insufficient financial resources, inadequate training, low pay and corruption, mean that effective border security is a reality only in very few regions of the world. Even the affluent states of Australia and Japan, whose island status isolates them from some problems of cross-border crime and terrorism, are not immune from them. The work further expresses how lengthy borders are difficult to guard thereby exposing the borders. And to this effect for example, Chinese nationals are smuggled into the United States through unregulated territory of Indian reserves on the US–Canada border, and Latin Americans enter the United States through a national park on the southern US border that has a limited border guard presence. The same crossing points can be used by both transnational criminals and terrorists (Louise, n.d).

In Ezeanyika (2012) work, *Towards Understanding Africa's International Criminal Organizations as an Emerging Industry in a Globalizing World*, various crimes perpetrated across the borders in West Africa are discussed. To them, child trafficking, drugs and fraud are major crimes perpetrated across the borders. The work further gave a break down as to the history to the emergence of border crime in West Africa and Nigeria when it posits that;

Organized crime in West Africa in its contemporary form is generally perceived to have emerged in the 1970s, contemporaneous with the oil boom of that decade, the delinking of the dollar from gold, high inflation, and the rapid spread of debt in the developing world. However, various antecedents could no doubt be traced back for decades earlier, such as in the ancient traditions of long-distance commerce that are characteristic of the region, or indeed in the activities of European criminal gangs who pioneered inter-continental crime from bases in West Africa in colonial times (Ezeanyika. S., & Ubah. C. , 2012:3)

This was the event that occurred during this period and Nigeria's booming economy had been a magnet for immigrants from other parts of the region, most notably Ghanaians. The downturn in the oil economy caused many such migrants to move on in search of new opportunities. In 1983, Nigeria officially expelled millions of Ghanaian migrants in a bid to rid itself of officially unwanted guests. Most returned to Ghana, but a fair proportion of these promptly migrated once again to wherever they believed they might find work opportunitiesThis work indicates that the general corruption of the civilian government of 1979-1983; the introduction of a structural adjustment program in 1986, resulting in greater poverty and unemployment and a consequent increase in emigration; the rapid and ill-prepared liberalization of the financial sector, including the establishment of poorly regulated finance houses and banks, providing new opportunities for money laundering and fraud; and illegal foreign exchange transactions.

Picarelli (2010) further expresses that, criminal groups have adopted a networked form of organization that is less hierarchical and better positioned to operate across political borders. To him, the trade in illicit drugs is most frequently cited as the largest sector of the illicit political economy. His work further noted that, UN's 2006 survey of the global drug trade noted that there were 200 million users of illicit drugs on an annual basis and these drugs are cannabis and synthetic drugs(Picarelli, 2010)The trade is been lined between production region (Nigeria, Colombia, South Africa) to the US, Mexico, Canada and finally a brisk trade in cannabis resin (hashish) originates in Pakistan and Lebanon and supplied to the Middle East and South Asia.

Abia and Ekong work on *International Police (Interpol) and Crime Control in the West African Sub-Region* also established a framework for the different types of (Abia, 2013)crimes being perpetuated across the borders. These they noted include smuggling, drug trafficking, counterfeiting, automobile theft, human trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, advanced free fraud, cross border robbery and recently, financial and hype-tech cyber-crime The international arena is not been neglected in this discuss of trans-border crime. The international community created the INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization) to combat border crimes as there is no world police (Abia, 2013). Interpol is equally necessary in that the arrest of cross border criminals in their country of refuge is usually followed with a request for either deportation or extradition through a collaborative mechanism handled by the Bureau for Deportation and Extradition (BDE). In 2006, in Nigeria, some Nigerian drug dealers were deported from Thailand to serve their prison terms in the country similarly, in 2011, James Ibori, a two term Governor of Delta State of Nigeria was also extradited to Britain where he was charged with money laundering.

Cross Border Crimes in West African Sub-Region: Implications for Nigeria's National Security and External Relations by Dr. Okeke Vincent Onyekwelu Sunday, Dr. Oji & Richard Okechukwu lays emphasis on the distribution and movement of SALW (Small and Light

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Weapons) across both countries' borders. Research show that these light weapons are easily hidden from the law enforcing agencies and smuggled easily without been detected. To the authors for example, out of the 640 million small arms circulating globally, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa, alone. The proliferation and use of SALW in ethno-religious clashes and armed robbery have killed more than 10,000 Nigerians, an average of 1000 people per year since 1999 (Onyekwelu, 2014)This showed the negative effect the porosity of the border is inflicting on the relationship that exists between both countries.

AkinyemiOmolara in his work, *Globalization and Nigeria Border Security: Issues and Challenges* presents globalization as one of the reasons for trans-border crime. To him, it has become easy for transitional crimes to be conducted such as the moving of money, people and goods across the world because of advancement in telecommunications, transportation and technology in general. The world has turned into a 'global village' with its own peculiarities as well as problems (Akinyemi, 2013). Globalization has allowed criminals to move across the borders unhindered and even continue with illicit business with impunity as this affects the socio-economic development and security of lives and property(Adeolu, L.G., & Fayomi, O, 2012 ;Akinyemi, 2013). The author had a different position as to the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of People, Goods and Services which was established by the ECOWAS Member States in 1979. He postulated that;

This protocol allows the movement of criminals to move across the border and also engage in cross border activities under the pretext of this protocol, posing a serious threat to the internal security of lives and property in the country, as the infractions at the border calls for enforcement of reforms of the border control system" (Akinyemi, 2013:5)

Constanze Blum Cross-Border flows betweenNigeria and Benin: What Are the Challenges for (Human) Security work discussed how the geographical location of both countries aids trans-border crimes. It was seen that, the Berlin Conference demarcation of African divided both countries along linguistic line. It was noted that, the cultural homogeneity of the border zone is crucial for the extraordinary cross-border dynamics. When the border was fixed in 1889, it divided up the Shabe Yoruba of which the majority became part of French Dahomey whilst some of the eastern Shabe villages joined British Nigeria. This separation, which forced many Yoruba into a nation with the DahomeanFon, a former enemy, was the source for resentment. The current borders, a colonial remnant, separated a homogeneous socio-cultural group(Blum, 2014).

To the author, transnational organized crimes were not prominent until recent times. This development has occurred parallel to an increased commitment towards free movement of persons and goods in the ECOWAS region that is designedto stimulate growth and stability in the region. With the support of this work as to the negative effect ECOWAS protocol on free movement, it would be seen that there is a need to readjust the protocol in order to reduce the various crimes across borders.

a) Seme Border

The Seme border is a historical costal town in Badagry between Nigeria and Republic du Benin and the border is as old as the country itself. It is a settlement in Nigeria and very close to Cotonou and Nigeria shares about 1,000km with Benin Republic. The border area between Nigeria and Benin is actually Seme/Krake border area as against believes that Seme was a Benin territory. The Kraka is also a coastal town in Benin and often safe guarded by the Customs, police and phytosanitary. Seme area comprises of NCS, ANCLA, NQS, NAFDAC, NIS, NDLEA, SSS, SON, NPF, and PHS among others (CEDEAO ECOWAS 2014). The Seme border area has been seen as "an important channel for better regional integration within ECOWAS" (Uchenna, 2016). The area is predominantly inhabited by the *Aworis, Ijaw* and *Eguns* and farming, fishing is their occupation.

b) Security

(Lahav, 2013) posits that, "security in its various form as assumed different meaning across culture and time. According to Mbachu (2012), nations allocate huge sum of money to security because security is of great importance. He further divides security into external security and internal security. To him, the Nigerian Armed Forces are charged with the responsibility to protect against external aggression. Furthermore, he pointed out various threat to both internal security and external security of which he pinpointed trans-border banditry. It has to do with bandits from neighboring countries like Niger, Chad, Benin and Cameroon. The porosity of the border areas enables the bandits to have free access into the country. He also laid emphasis on smuggling of small arms and dangerous weapons into the country (Mbachu, 2012).

III. Theoretical Framework

a) Failed state theory

The concept of failed state lies on the inability of a state to coordinate its affairs well. (Rotberg, n.d). In his work, *Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators,* he expresses that, nation-state fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to the citizenry. Sovereign states are expected to perform certain minimal functions for the security and wellbeing of their citizens as well as the smooth working of the international system. The implication is that the state has

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been amputated in controlling the affairs of its citizens. Failed states are those whose power grids have experienced frequent, sustained, and massive breakdown, such that the state authorities are no longer able to project real power on a consistent basis(Gros, 2011). This theory is best suitable to the woes that African countries are facing in the contemporary period. The states have been neglecting its social responsibility and only gunning towards embezzling of public funds whereby the gap between the ruling class and the ruled classes continue to grow wider. The resources are not evenly spread resulting into the struggle of the available resources. The proletariat therefore results into practicing illegal activities in order to continue to maintain their status. This results in the various crimes which thereafter spread to neighboring countries. The concept of failed state connects to rational choices made by individuals in order to survive in the country.

b) Rational Choice Theory

The Rational Choice Theory best suit the research as against the failed state theory. "Rational choice theory assumes that an actor chooses an alternative that he/she believes brings about a social outcome that optimizes his/her preference under subjectively conceived constraints" (Sato, 2013). According to (Marsh, 2011),

The basic premise of this theory is related to the rewards that potential offenders seeks from their crime. This is done by certain decision-making processes that are unique to the individual (e.g. skill) and to the dynamics of the actual situation (e.g. time available). The theory clearly holds that certain crimes are selected by offenders and committed for specific reasons (p. 87).

The subject for the theorist argument is that, "at the core of criminal behavior are concepts of choice and decision-making" (Marsh, 2011:142). Various options are always available to humans in a given situation and it's often left to the individual to make his/her choice. An actor chooses an alternative that he/she believes brings about a social outcome that maximizes his/her utility (payoff) under subjectively conceived constraints(Sato, 2013). According to the theorist, five critical elements are included in choice making of an individual: constraints, alternatives, social outcomes, utility and belief. All this elements are key to the choices made by an individual in the society. In relation to crime, criminals often have the choice to either engage in criminal activities and also not to engage in the crime. An important element of rational choice theory is the idea that people will weigh the possible pleasure from committing the crime against the possible pain from punishment, and act accordingly. This is known as *hedonistic calculus*(Boyd, 2017). Rational choice theory therefore implies that criminals act in a logical, premeditated way, and make rational choices about whether to commit crimes or not. Rational choice theorists also recognize that "the *threat* of punishment or the *promise* of a reward may motivate people just as much as the punishment or reward itself" (Scott, 2000).

IV. Trans-Border Crime in Nigeria

According to findings, one of the respondent noted that, Nigeria has been the new hub for all forms of trans-border crimes ranging from women and child trafficking, internet fraud (419), smuggling among others. This activities tend to affect the security measures already been put in place by the various security agencies. The porous border for instance has been an easy route for criminals to easily ply their trade with less difficulties. Some factors like political instability, economic woes among others encourages individuals to swallow certain quantities of drugs like Cocaine. The quest for survival led many into smuggling various goods from Benin Du Republic, they avoid paying custom duties thereby reducing revenue generation by the government

Most of the respondent revealed that, corruption has been at the forefront of the issues leading to increased crime in the country whereby resources are not evenly distributed. Transparency International in 2017 ranked Nigeria low among the corrupt countries in the world and for the fourth consecutive year, Nigeria ranked 136 out of 176 countries of the world(Transparency International, 2017). Nigeria's involvement in the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 has been a major development in integrating West African countries together. Various protocol has been instituted and all countries have ratified the protocol but the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of Persons and the Right of Residence and Establishment has caused wide spread condemnation. The protocol allows easy movement of people from one place to another without difficulties but through this, people easily carry with them weapons, drugs, and on getting to their destinations, cause havoc. Findings further shows that, during the oil boom in Nigeria in the 70s when there was huge migration of people especially the Ghanaians who were in search of improved standard of living, criminal activities were perpetrated. The oil boom experience did not last long before the country was rocked with economic difficulties and "In early 1983 and in mid-1985, the Nigerian Government revoked, respectively, Articles 4 and 27 of the ECOWAS Protocol, and expelled between 0.9 and 1.3 million illegal aliens, mostly Ghanaians"(Adepoju., n.d). On numerous occasions, Nigerians have been caught in the net of security agencies across the world as offenders of crimes like smuggling of cocaine, Heroin, arms among others are been prosecuted. Others were deported for trial in the home country and all these vices are not good for the country's image.

The concept of trans-border has been divided into various segments. These crimes are smuggling,

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prostitution, and proliferation of small and light weapons, drugs, piracy, and child trafficking, advanced fee Fraud (419) among others.

a) Smuggling

Most of the security agents interviewed stated that, Nigerian land borders are prone to crime of different shades. They spark the themes of frontier of lawlessness, insurgence, illegal trade and rebellion against government policies (Newspaper, 2016). How surprising with the various security operatives around the border area with around 19 check point mounted by the Nigerian Customs, Immigration, NDLEA and the Police, the rate of border crime has not reduced. The concept smuggling have been a major issue facing security operatives across the border areas in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole. West Africa is under attack from international criminal networks that are using the sub-region as a key global hub for the distribution, wholesale, and increasing production of illicit drugs (Brown, 2013). The porosity of the border area tend to make it difficult of the security operatives to control the movement of people and goods. As in the case study of this work, the Seme Border area was used it was discovered that, not until 2015, there have not been any development at the border post to prevent smuggling of goods and humans. It of recent that the federal government started putting various building in place to reduce smuggling by criminals. The land borders are not well manned and it was discovered that, illegal routes are connecting Benin with Nigeria which the government are not aware of. Smuggling take various form and ranges from smuggling of food items to cars, weapons among others. The border area has been closed on different occasions by the Nigerian government to curb the activities of smuggling at the border area.

b) Drug Trafficking

The introduction of drugs trafficking in West Africa is has been traced to Nigeria. Being the most populous black nation with high population, criminal who are not Nigerians often disguise as one. The first arrest was made in 1983 and during Gen. Buhari regime, he introduced death penalty for drug traffickers (UNODC, 2015;Stephen, 2016). This caused panic among the couriers leading to the push towards Ghana. The border area between Nigeria and Benin served as the alternative route for the traffickers into Ghana before it is later airlifted to the destination. This event led to the establishment of NDLEA to combat illicit drugs but in recent times, the agency has been tarnished as a result of various corrupt practices and sabotaging by its officials. In recent times, it has been reported that the activities of Nigerian 'drug pushers' have extended beyond Europe to include some African countries. In Chad and Equatorial Guinea, arrests were made of some Nigerians alleged to be dealing in drugs (Adetula, 2015).

The implication thereof is that, some of these drug traffickers often employ other people to carry out their activities thereby making it difficult for security agencies to detect their movement. These mule or couriers often move undetected and they can be children, pregnant women, clerics, important personality in the society among others. The drug courier are also on several occasion not aware of being in possession of the drugs. They are often told to deliver a parcel to somebody on the other side of the country. Others are made to swear oaths making it difficult to divulge information when caught(UNODC, 2015). In an environment where there is high poverty rate, illiteracy, poor governance, corruption, ethnic violence among others, drug trafficking and drug addiction is growing every day. Illicit drugs is common among the youth of the 21st century who are often between the age bracket 18-40years old.

c) Advanced Fee Fraud (419)/Money Laundering

Owing its popularity to the worsening economic crisis that reached the beginning of a climax in the 1980s, '419' takes its name from Nigeria's criminal code on fraud. It is difficult to ascribe a specific stereotype mode of operation to the dozens of small groups and independent operators involved in the 'business' that has expanded into internet scam, as their activities do not only take a variety of guises ranging from "seemingly legitimate business solicitations" to "illicit proposition for collusion in money-laundering." (Garuba, 2010). Criminals often take advantage of the advanced internet and telephone/fax facilities as a cheaper means of communication to rob targeted and unsuspecting victims of their assets and resources(Addo, 2006). It will be argued that the increased level of globalization is aiding increase in internet fraud. At a tender age of 9/10years, children are introduced to internet facilities to improve their interaction and do tasks easily but the adverse effect is that, through the internet, they are often exposed to the urge to perpetrate criminal activities.

Advanced fee fraud in Nigeria often begins with an unsolicited letter from an official in Nigeria seeking the recipient's cooperation in transferring huge amount of money out of the sender's country(Durkin, 2009). These senders often lay emphasis on his inability to get those funds directly to his account unless it been transferred outside the country. The emails contains details of the deceased which is their best fraud term. There often arises problems and the receiver is often encouraged to pay certain fee like insurance fee, delivery fee, levy, bribe to mention a few. When these money are thereafter paid by the victim, more request are been made and it's the same for their victims.

Based on findings, individuals have been caught with stack of money in their vehicles and are

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always ready to bribe their way outside the country. one of the respondent stated that, the money are usually stacked alongside clothes and other valuables making it undetected by as a result of intelligence often given ahead, majority of the offenders are been apprehended. Money laundering is the practice of engaging in "financial transactions to conceal the identity, source, or destination of illegally gained money. It could also be defined as the process of taking any action with property of any form which is either wholly or in part the proceeds of a crime that will disguise the fact that that property is the proceeds of a crime or obscure the beneficial ownership of said property"(Ering, 2011). It has become a prominent practice by Nigerian elites who often syphon the countries resources and funds into their oversea accounts. For example, a Nigerian governor, DiepreyeAlamieyeseigha was charged in November 2005 in the United Kingdom for laundering £1.8million found in cash and bank (Addo, 2006).

V. Factors That aids Trans-Border Crime

a) Poverty

Findings revealed that, the living condition of people in the country is not conducive as there is no equilibrium the revenue sharing leading to an increase in poverty rate. The rich are getting richer and the poor are always at the receiving end. Nigeria poverty rate is very high that even the minimum wage rate of civil servants is not enough for them to cater for their families. The implication therefore is that, people often engage themselves in various activities in order to meet ends means. An interview with a respondent shows that;

I have to smuggle rice with my car on daily bases in order to augment my financial responsibilities with daily lifestyle. I therefore often make use of my office as a police officer to smuggle rice undetected in the trunk of my car and this has been providing additional money to meet daily means(Adeniji, 2017)

This is the experience of a civil servant who still earns monthly salary which is different from the common man who has no job. The aftermath of this is that, they often engage themselves in various activities just to earn money.

b) Porosity of the borders

While Nigeria's border problem is related to colonial history, its porosity has been exacerbated by the failure of succeeding governments to properly administer these borders. As Onuoha noted, "the high level of insecurity on African borders is largely due to the way they are administered and managed, and less to do with how colonialists drew them"(Onuoha., 2013). Despite this spirit of enterprising and promising neighborliness, the borders linking the two countries are the most problematic because of the activities of internationally reputed criminals engaging in smuggling and trafficking of virtually everything from human trafficking, ammunition, arms, and drugs manufactured goods, agricultural produce, prostitution, and child labour to religious fanaticism, terrorist attacks and insurgency (Adeolu, L.G., & Fayomi, O., 2012)The demarcation of the border between Seme and Krake is through the use of ropes. The ropes are tied to drums filled with sand and after interrogation by the security agents, the rope is been lifted and vehicles can pass. This is just for vehicles and the security for humans crossing is unbearable. Individuals moves freely from one part of the country into the other without been asked questions or been checked and it's through this movements that crimes are been perpetrated.

Respondent reveled that, Drugs for instance are concealable and easy to transport from one place to another as against human trafficking or arms smuggling. The border area in this context expands across the 1,000km dividing both countries up to the sea. The designated border is the Seme and Idiroko area but there are about 100 illegal border areas that these criminals uses in perpetrating their crimes.

c) Corruption

Majority of the correspondent were of the view that, corruption has been behind the brain of underdevelopment in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. It has spread all around and every parasternal are under its influence. Corruption is an endemic problem that affects the prosperity and well-being of nations and a major contributor to poverty(Carr., 2007). Corruption in Nigeria has started in 1970s during the oil boom whereby Nigeria's problem is no money but how to spend the money. Individuals started amazing wealth to themselves and using dubious means thereby causing economic chaos. Resources are not evenly distributed again and in order for the citizens to survive, they tend to engage themselves in illegal trades.

Corruption in Nigeria has eaten deep into the blood system of citizens from the top officials to the ordinary citizen. Recently, top government officials have been arrested and prominent among them is National Security Adviser, SamboDasuki who have been accused of diverting revenue meant for arms purchase in combating the Boko Haram terrorist attack in the Northern part of the country and as well former Comptroller General of Customs. Furthermore Furthermore, high level elected officials and security personnel were found to be involved in a range of cocaine and heroin trafficking seizures in the late 2000s, indicating that both formal and traditional governance and security systems of many West African countries are at risk from international drug trafficking cartels (Aning., K. & Pokoo., J, 2014). Findings shows that, the security agencies for instance have the highest share of corrupt personnel in the country. For instance, one of the respondent noted that, there is a hierarchy in money

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sharing formula. The revenue gotten from the road blocks in Seme border area are been taken to the command which is transferred to Lagos command and from there to the headquarters in Abuja. This event is common across all the security agencies.

d) Institutional framework

The ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of persons, goods and services was established by ECOWAS to allow free passage of member states into one another territory without any difficulties or obstruction. It gives room for establishment of companies and citizens can live peacefully without any problem. The essence of the protocol is to improve the relationship that exist between West African countries in terms of trade, commerce, politics, and social events among others. Findings revealed that, the protocol has adverse effect apart from creating a free room for movement.

Criminals have availed themselves of this initiative to perpetrate their nefarious activities. These have a lot of implication for the security of the sub-region. There is no security of lives and properties, weapons are readily available as a result of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (Opanike, 2015:45)

More so, the protocol has created a space for criminals to exploit and has been a major challenge to the effectiveness of the protocol.

VI. Effect of Trans-Border Crime

a) Threat to lives and property

Border crimes has been one of the issue affecting the security of the country. The various crimes have posed serious challenge to lives and properties. Findings revels that, lives are been lost on regular bases especially in communities surrounding the border area when there is any gun fight between the security agencies and the criminals. Numerous times, there have been community clashes leading to the death of security agents and also smugglers in these area. This often escalate into expanded conflict as findings shows that, there have been faceoff between security agents and the communities who always try to protect their people. The security agents needs to conduct their work diligently but the communities always prove as a stumbling block and it's a danger to the security of lives and properties.

b) Increased crime

Findings reveled that, increased in smuggling of weapons one of causes of conflict in the country. There is enough weapon to be shared around and people therefore tend to make use of it for their personal gain. Criminal activities tend to increase daily as a result of border crimes according to a respondent. There have been cases of criminals from neighboring country terrorizing citizens in Nigeria and because of the porosity of the border area, it's easier for the criminals to escape. Research shows that, members of the communities especially in Seme often lead those criminals along illegal routes that are unknown to the security agencies. Not all routes are been guarded thereby enabling the continuous flow of criminals. For instance the recent ban on land importation on vehicle has adverse effect on those practicing the trade. They tend to have no form of income and would thereafter engage themselves in illegal activities like armed robbery. Robbery attacks have always been foiled by the Police Force in Seme on various occasion but most of them often run into Benin where they can easily mix without been detected.

c) Economic woes

One of the respondent stated that, smuggling for instance have adverse effect on the economy of the country. For instance, 90% of the revenue meant to be collated by Nigeria Customs is been lost through smuggling. The remaining 10% is not evenly declared to the government as a result of the corrupt nature of the agencies involved. Furthermore, with the increase in cybercrime and money laundry, the economic situation of the country is been affected. Resources that should be used for development of the country is been transferred to other places. Findings shows that, bags loaded with money are usually smuggled across the Seme borders on daily base. These revenue which are meant for development but are turned to personal use thereby leading economic woes. With the high rate of corruption in the country, revenue are not shared equally thereby and leaders are not helping as they are the dominant traffickers of money across the borders. A prominent NDLEA officer resigned after Buhari led government introduced declaration of asset of government officials because of his malpractices because he was known to have surplus revenue at his disposal which is not meant to be so. The resign was to prevent his arrest and loss of his money. This shows that, corruption level in the country and increased trafficking of money leads to economic crisis.

d) Increase in substandard products that are risky to human health

Findings shows that, the increase in substandard health products have adverse effect on the citizens. Drugs for instance that are not meant for consumption or have expired are been smuggled into the country and distributed to unsusceptible buyers. These drugs are dangerous to human health and when not properly in its normal condition, it leads to loss of lives or causes advanced health complications in the body system. The era of Akuyilli, the Head of NDLEA saw the reduction of the flow of expired drugs but notwithstanding, the drugs still usually finds its way into the market.

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The use of hard drugs by youth especially affects their psychological state of mind. They tend to behave in an abnormal way making them not useful to the society. This increases the rate of people in the psychiatric hospital which is not good for the human manpower in the country.

VII. Conclusion

In the light of the forgoing, it will be noted that trans-border crime is one issue that can lead to turbulence in the international community if not tackled. The increased activities of smugglers across the border area coupled with arms trafficking is a challenge to security in Nigeria. The current insurgence in North East Nigeria and other regional crisis will be curtailed if the flow of arms is reduced. Since it's easy to carry about, every citizen are capable of possessing the weapon illegally and this translates to national insecurity. The current government approach to curb border crime by reconstructing the entry and exit border post is a good development but the issue will be the maintenance of the facilities in place. The issue of corruption which has eaten deep into the blood stream of security agents for instance has been a major problem confronting reduction of border crimes. If there is no sensitization of the security force and improved welfare, border crime will continue to soar and further breakdown the security system of the state.

VIII. Recommendations

This research have been able to highlight various causes and effects of trans-border crime. In the cause of the research, numerous solutions have been pointed out which will help improve the various security challenges across the Seme border area.

a) Increased manpower

Findings shows that, lack of enough manpower has been one of the factor affecting the security agencies from combating crime. For instance, the total number of agents under NDLEA in Seme Command is around 40 whereas the Customs have over 400 agents. Enough manpower to a correspondent will enable the security agencies carry out their duties effectively. For instance, a respondent noted that, drug trafficking has taken a new turn as traffickers tend to make use of the water ways to transport drugs and the security agency is not in possession of marine agents who can help apprehend the criminals.

b) Sanitization and enlightenment of the border security Agencies

Training and re-training should be conducted monthly by the various security agencies. These training and workshops should be held occasionally to enable the agencies sharpen up their ideas. Majority of the officers are not well trained and often get into positions through illegal means and for them to be prepared to combat crime, training needs to be conducted.one of the respondent was of the opinion that, there should be a sanitization of the border. The corrupt nature at the border area often make people want to work at either Customs or Immigration. Therefore, there should be a sensitization at the border for all agencies. Another respondent noted that, there should be adequate checks and balances on the staffs at the border area. These will enable the agency to act effectively and reduce corruption as people of integrity should be brought into the system.

c) Technological improvement

The introduction of modern technology should be the priority of the government in combating crimes across the border area. Due to the vast area of borders, developed countries often engage in the use of improved technology like cameras, robots, scanners among others. Sniffing dogs are trained especially by drug related agencies to easily help detect illegal materials. A central data base and watch house should be instituted whereby the cameras are been installed in hidden selected places. The communities if aware might destroy it but it should be strategically place. New machine that can scan vehicles and humans should be introduced and it will make the job of the security agent easier and reduces crime.

d) Improve welfares

Finding revealed that, the welfare situation of security agents are not been taken care of very well. One of the respondent noted that, they are not well taken care and there is no equality among the security agencies. For instance, finding shows that the Customs and Immigration have in their possession more patrol vehicle as against the police and very poor with NDLEA. The NDLEA have in their possession just one patrol vehicle in their command. This will definitely tend to reduce their efficiency as their no is even small. Staffs are not well paid leading to most of them turning into illegal means of livelihood. When there is a well structure welfare package for the agencies, this will increase their efficiency and will reduce corruption. Annual promotion should be introduced as findings shows that, most of the agents are not evenly promoted and those promoted usually pay certain amount of money before their promotion is been done.

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