



**ARMED BANDITRY AND BORDER MONITORING:  
CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIA'S SECURITY, PEACE  
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract:**

The greatest challenge facing Nigeria today is international terrorism that is aided by religious extremism, porosity of borderline and cross-border security challenges and crime. Indeed, the existence of porous borders and cross-border and frontier activities in Nigeria has aided crimes and security challenges across Nigerian borders for long without any specific solutions. This paper examines the security challenges and the socio-economic effects of insurgency and armed banditry in Nigeria. The country as a nation state is under a severe internal socio economic and security threat. At a more general level, the threat has social, economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation's stability, and can be traced to the ethnic militia armies, ethnic and religious conflicts, poverty, terrorism, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation. The efforts of the government to eradicate insurgency, banditry and corruption have been slow and costly in terms of public funds spent, lives and properties lost. This has made the citizenry to question, the efficiency of the menace. Using frustration-aggression theory, the paper then revealed that the major criminal activities in Nigeria borders are smuggling of contraband goods and illegal immigrants, trafficking in weapons and human parts, drug trafficking, vehicle crime, trafficking of illegally exploited natural resources, including the illicit trade in timber, oil and diamond among others. This growth and flourishing entry without proper check or monitoring, has brought about insurgency, armed banditry, kidnapping and corruption, etc. which has become a problem of security as a

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result of these borderless-borders in Nigeria, with armed banditry becoming one of the most intractable challenges facing the country today. There are many speculations that the groups may have found their way through our porous borders. Therefore, the study probes into the nature of Nigeria borders using Historical/descriptive method of research and analysis in *Armed Banditry and Border Monitoring: Challenges for Nigeria's Security, Peace and Sustainable Development*. The study data were collected through documentation of secondary sources, including review of related literature journals and write-ups even as it built on the findings of already existing works about emerging security threats in Nigeria. The study is concluded by recommending among others that the country should evolve a sustainable social security system which will discourage public office holders from engaging in corruption, with good information sharing techniques providing gainful employment opportunities for the citizenry, etc.

**Keywords:** armed banditry, border monitoring, Nigeria, sustainable development

## 1. Introduction

Armed banditry is the act of attacking people on highways and on transit points, storming and ransacking of whole villages, stealing hundreds of cattle, with extortion, kidnapping, robbery, murder and the likes. The activities of armed banditry in the Nigerian states, have been worrisome for Nigeria's security, peace and sustainable development even as these states have been struggling with the menace since 2011-to-2017 where its operations increased, and lives and property have been lost to armed banditry in the affected regions of Nigeria till date.

States on the contrary, have a primary role of protecting its citizens from both internal and external threats like banditry which is one. In fact, the ability to secure national borders is one of the criteria used to classify states as strong, weak and failed. In Africa for instance, countries are increasingly facing daunting tasks and challenges of monitoring their borders in ways that secure their territories against threats of different forms (both internal and external), be it armed banditry, Boko Haram, factionised IPOB, intermittent Militants, Herdsmen, etc. like we have in Nigeria. Today, the challenges facing African states to monitor their borders are compounded by globalization that is tearing down traditional borders through technological advancement and transformation of relations in the international arena.

At the moment, crimes are committed without crossing borders and large amount of goods are sold through cyberspace. The internet has not only made it more difficult to monitor borders and to combat cross border crimes and insecurity, but has also effectively disrupt proper monitoring by allowing imports without going through customs. According to Phil William (1978), there are 84 legal border routes and over 1894 illegal border routes of 1978 entry points in Nigeria. Nigeria came to share international land border with Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroun, totaling about 4745sqkm, and also shares maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome Principle. But poor

border monitoring in Nigeria for example, has led to illegal entry of people, guns and ammunitions, etc. through the borders to perpetrate crimes which threatens Nigeria's security, peace and sustainable development. This explains why series of anomic groups like Herdsmen, Militants, Boko Haram and a more recent one, bandits, etc. in Nigeria, use guns and ammunitions in most of their illegal outings to perpetrate crimes which constitute security threats to peace and sustainable development of the nation, Nigeria.

The recent surge of banditry, ranging from kidnapping to murder, robbery, rape, cattle rustling and the likes in Nigeria, is posing great challenges to national security, peace and sustainable development and have transformed to resemble those of non-state armed groups (NSAG).

Banditry violence has affected populations living in Nigeria's Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina States in the northwest, even extending to some other parts of Nigeria. About 21 million people living in these states have been exposed to insecurity from the activities of banditry. The violence has affected about 35 out of 92 local government areas in the aforementioned states, and has killed and displaced many, with attendant out of school children being the case in these regions.

Frankly speaking, the nature and pattern of armed banditry in contemporary Nigeria, has become so severe that only a few Nigerians that travel or live within the border communities can claim not to have suffered its impacts.

In recent times, banditry has become a harsh reality in Nigerian societies and it has come in different forms, manifesting as insurgency, kidnapping, suicide attacks, self-suicide, bombing, corruption, armed robbery and the likes. Several attempts by the Nigerian government have been made to reduce or eradicate the menace of banditry in the country using counter insurgent force as policy deterrence, with imposition of sanctions to curb the actual attempts and also attempting to put appropriate measures in place to reduce the level of banditry in Nigeria. But despite all these, the level of insecurity in the country is still high. The facts are scary, hence, while about 1,100 people were murdered in 2018 in the six states of northwest Nigeria, over 2,200 were killed in 2019 and 1,600 killed between January and June 2020. About 247,000 people had been displaced while their activities alone have led to the production of more than 41,000 refugees. In Zamfara alone, over 8,000 people have been murdered in the last decade, 200,000 displaced internally and others fleeing to neighboring states. This situation, coupled with the porosity of the borders (both national and international), has made Nigeria to consistently rank low in the Global Peace Index, signifying a worsened state of insecurity in the country thus, tainting Nigeria's image in the international arena due to the spate of insecurity occasioned by this bandit groups.

Hence, while Nigeria is struggling to cope with its security crisis generated by various ethnic, religious and political groups, it is also faced with problems of various instabilities within her neighboring countries, forcing their people and members to troop into Nigeria from various points across the porous borders. Most of these people have been seen or alleged to be brains behind the numerous crimes and armed banditry

incidents in Nigeria, which has extended from the North to other parts of the nation, Nigeria.

With the severity and seriousness of attacks occasioned by bandits in Nigeria, it has been on record that the Nigerian border law enforcement agencies are usually ill-equipped to effectively monitor or police the numerous illegal entry points through which these criminals, who are very familiar with the terrain, pass easily through undetected. And again, that the Nigerian law enforcement agencies are oftentimes outnumbered by these armed bandits whenever the bandits choose to operate (Bobbo, 1990).

Studies have revealed that some law enforcement agencies also get involved by leaking intelligent information to the bandits who operate in gangs so that they could be in bandits good books, and also get their 'pay' for playing their part in aiding a successful operation of the bandits, while some do it for political reasons.

This, has however, culminated into a state of violence and insecurity, with manifestations ranging from displacement of people to murder, robbery, kidnapping to disruption of child schooling and to unemployment and the likes in Nigeria, thus, making the special resolution of the senate, sponsored by senators from the affected constituents to call on the Presidency to mount diplomatic pressures on Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Benin to deal with the unbearable problem of armed bandits operating from bases widely believed to be located in the adjacent border areas of the neighboring countries (Asiwaju, 2005).

The growing surge of armed bandits in Nigeria, calls for worry as it poses serious challenges to Nigeria national security, peace and sustainable development. Hence, it necessitated this paper work to find out: (1) who are the bandits, (2) what drives or causes armed banditry, (3) who are the targets/victims and (4) the extent to which it threatens Nigeria's borderlines, security, peace and sustainable development even as it seeks to proffer remedies or lasting solutions to armed banditry in Nigeria.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The work adopts Frustration-Aggression theory.

### **2.1 Frustration-Aggression**

Dollard (1939), as developed by Yales, (1962) and Berkowitz (1963), argue that people are motivated to act aggressively by a drive induced by frustration. *"The concept of Frustration denotes a condition that arises when goal attainment is blocked, while aggression constitutes actions aimed at harming perceived stumbling blocks"* (Jegade and Ajayi, 2008). It implies that frustration will inevitably lead to some form of aggression. When the aggrieved do not have easy access to the stumbling block, they take out their violent response on *"symbolic representation of the imagined enemy and expressed in an indirect way"* (Hewstone and Stroebe, 2001 cited in Jegede and Ajayi, 2008).

In this case, the stumbling block is the government which has failed to provide the means of self-actualization for majority of the population (over 70%) that is regarded as poor; living on less than \$2 per day and with no access to basic social infrastructure. The symbolic representations include, innocent unprotected civilians, expatriates, government officials (including police and military officials), and public property, perceived as agents of the state.

Northern Nigeria is about the most poverty stricken part of the country (Ajayi and Nwogwugwu's view). Unfortunately, most of the country's past leaders, military and civilian have been from the North, and they failed to utilize the national resources in developing the region, as they preferred to engage in wanton looting of public funds. The northern leaders possess enormous personal wealth, living the young people with no hope and no future, as critical infrastructures are non-existent; public schools are underfunded and abandoned. The theory postulates that the youths are frustrated as they see past and present political leaders' live lives of affluence, while they are jobless, uneducated, and poverty stricken with no hope. Thus, they become easy prey to be mobilized as terrorist groups (Armed Bandits), who claim to be fighting injustice meted to them by corrupt leaders, especially those ones that have been corrupted from true tenets of Islam by their exposure to western education. Hence, they take out their frustration on government institutions and those who do not join in their fight against the "evil" system. This explains the case of Armed Bandits in Nigeria in which the group has expressed their bottle neck frustration and aggression as a result of poverty, corruption, bad government, unemployment, ecological climate change and consistent shift in the human and livestock population, expansion in agricultural use of land, among others.

## **2.1 Conceptualizing Border Security (Monitoring) and Insecurity issues in Africa and Nigeria in particular**

The word monitoring is sometimes used interchangeably with security, and border security is a factor of border management. International borders are a security issue for all governments. States are recognized under international law by their capability to maintain their boundaries, secure their territories, and protect their citizens. The ability to secure national borders is one of the criteria used to classify states as strong, weak and failed. A state has a primary responsibility of protecting its citizens from both internal and external threats to their livelihoods. It must be pointed out that the strategic location of a country determines opportunities for illegal activities that exists or can take place in its border areas. Some countries are more threatened by insecurities or mismanagement of other countries borders than their own; hence, the importance of monitoring or securing their own as well as other countries borders in the way the US and European governments have done in Africa (Okumu, 2010).

Border Security means different things: border control, border management, border monitoring, border protection, etc. Usually, border security has been used to mean border monitoring and control, which seeks to facilitate or limit the movements of people,

animals, plants, and goods in and out of a country. Border control is divided into two main categories: securing borderlines (activities along the boundary), and controlling ports (harbors, border posts and airports) of entry.

The purposes of border monitoring and control are to:

- 1) Impose conditions under which people legally cross borders with documentations such as passport or visa.
- 2) Ensure that animals and plants do not transmit diseases.
- 3) Ensure that goods moved across a border have been paid for (excise tax, levies).
- 4) Eliminate illegal activities (black market smuggling operations) at the borders.

But generally, border security entails the following:

- 1) Geophysical control of a boundary through patrol by the military or special border protection force.
- 2) Immigration by internally enforcing laws.
- 3) Migration by controlling the transnational movement of people.
- 4) Enhancing enforcement of the immigration and migration laws by asking questions that assist in screening people using the border.
- 5) Enhancing inspections through searches to ensure that harmful products or individuals do not enter into a country.
- 6) Enhancing management of institutions and systems that contribute to border security.
- 7) Detecting and preventing criminals, and illegal persons, goods, drugs, and weapons, as well as other prohibited items, from entering a country.

Border security is about asserting *"territorial sovereignty by enforcing the boundary' and by protecting 'it through permanent surveillance"* (Okumu and Ikelegbe, 2010). Border enforcement and surveillance include also the systems that allow the state to trace the movement and use of goods and data and especially the actions of people once they are in the national territory.

Okumu and Ikelegbe (2010) opined that the management and security of African borders, appears to be influenced by a number of trends taking place in Europe and America. The first trend is the increasing 'criminalization' of migrants through tightening of border controls to keep out criminals and terrorists. In Europe as well as North America, the 'fight' against illegal immigration is put on the same level as the fight against organized crime and the fight against terrorism. The second trend is the 'securitization' or monitoring of borders and tightening of controls; which in turn have led to increased spending on border security. For instance, *"in the United States, border security funding is more than doubled between 2001 and 2006 from \$4.6 billion to \$10.4 billion. Border security has entailed hiring more Border Patrol officers, putting the National Guard on the border, constructing a fence, and installing ground sensors, stadium lights, unmanned aerial drones, and new 90-foot radar towers produced by Boeing that record images and relay these to Border Patrol."*

The third trend is the externalization of immigration policies: *“the shifting of responsibility for aspects of border control and management of migration to third countries.”* Some have also talked about a ‘thickening’ or ‘buffering’ of the border.’ For instance,

*“Europe has increasingly pressed countries like Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya to play the roles of ‘policemen’ in trying to curb migration coming from sub-Saharan Africa. Spain has had an agreement with Morocco to admit returned third-country nationals who have transited through Morocco to get to Spain. Spain has also sought out ‘readmission agreements’ with a growing number of African countries, as migrants have increasingly come from farther away. These agreements often involve granting sums of money to induce foreign governments both to take back their nationals and to admit migrants from third countries who are apprehended trying to enter Spain. Spain has also enlisted African countries in policing (monitoring) their own coasts and smugglers’ jumping-off points to keep migrants from reaching Spanish shores or waters. Many African countries cooperate reluctantly, in exchange for financial assistance, military equipment, and sometimes, a limited number of temporary work permits for their nationals.”*

However, border security and the management of borders in ways that promotes national security, has generally been given low priority in Africa compared to security provided for political elites and their assets in the national capitals and other urban areas far-removed from the borders. While national security strategies of some countries mention the importance of secure and peaceful borders, few have border security strategies. The negligence of border security (monitoring) and poor, or lack of managing African borders, has largely contributed to a prevalence of threats such as cross-border crimes as African border security issues are distinctive when compared to the other regions of the world. Besides, several factors influence border monitoring and management in Africa and Nigeria:

- Lack of institutions: The management of African boundaries/borders is a factor of the nature of African states and how they are governed. For instance, the prevalence of weak or lack government institutions is most pronounced at the border. Most African countries do not have institutions to manage their borders.
- Lack of cooperation: The lack of integration at different levels: local, governmental and regional. At the local level, most border monitoring and management efforts do not incorporate or include border communities. Some deployments of security personnel have most often been carried out without including local interests or partnering with locals despite their intimate knowledge of the border terrain. At government level, there is usually little or no integration between different departments such as immigration, customs, police and intelligence. It is a major security failure when personnel such as police, military and intelligence do not coordinate with each other at the border. At regional level, most governments do work closely to enhance border security by sharing of intelligence information,

undertaking joint border patrols, etc. Effective border security measures require close cooperation among all these levels.

- Lack of demarcation: Lack of, and poorly marked boundaries, have greatly contributed to border insecurity in Africa. Managing African borders is a daunting task. Patrolling a country's borders may often lead to violations of neighbors' territories, as one cannot patrol what doesn't exist. Furthermore, in the words of Helmoed-Römer Heitman (2005), "*one cannot control what one does not patrol.*" African maritime borders are even much more insecure due to the lack of resources to patrol them. At the moment, very few maritime boundaries have been marked. This has greatly contributed to the menace of piracy in the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Guinea regions. Besides piracy, African states are threatened from the sea by illegal fishing, dumping of hazardous and toxic wastes, and smuggling. A point of departure in understanding Africa's border monitoring and management agenda is that in the continent, most governments do not know where state borders are, their nature/characteristics, and what is moving across them. Because of this fact, these borders are not monitored, patrolled or controlled. Consequently, these borders have become transit points for smuggling and other illegal cross-border activities. In other words, most, if not all African borders, are transnational crime zones (Babatola, 2015).

Okumu (2010) outlined Key issues in border monitoring and management in Africa to be:

- Human smuggling in assisting clients for a fee to cross borders, and human trafficking in facilitating crossing of borders for employment, etc. which is usually exploitative in foreign lands. Victims of human trafficking put their lives at risk to look for better life opportunities in promised lands by using criminal syndicates. War, poverty and flawed or nonexistent birth registration systems, are the main factors that contribute to African women and children to be trafficked and forced into prostitution or work under deplorable conditions. The most vulnerable are the women and children in refugee camps and those orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Almost 90% of human trafficking is intra-African.
- Criminal syndicates using ships, aircrafts and land transport, particularly in regional conflict clusters of Horn, GLR, and Mano River, also smuggle arms across borders with ease. Some of the arms smuggling activities are linked to conflict resources such as diamonds that are used to purchase more weapons. The GLR (Gas Liquid Ratio) conflicts have been particularly fuelled by natural resources that have drawn in national armies of Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe and sustained motley of rebel groups, some of them acting as proxies of foreign interests. Minerals exploited in Eastern DRC, are smuggled across borders with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. The same phenomenon was witnessed during the Sierra Leonean conflicts when 'blood diamonds' were siphoned out through Liberia.



- Arms smuggling in West Africa has been identified as a major contributor of regional instability. A Small Arms Survey report points out that 'countries with more porous borders tend to have lower weapons prices. This is especially the case in Africa, where porous borders allow the supply of weapons to meet demand more readily.' However, Amado Philip de Andrés (2008) has noted that "*cross-border crimes are mostly symptomatic rather than causes of instability*" in regions.
- Auto theft-in South Africa and more than 100 vehicles, mainly Land Cruisers, four wheel drives, Mercedes-Benz and BMWs, are stolen and smuggled across the borderlines of Mozambique each month (Okumu, 2010). This is done with the assistance of border communities who "*hide the vehicles and provide information on local law enforcement patrols*" for a fee of between \$150-200.
- Terrorists have been crossing porous and poorly secured (monitored) borders, particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions, with ease while armed with weapons; ingredients for making bombs and radical ideas. Sources of transnational terrorism in Kenya and Uganda have been traced to stateless Somalia.
- Mercenaries have become major players in African civil wars such as those fought in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, the DRC and Somalia. Some mercenaries have fought in most of these civil wars after easily crossing from one Conflict Theater to the other.
- Drug Trafficking-Africa, has become a major transshipment route of drugs that are carefully disguised to hide their origins and avoid an inspection. Almost all African countries lack the advanced technology to detect harmful substances and goods such as narcotics and weapons. In some cases, where the border control personnel have seized contrabands, drugs barons do connive with high-ranking government officials to undermine their efforts. Narcotics such as cocaine smuggled from South America to Europe, have easily flowed across West African boundaries. Illicit drug trafficking is carried out using cargo containers and offshore drops. Most African countries do not have the capabilities to board and interdict at sea, as well as inspect their harbors for illegal and dangerous goods.
- There are millions of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contaminating African battle spaces and border areas. They were used to protect borders from infiltration by enemies in conflicts or to deter illegal entry by foreigners. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) 2009 Annual report pointed out that sub-Saharan Africa is the most heavily mined region in the world. The most landmine contaminated African countries are Angola, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan.
- Population movements across borders caused by armed conflicts, have far-reaching security and legal implications. While refugees fleeing armed conflicts have rights and protections guaranteed by international humanitarian laws, among their ranks may be armed combatants who could threaten the security of civilian refugees and local populations near the camps. There have also been cases

where combatants have used refugees as shields and the camps to stage cross-border attacks or to organize invasion of neighboring countries

- Border security is largely focused on ports of entry and not the border line.
- A state inability to monitor or secure its borders, creates a security vacuum that attracts entrepreneurs of violence, and inevitably border insecurities. Criminal syndicates also take advantage of weak state capacities to control/manage its borders to transact illegal activities.
- Cattle rustling in Horn of African region have become a regional security issue due to their trans-boundary aspects.
- Smuggling of contrabands (untaxed cigarettes and alcohol) is a common occurrence over most borders. The smuggling of contraband goods and undocumented aliens is usually done with the connivance of border personnel (customs and immigration).
- Although armed conflicts over borders have been few, most violent conflicts have taken place in borderlands. According to Daniel S. Carik (2009), *“unsecured borders allow for the free movement of militants and criminal actors who spread violence and insecurity from state to state. Militant groups regularly cross the border with impunity, attacking civilian populations on both sides.”*
- When border communities are marginalized and excluded from the center, they become uncooperative and highly secretive, and *“rarely inform government officials on suspicious individuals.”*
- Accordingly, this has been the case in Nigeria where anomic groups like Boko Haram, Armed Banditry and the likes, have been instruments of violence and instability to the nation, Nigeria. With the porosity of its borders, these groups have perpetrated crimes and violence, killed and displaced many, even as it has disrupted so many children from going to school.

## **2.2 Armed Banditry and its origin in Nigeria**

A surge in banditry attacks began in 2011 in Nigeria as a reflection of violent competition for scarce resources, mainly between farmers and herders in the Northwest (The new Humanitarian, 2018). Land and water became precious commodities, especially due to environmental and ecological changes in the area, including desertification. Conflict over resources, including livestock in certain cases, led to farmers-herders clashes and fighting between armed nomadic Fulani herders and armed sedentary Hausa/non-Hausa farmers. The introduction of criminal enterprises on both sides soon turned some of them into banditry group.

Unresolved legal issues to land and grazing right, limited security and administration presence that failed to provide Security in the area, and politicization of the problem, have all further intensified the crisis and led to the emergence of fringe groups who now attack communities (The New Humanitarian, 2018).

Today, armed banditry has been observed to be carried out in homes, workplaces, schools, banks, highways and neighborhoods. Their activities seem to be concentrated

mostly in towns, cities, urban centres and major highways, although they also rake rural communities as well. The bandits can also be said to operate from hills and bushes, bush paths and between villages. They have no fixed abode while or during their operations. They also use sophisticated weapons, while some do not have such but carry cutlasses, and others carry such guns and ammunitions used by the Security agents (Anonymous, 2020).

It is believed that some influential Nigerians fund the activities and operations of Bandits in Nigeria as some soldiers and Government officials have been alleged to be sponsors of banditry activities. Hence, they supply Military uniforms and arms to bandits to aid their operation (Anonymous, 2020). The Governor of Zamfara, Bello Matawalle, was once asked by the Chairman of Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Chief Audu Ogbah, to without fear, name the sponsors of Armed Bandits in Nigeria ([www.internetnews.com](http://www.internetnews.com)). Again, it is believed by some quarters that Armed Bandits have International sponsors as they render aid in terms of supplying arms (guns and ammunitions) to facilitate their operations in Nigeria and her neighboring states. Most of these supports and sponsors also come through sending in a certain number of their recruited/indoctrinated men, who come in through the porous borders of Nigeria without proper border security/monitoring to perpetrate crimes of different sorts, a clog to peace and sustainable development.

### **2.3 Causes and triggers of Armed Banditry in Nigeria**

Studies reveal that many factors account for banditry and social conflicts. This include: ecological climate change and consistent shift in the human and livestock population; expansion in agricultural use of land; weak state capacity and provision of security; proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWS); rise of criminality and insecurity in rural areas; the weakening or collapse of informal conflict resolution mechanisms; border porosity and lack of proper border monitoring/policing.

It is also revealed that rural banditry has international dimensions and support as social conflict is from the perspective of the rising incidences of cross-border crimes, which has impacts on the proliferation of SALWS in Nigeria ([www.nsrp.nigeria.org](http://www.nsrp.nigeria.org)). Again, where there is little deterrence, crime can thrive. In most of Nigeria's rural communities, there are many opportunities for criminal activity. For one thing, some of these communities are located in remote areas where there is little or no government presence. More importantly, households are in some cases separated by, and interspersed with forest areas. This situation is made worse by the absence of effective community policing mechanisms capable of addressing the hinterlands' peculiar security challenges.

In effect, the incidence and prevalence of rural banditry in northwest Nigeria, raises a fundamental question about the government's ability to govern effectively.

Other causes and triggers of armed banditry according to Carik (2009) include:

- Lack of political will and commitment of resources to effectively monitor and manage borders.

- Lack of cooperation within departments, between departments and between countries.
- Inadequate personnel available for deployment on the borders.
- Inadequate skills of personnel deployed to monitor and manage borders.
- Poor motivation among border personnel.
- Lack or poor intelligence sharing between agencies and countries.
- Lack of facilities and equipment to secure and manage borders.
- Lack of office spaces and accommodation for border patrol and control personnel (dilapidated houses with collapsing walls and leaking roofs).
- Poor and inadequate communication channels-most of the border management personnel do not have the basic communication means such as radios or even mobile phones.
- Lack of transport and roads along borders to enable patrols.
- Poorly controlled and managed border points due to absence of offices.
- Poorly demarcated borders; as pointed out above, more than 75% of African boundaries are poorly marked or unmarked.
- Illegal border crossing points, usually called 'mice or rat routes,' are used by smugglers who charge a fee ranging from \$15-100 depending on the difficulty of terrain and presence of border security personnel.
- Porosity of borders: *"The porosity of the land borders is perceived by some as a danger and vulnerability, but for the borderland communities, it is an essential part of their very mode of transnational existence, of their social and economic life and of the cultural uniqueness that conform to their identity and livelihoods. An indiscriminate attempt at closing up that porosity becomes a threat to the borderland form of life."* Daniel Hernández Joseph (2007) adds that *"the dynamism produced by these borderland communities, expands the challenges and demands of border management beyond the traditional issues of law enforcement and surveillance (border monitoring and maintenance) into the whole greater agenda of public administration: health, education, infrastructure, social and economic development, culture, arts, and most notably trade and transnational modes of production."*
- Presence of cross-border communities that are difficult to administer and often uncooperative in managing borders. Some borders, particularly in Eastern African, have become almost unmanageable due to the lifestyles (gun culture) of pastoralist border communities.
- Lack or non-functioning border commissions.
- High-level corruption: On 26 January 2010, Sierra Leonean President Ernest Koroma accused immigration officials of selling passports to foreigners and police of fleecing passengers at checkpoints. According to Koroma, *"a Sierra Leonean passport can be bought by any African for \$250 to \$500."* All these, drive or enhance armed banditry in Nigeria and Africa.

## **2.4 Armed Banditry and its Victims**

The impact of attacks by armed bandits can be seen to be devastating, especially for such crimes as armed banditry which takes a toll on their victims, both in material and other losses, as well as in social and psychological terms. These could be translated into material losses, physical injury or death, social intimidation, restrictions on freedom of movement, and even the psychological fear of potential victimization (Odekunle, 1986).

According to Muggah and Batchelor (2002:32),

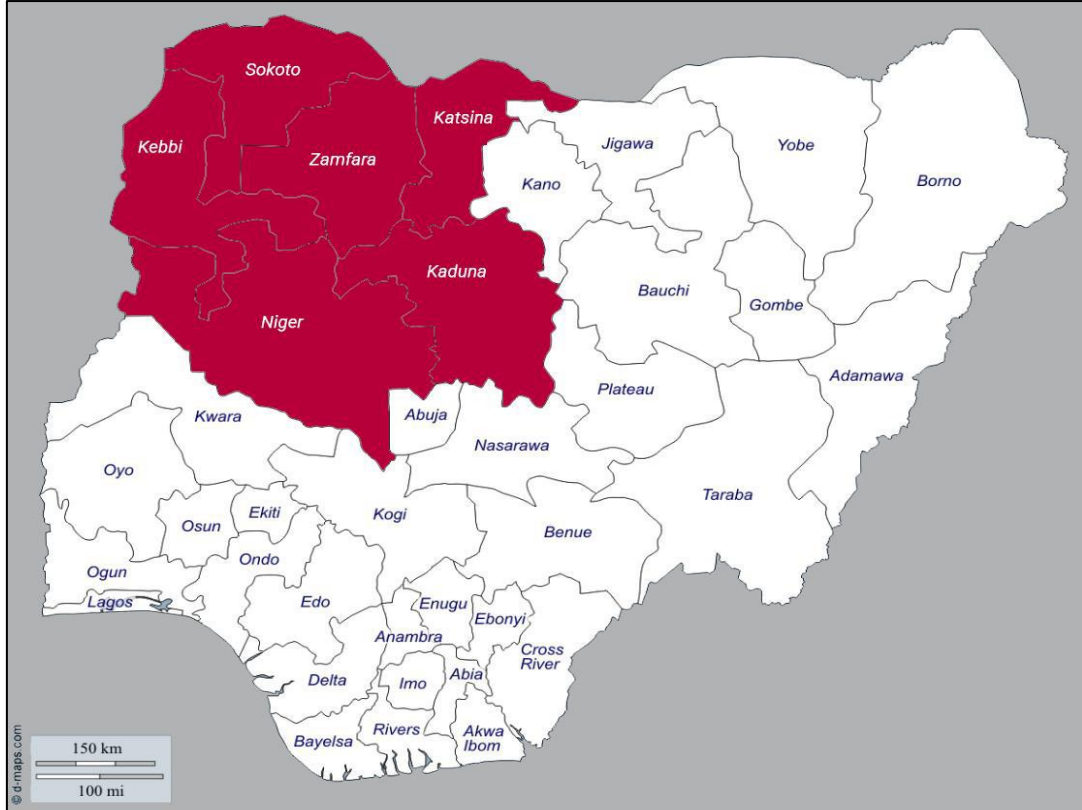
*“Armed banditry can severely affect the supply of cash crops, as public and commercial transportation to markets is often interrupted, and consequently, farmers are forced to abandon commercial harvests. Where this happens repeatedly on a large scale, social investment often declines with broad ripple effects on both foreign investor confidence and overseas development assistance.”*

The menace of armed banditry could therefore not only lead to the boycotting of markets or businesses within and around these border communities, but could also lead to the diversion of routes elsewhere, thereby losing major revenue and affecting the economy of these areas. The existence of small arms and incidents of armed banditry have also been observed to affect the supply and delivery of essential social services by non-governmental and governmental organizations.

However, the map and figure below, further helps in explaining armed banditry and its attacks on victims.

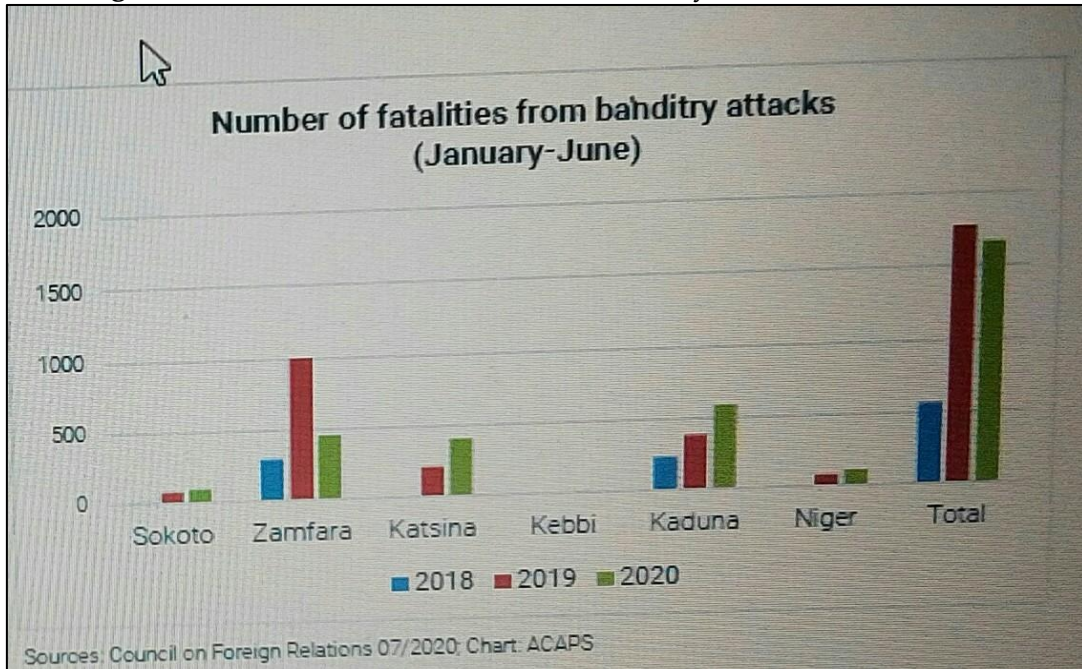
Banditry violence has affected population living in Nigeria's Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina states in the northwest. About 21 million people living in these states have been exposed to insecurity from activities of bandits. Unconnected to the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, the banditry violence began as a farmer-herder conflict in 2011 and intensified between 2017-to-2018 to include cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and killings. About 35 out of 92 local government areas in the four states have been victims of this group who have now extended to other parts of Nigeria. The discovery of gold mines and the activities of illegal miners competing for the control of gold reserves, have served to further intensify the existence and activities of armed bandits in the northwest. By March 2020, more than 210,000 people have been victims of the bandits as they have been internally displaced. Women, children, including clergymen, etc. have all been victims of banditry in Nigeria, together with some government officials, property, companies, etc. Hence, more than 35,000 refugees have crossed communal borders to Maradi in Niger Republic by the beginning of March 2020, even as these refugees are hosted in Madaou in Tahoua region, Dan Dadji Makaou, Garin Kaka and Guidan Roundji (ACAPS, 2020).

**Figure 1:** Map of Nigeria showing areas affected by Northwest Banditry Crisis (July, 2020)



Sources: <https://d-maps.com/>; ACAPS, 2020

**Figure 2:** The number of fatalities from Banditry attacks from 2018-2020



Source: Chart ACAPS, 2020.

Many children have been dropped out of school, women sexually assaulted, while many homes have been destroyed and many displaced, thus, making them suddenly

become refugees in internally displaced persons' camps. The Security agents who happen to be responsible for protecting citizens against threats to life, have also been victims as many have lost their lives to the violent activities of Armed Bandits in the affected regions. Farmers have also suffered economic loss due to the killings, with fear of planting due to the insecurity issue that has threatened lives and property. Most citizens too, have been victims of high cost of goods and products or commodities due to food insecurity and insufficiency in the warring regions.

Agboton-Johnson *et al.* (2004:23) noted that:

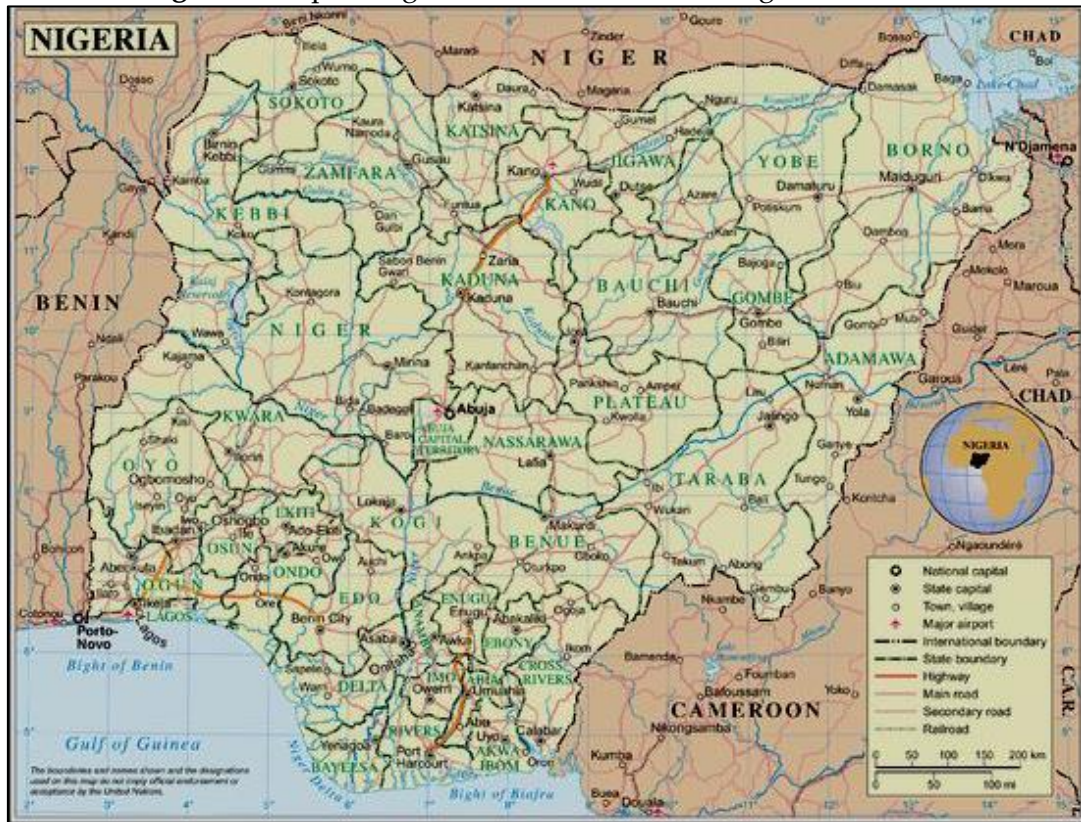
*"While violence has affected all segments of society, the impact on the poor is the most severe. The wealthier segments of society have turned their homes into fortresses and resorted to services of private security companies. Research indicated that around 20 private security companies operate in the Northern city of Kaduna. From 1997 to 2001, the number of clients increased by 114% and the number of guards they employ by 188%. Among the poorer segment of society however, there has been a proliferation of vigilante groups, similar to community guards, and usually comprising of young men from the respective communities who form patrol units, provide security for the community and mete out justice as they deem fit."*

Addo (2006:1) also notes how cross-border criminal activities undermine good governance and security with negative impact on the rule of law, economic activities and growth, human rights and general societal and cultural advancement within the West African Sub-region. He noted such cross-border crimes as illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons/ammunition, human trafficking, peddling in narcotics, armed banditry, and smuggling of goods among others, stating that, these cross-border crimes are 'mostly symptomatic rather than as causes of instability in the Sub-region.' These cross-border crimes are now being committed with increasing sophistication and by all kinds of actors across political, economic and social divide. The loosely structured and complex modes of operation easily evade detection and enforcement measures.

Besides, failure of the ill-equipped, corrupt and unorganized state controlled and monitoring agencies like the Nigeria Police Force, the Customs and Excise, the Nigerian Immigration Service, the Defence Intelligence Agency, the Nigeria Intelligence Agency, the Department of State Security Service and other interrelated independent bodies involved in the process of protecting the nation's seaports (harbors), the border posts and border bi-national links within their areas of jurisdiction and in cooperation with Government of neighboring states, leaves much in doubt.

## 2.5 Challenges of Border Monitoring and impact of Banditry crisis in Nigeria

Figure 3: Map of Nigeria's 36 states, FCT & Neighbors' Border



Source: Google Online Resource (2014).

Figure 4: Customs Patrol at Nigerian Borders Joint Military Patrols to flush out Armed Banditry



Nigeria has been faced with the challenges of monitoring her borders against external and internal aggression such as Banditry. For the past 10 years and more, there have been cases of crimes and security threats by anomic groups like Boko Haram, Herdsmen, Gun men or Armed Bandits, etc. believed to have been caused by Nigerian and non-Nigerians who pass through the porous borders of Nigeria without proper check or monitoring to cause havoc that threatens lives, peace and stability of the Nation, Nigeria. The recent killings, kidnappings and economic crisis occasioned by these anomic groups, particularly, Banditry, in Zaria, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, Niger, Zamfara, Katsina and other states of Nigeria, have posed serious challenges to Nigeria's peace and



sustainable development. Lack of proper border monitoring and security has resulted in illegal entry/smuggling which serves as security threats to the nation, Nigeria.

However, the impact of banditry crisis in Nigeria has brought about:

#### a. Displacement

**Figure 5:** Displaced Nigerians caused by Armed Banditry



More than 309,000 people have been displaced by the northwest banditry crisis as of 30 June, 2020. Zamfara state accommodates about 69,000 IDPs, Kaduna 71,000, Katsina 61,000, Sokoto 45,000, and Niger 3,000 (UNHCR, 2020). About 60,000 people displaced from Sokoto, Katsina and Zamfara have crossed the border to Maradi, in the Republic of Niger. More than 30,000 of the refugees arrived in Niger between May and June 2020 alone (UNHCR, 2020). While Katsina and Niger states have formal IDP camps (Faskari, Dandle, Dandume, and Batsari for Katsina, and Gwada and Central School Camp for Niger), most IDPs informally organize themselves by seeking shelter in football fields, and primary and secondary school buildings (Ummu Ameena Alyateem Foundation, 2020). Some of the IDP locations thus remain unknown or not recognized as such by local authorities. The public buildings used by IDPs as temporary shelters, are insufficiently equipped, often lacking basic services and items such as safe water sources, toilets, sleeping tents, beddings, blankets, and cooking and washing utensils (Ummu Ameena Alyateem Foundation, 2020). Many other IDPs are moving to urban centres to live within extended families and host communities, making it difficult to verify their exact locations, numbers or needs. Rapid displacement because of conflict also disrupts people's livelihood activities. As a coping mechanism, displaced people have taken to begging on the streets and engaging in menial jobs to survive. Fear and mistrust among IDPs have spread in camps as it is believed that informants and spies from banditry groups may have infiltrated IDP settlements, and are relaying vital security plans of the military to the bandits (ACAPS, 2020).

## b. Protection Concerns

**Figure 6:** Carnages of Armed Banditry attacks and bombing Military Operations to flush out Armed Banditry



Over 30.6 million people living in the six affected states face increased protection concerns due to the continued escalation of the crisis. Since 2016, almost daily attacks by bandits have been recorded in Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto prompting the Nigeria government to institute various security operations in the northwest. There are risks of getting kidnapped specifically for ransom (BBC report, 2020). Women and girls are susceptible to kidnap, sexual violence, and abuse, including rape. As banditry attacks have continued, the affected population has expressed a lack of trust towards the army and police and their ability to prevent these from happening. Residents and survivors in affected states have complained that response from the police and army were slow, and sometimes non-existent when they are attacked (Key Informant Interviews in ACAPS, 2020). Affected communities started relying on local vigilantes for protection as a result. In certain cases, people arm themselves to resist attacks. Government's focus on fighting Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast may also be hindering its response to insecurity in the northwest.

## c. Livelihoods and Food Security Concerns

**Figure 7:** Typical economic activities and ferry of farms produce with rickety vehicles and motorcycles which attracts limited losses if seized from owners



Large-scale farming and animal husbandry are the main economic activities in the northwest, with trading as an alternative source of income. Most farmers cultivate yams

(in Niger state), legumes, beans, millet, tomatoes, and rice (in Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto). Targeted attacks on farmers throughout the year have made cultivation and harvest impossible. Bandits have warned farmers to stay away from their farms, and about 26 farmers who ignored this order were killed in Batsari LGA of Katsina state (BBC, 2020). Farmers have been kidnapped for ransom, while bandits in Shiroro LGA have demanded payments of up to \$1,100 before farmers can access their farmlands (Anka, 2020). Cattle-rustling has also hampered animal husbandry in these areas. Violence and forced displacement had left affected communities unable to rely on own-produced cereals for subsistence and commercial farming, highlighting the risk of food insecurity for displaced and non-displaced populations. About 70% of the 309,000 IDPs in the northwest have insufficient food, with global acute malnutrition rates among children reported to be as high as 18% and 31% in Sokoto and Zamfara states respectively (WFP, 2019).

#### **d. WASH and Healthcare Concerns**

Both formal and informal IDP camps need safe water sources, sanitary and hygiene items. About 65% of IDPs in Katsina and 53% of IDPs in Sokoto do not have access to safe drinking water (WFP, 2019). Overcrowded latrine use, non-availability of toilet infrastructure and open defecation are also prevalent in the IDP camps as most were created for fewer numbers of people. All of these, aggravate the risk of diarrhoea and cholera outbreaks in the camps. As water and hygiene infrastructure are insufficient for the numbers of IDPs, and with overcrowded camps, it is impossible to observe social distancing, enforce mask-wearing or guarantee washing of hands as required for the prevention of a COVID-19 spread. Most displaced people either do not believe that the virus exists or believe that banditry remains a bigger and closer threat to life. Across the six states, 1,948 Covid-19 cases and 70 deaths are recorded as at 8 July (NCDC, 2020).

#### **e. Connection with other NSAGs Concerns**

The killing of 23 soldiers by bandits in Shimfida area of Jibia in Katsina state, and the death of five children from a bomb in Yammama village in the same state on 18 July 2020, seemingly lends credence to assertions that certain elements of the bandits are either linking up with other NSAGs in the northeast, or these NSAGs in the northeast are operating independently in the northwest (Al Jazeera, 2020).

Besides, government's security response to all these, appears to have been inefficient. Varied joint security operations were instituted in the northwest but security in northwest Nigeria has deteriorated throughout the years. This was aggravated by the failure of an amnesty programme and peace deal inaugurated by the governors of Katsina and Zamfara states. Having granted amnesty to bandits with some of them partially surrendering their weapons on 6 December 2019, the violence was expected to reduce as negotiations continued (Ibenegbu, 2020). However, the two most powerful banditry groups (Buharin Daji and Dogo Gyedi) and other groups did not participate in the peace pacts. (Salkida, 2019). The peace deal, which appeared to grant more

concessions to the Fulanis while overlooking the Hausa, also stirred up Hausa/Fulani ethnic conflagrations, and increased tensions between Hausa vigilantes and Fulani herders who are now all loosely been labeled as 'bandits and kidnappers' by some parts of the population. (Salkida, 2019).

## 6. Conclusion

Border security or monitoring and the management of borders in ways that promotes national security has generally been given low priority in Africa, compared to security provided for political elites and their assets in the national capitals and other urban areas far-removed from the borders. While national security strategies of some countries mention the importance of secure and peaceful borders, few have border security strategies. The negligence of border security and poor, or lack of proper monitoring and management of African borders, has largely contributed to a prevalence of threats such as cross-border crimes, even as African border security issues are distinctive when compared to the other regions of the world. In Nigeria particularly, porous borders, which serve as conduits for illicit transnational traffic of small arms and light weapons and drugs, is further exacerbated by limited presence of security and law enforcement officials. If they are present, they are poorly equipped, poorly paid, poorly trained and sometimes compromised or recruited to do the bid of the insurgents. It was also widely reported on accounts of current and former U.S. officials and arms experts that most of Boko Haram weapons were either stolen from Nigerian military stocks or purchased from thriving Central African arms black market, owing to the insurgents' source of weaponry, its sophistication and sheer number. The news report further credited a statement to a former US Ambassador in Nigeria - John Campbell, admitting that: *"There are hints that sympathizers in the Nigerian Army will deliberately leave doors of armories unlocked for Boko Haram"*. He concluded that the array of small and automatic weapons, grenades, mortars, mines and car bombs, *"is all Boko Haram's soldiers need to carry out their brand of terrorism."*

In June, 2013, the Nigerian military seized arms and ammunition exported through the Nigerian Seashores for delivery to Islamic fighters i.e. Boko Haram (a terrorist group) using religious and rebellious tactics to attack, maim and kill civilians, businesses, government institutions and security forces. Furthermore, it was propounded that the degree of arms proliferation and possession of arms and ammunition: surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank missiles, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), AK-47 assault rifles etc. by rebel forces and mercenaries during Libya uprising open to acquisition by terrorist groups like Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and sold to Boko Haram and its splinter groups in Nigeria, have made the matter worse.

Now here comes a new trend of violence and insecurity called Armed Banditry that has risen in proportion in Nigeria, turning the affected regions into a no-go-area for most Tourists and foreign Visitors. Hence, Nigeria's porous borders are infamous.

Currently, Nigerian borders are managed in ways that allow arms and criminals to freely pass through undetected. Poor monitoring or lack of management and control of these borders has been a major cause of national insecurity. In order to enhance border security, a number of far-reaching measures must be undertaken. These include: adopting appropriate legal and organizational frameworks, improving infrastructure and adequately equipping personnel and border posts, effectively exchanging information and data, improving conditions of local communities and integrating them into border management initiatives, and clearly demarcating international borders and national borders. Also, strengthening co-operation and co-ordination at the national level between law enforcement officials, immigration and customs services to ensure a more efficient and effective approach to monitoring, and managing the flow of goods and people across borders, together with strengthening co-operation between States' sub-regional/regional agencies, and the international community in particular in the area of law enforcement, sharing migration-related data and information, training and sustained dialogue, will all help to quell the spate of border crimes and armed banditry in Nigeria.

## **7. Recommendation**

The following recommendations are made:

- 1) Coordination within and between a country's border management agencies.
- 2) Coordinated Patrols and Joint Patrols with neighboring countries, in frame of bilateral or trilateral cooperation. Some countries such as Uganda, South Africa and Rwanda have deployed military personnel to patrol their borders while others such as Kenya, prefer to deploy police units. Those that use the military assume that the military is less prone to being bribed than the police.
- 3) The establishment of Joint Border Posts (JBPs)/Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) to increase cross-border communication and sharing of crucial intelligence information. This would build trust and dialogue between the opposing border control agencies and increase the spontaneous information exchange about the movement of goods, suspects and vehicles across common borders. The EU in February 2011 offered to construct JBPs at Seme (Nigeria/Benin), Noepe (Ghana/Togo) and Malanville (Benin/Niger) border posts at a cost of 37 million Euros.
- 4) The installation of surveillance equipment in border regions. Such equipment is usually expensive to procure and maintain, but it should also be noted that peddling of border security gadgets have become a growth industry worth billions of dollars.
- 5) The deployment of Mobile Interdiction Teams (MOBITs) to guard long, porous borders that are often crossed with ease.
- 6) The creation of an intelligence-led border control capacity that aims to control cross-border crimes. This approach will focus on the identification, analysis, management and sharing of intelligence on cross-border criminal activities.

- 7) Secure territorial sovereignty/integrity.
- 8) Prevent illegal entries/exiting of people and goods.
- 9) Keep away criminals (drug/human traffickers, terrorists, etc.)
- 10) Ensure national security by keeping out arms.
- 11) Keep out enemies of the state/nation.
- 12) Clear demarcation of all borders.
- 13) Establishment of border management agencies.
- 14) Coordination of border management activities.
- 15) Cross-border cooperation through economic activities and security management.
- 16) Incorporation of local communities in managing and securing borders.
- 17) Use of border security management strategies incorporating concepts such as Integrated Border Management (IBM), etc.
- 18) Creation of employments and a responsible government at all levels.
- 19) All these when applied, will help to combat all forms of cross-border terrorism and crimes in Nigeria for peace, stability and sustainable development of the nation.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors, whose names are listed immediately below, certify that apart from submitting this manuscript in European Journal of Political Science for publication, there are no other affiliations with or involvement in any other organization or entity with financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript. Author names: Nsikak Mathias Udosen, Uko E. Uwak, Date: 22/10/2021.

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