

An Evaluation of Cross-Border Crimes and Nigeria's External Relations Trajectories Since 1999

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the causes, nature and dynamics of cross-border threats in Nigeria. Cross-border crimes constitute a number of illicit and ill-famed activities perpetrated by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for financial and economic gains, or for socio-political cum religious attention and benefits. Consequently, these illegal activities tend to have adverse effects on the security of the region and nations where such activities are easily and freely perpetrated, of which the West African sub-region and the nation of Nigeria appear to be good examples and victims of this security menace. The research methodology of this research is centred on both a qualitative analysis/review of relevant secondary literatures and a quantitative analysis of generated data using the questionnaire design research instrument. The data collated from the survey were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentage. The findings gathered from the quantitative survey on the causes of cross-border crime in Nigeria, and the impact of cross-border crime on Nigeria's external relations indicated that, the issue of cross-border crime could be attributed to so many factors including: greed/ desire for financial gain, unemployment/poverty rate, economic deprivation, porosity of the national borders, bad governance/corruption, among others.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penyebab, sifat, dan dinamika ancaman lintas batas di Nigeria. Kejahatan lintas batas mencakup sejumlah aktivitas ilegal dan terkenal buruk yang dilakukan oleh individu dan kelompok di seluruh perbatasan nasional dan internasional, baik untuk keuntungan finansial dan ekonomi, atau untuk perhatian dan manfaat sosial-politik dan keagamaan. Akibatnya, aktivitas ilegal ini cenderung berdampak buruk pada keamanan wilayah dan negara tempat aktivitas tersebut mudah dan bebas dilakukan, di mana sub-wilayah Afrika Barat dan negara Nigeria tampaknya menjadi contoh yang baik dan korban dari ancaman keamanan ini. Metodologi penelitian ini berpusat pada analisis/ulasan kualitatif literatur sekunder yang relevan dan analisis kuantitatif data yang dihasilkan menggunakan instrumen penelitian desain kuesioner. Data yang dikumpulkan dari survei dianalisis secara deskriptif menggunakan frekuensi dan persentase. Temuan yang diperoleh dari survei kuantitatif tentang penyebab kejahatan lintas batas di Nigeria, dan dampak kejahatan lintas batas terhadap hubungan luar negeri Nigeria menunjukkan bahwa masalah kejahatan lintas batas dapat dikaitkan dengan banyak faktor, termasuk: keserakahan/keinginan untuk mendapatkan keuntungan finansial, tingkat pengangguran/kemiskinan, kekurangan ekonomi, lemahnya pengawasan perbatasan nasional, tata pemerintahan yang buruk/korupsi, dan lain-lain.

Keywords

Cross-Border Crimes, External Relations, National Security, Nigeria

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Introduction

In the advent of globalization and the eruption in information technologies, new security related menaces have surfaced that are to a considerable degree independent of national boundaries. Hence, a new kind of war is waged in every nation of the world, considering the fact that the prime threats to national security is perceived to have changed fundamentally. These security threats no longer stem from the previously known territorial and ideological disputes among nation-states, but from how swift and far globalization, technological threats and criminal networks both internationally and locally have grown to challenge the autonomy of nation-states (Zalur et al 2002). For instance, the security and conflict issues of Nigeria today seems persistent and intractable, although after a decade of laxity and smugness, reality only seems to have caused us to lay hold on the fact that the new threats to national security have essentially evolved from the traditional aggression to asymmetric form of aggression, and that our fight for survival is under a catastrophic danger. Hence, the discourse on national security and everything connected to it, considering the dynamic and uncertainty of the present security environment, packed with a host of unconventional threats and challenges which cuts across national borders and having the potential to grow more dangerous and deadly to any nation's development if not properly managed. (Pandya et al 2008:39).

With the emergence and rapid growth of the menace of cross-border crimes, there has been an increasing concern about its nature and influence in the international community as a variety of expositions have been proposed for its increase. For instance, in this era of globalisation, it is proposed that the stimulant for cross-border crimes is on the increase based on the fact that they have been able to identify the avenues to gain much reward from their illicit activities outside their traditional boundaries.

Thus, these cross-border crimes are generally symptomatic as opposed to being the cause of uncertainty in the nation. Van (2002) noted that the high level of accessible and expendable income in the Western world of Europe and America (especially North America) tend to generate a marketing chance and avenue for illegal trade for the rest of the world, especially in developing and underdeveloped nations and regions like Africa. Thus, cross-border crime is not limited to the trade in illicit drugs and trafficking in arms, but extends to all criminal currencies, ranging from money laundering and other corrupt practises (Julins 2002). The flow of cross-border crime is also not one sided, in the sense that the more developed export corruption as a crime as well as import it, especially to the vulnerable nations of the world. Yet, citizens and corporations from the most developed countries would scarcely appear in any worldwide most wanted list (Boister 2003).

Howbeit, Cross-border crimes in Nigeria and the West African sub-region could be judged to have been in existence since the 1970s (Amado 2008:205). According to Okeke and Okechukwu (2014:8) Cross-border crime first manifested itself in the form of individuals or groups of traders, businessmen and women smuggling goods across the borders in the sub-region. These activities ultimately undertook alarming proportions when human trafficking for the purpose of domestic slaves and illegal sexual activities was introduced, followed by narcotics peddling and car robbery by criminal syndicates (Amado 2008:205). The outburst of intra-state conflicts in the region starting with the Liberian civil war in 1989, further brought an added advantage for small arms smuggling and trafficking to cross-border crimes.

Thus, cross-border crimes became rampart and sophisticated in the region, thereby creating an industry and a hub for cross-border criminal syndicates to undertake illegal criminal activities and in the process undermine the security structures of States like Nigeria, and the abuse of human rights. Accordingly, as Aning and Pokoo (2014:3) puts it, “ since the 1990s the West African sub-region has become a major transit and repackaging hub for narcotic originating from the Latin American and Asian producing areas to European markets... The region presents an ideal geographical choice for narcotic trade and a better logistical transit centre for drug

trafficker...boasting of well-established networks of smugglers and crime syndicates, supporting the claims of international analysts' conclusion in 2004 that there are definitive criminal networks emerging within and across borders, due to vulnerable political environment and porous borders that creates opportunities for it to blossom”.

While it remains obvious that the West African sub-region lacks the germane and well-judged mechanism to monitor cross- border crimes within the region. The existence of the illicit criminal activities poses serious threats and challenges to the countries of the sub-region. This is present in areas such as lapses in national security apparatuses, uncoordinated state security agencies, weak border systems and weak collaborative efforts. The United Nation's Secretary General's Report in March 2004 on the ways to combat sub-regional and cross-border crimes rightly identified major cross-border problems, which include the continuous weakening of the security sector, the proliferation of roadblocks, youth unemployment, social exclusion and environmental degradation, as well as explosive remnants of war. (Amando 2008:204).

Unfortunately, Nigeria as a nation also share in this experience. Nigeria has and is still suffering severely from cross-border crimes as both the national, human and economic security, as well as her external relations are being affected. The nation's porous borders with its numerous 'potholes' are often utilized by smugglers and other criminal syndicates, especially in the areas of contraband smuggling, human trafficking and kidnaping. A good example is the shocking revelation of some not too lucky survivors of kidnapping that were adopted by a group of kidnapers who were alleged to have come from neighbouring Country-Niger; who could neither speak English nor Hausa. These kidnapers allegedly claimed to have been smuggled into Nigeria during the 2015 electioneering by some influential Nigerians on what they regarded as special assignment. (Okwara 2021:73). The North-eastern part of the Nigerian border which has the highest cluster of border towns is adjudged as the most primitive due to its difficult terrain, lowest literacy level, highest poverty and highest unemployment rate.

Consequently, as observed by Styan (2007) these Cross-border crimes which take the form of narcotic peddling, small arms and light weapons smuggling, human trafficking and kidnapping, as well as illegal migration have severely created all sorts of security challenges and impacts in Nigeria in recent times. Also, Onuoha (2013) affirms that “large bands of gunmen, remnants of rebel wars in Niger, Chad and in the Sahel in the last two decades have in no small measure slipped into Nigeria where they have transformed into sophisticated criminal syndicates like bandits and insurgency groups, making major highways and isolated towns/villages a safe haven for themselves”. Furthermore, according to Bayard et al (1999) and Williams (1998), Cross-border criminal activities and operations have become even more strong and conspicuous since the 1980s and that Nigerians are listed amongst the top ranking global organized criminal syndicates.

Again, a report by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in September 2017 indicated that “an estimate of 7.5 percent of Africa's illegal arms and 70 percent of over 10 million illegal weapons in circulation in West Africa, 90 per cent of which are in the hands of non-state actors, are in Nigeria”. Similarly, a pointer to this can be traced back to the incidence of January 31st, 2017 when the Nigeria Customs Service affirmed the interception and impounding of 661 Pump Action Rifles imported from China into Nigeria. (Taiwo, 2021). It therefore appears safe to adjudge that the impacts of cross-border crimes in Nigeria are as numerous as her neighbouring states. Thus, in a time when every nation of the earth is agitated in making sustainable efforts to develop and to protect their security and sovereignty, the effects of the phenomenon are likely to overwhelm the capabilities and image of most individual nations as it is utterly daunting and niggling, demanding a concerted effort. It is therefore based on this background that this study seeks to examine the impact of Cross-border crimes on Nigeria and her external relations.

According to research, out of the 500million weapons (small arms and weapons) circulating in West Africa, about 350million which represents 70% of it can be located in Nigeria (UNREC and UNDP Reports 07/10/2017). Thus, West Africa's so-called superpower; Nigeria continues to face serious security threats from cross-border crimes and operations. African countries generally at one point or another have equally experienced direct and indirect impact from the proliferation arms and other organised criminal activities in the continent that have resulted in the destruction of lives and properties. Yet, even when the death and injury of lives are not recorded, organised criminal activities like illicit trafficking and small arms proliferation / misuse have dramatically and consequentially impacted on some country's or on the region's landscape, as well as the external image/ relations as it is with the case of Nigeria.

The menace and proliferation of small arms by criminal syndicates in Nigeria is judged to undermine national security and development (economic and social development), thereby contributing to the displacement of citizens in their own country in places where violence has erupted following the activities of criminal syndicates and insurgents, majorly as a result of the quick and easy means of accessing fire arms and other weapons via cross-border criminal activities (Stohl 2009). This, regardless of the endeavours of the various cross-border security and monitoring agencies in Nigeria, the porous nature of the Nigerian border has continued to serve as a safe haven for all sorts of cross-border illicit activities and crimes such as human trafficking, arms smuggling resulting to the widespread of SALW (small arms and light weapons), kidnapping money laundry and amongst others. This goes to affirm the submission made by William Hartung, a renowned arms dealer, that arms deal blossoms in Nigeria and in African generally as result of numerous conflicts which creates the fulcrum for the illicit arms trade (Leiter 2014). The thriving arms peddling in Nigeria and across African nations, rightly explains the source of strength for the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, as well as the current kidnapping and armed banditry activities in northern Nigeria, thereby making it a perpetual threat to the nation's territorial integrity, national security and external influence.

Cross-border crimes in Nigeria have evolved into complex, organized, and transnational networks facilitated largely by porous borders, corruption among security agencies, weak border governance, and regional instability. These crimes manifest in diverse forms such as drug and human trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency, with strong interconnections among criminal, terrorist, and insurgent groups (Sheller, 1995). The proliferation of small and light weapons, exacerbated by conflicts in neighbouring states, has significantly intensified insecurity in border regions despite cultural and religious affinities among border communities (Asiwaju, 2004; Dambazau, 1999). Scholars further attribute the persistence of these crimes to weak state capacity, poorly managed borderlands, infrastructural neglect, and socio-economic deprivation, which collectively provide safe havens for criminal syndicates (Enyiocha, 2012; Nte, 2011; Shalangwa, 2013). Rising poverty, unemployment, and the breakdown of traditional social structures have also contributed to escalating violent crimes, while the widespread availability of firearms has intensified banditry, farmer–herder conflicts, and armed robbery across Nigeria (Human Rights Report, 2002; Agbotan Johnson et al., 2004; Shalangwa, 2013).

Nigeria's external relations, historically anchored on Afrocentrism and the “big brother” foreign policy doctrine, have been significantly shaped by its leadership role in Africa and commitment to regional stability. Since independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has evolved from a pro-Western orientation to a more assertive Afrocentric posture, demonstrated through its support for liberation movements, opposition to apartheid, promotion of regional integration through ECOWAS, and peacekeeping interventions in conflict-ridden African states (Durotoye et al., 2016; Olawale, 2015). The concentric circle model of Nigeria's foreign policy places national interest at the core, followed by West Africa and the broader African continent (Gambari, 2014;

Dauda, 2006; Ashaver, 2014). However, the implementation of this framework has often been paradoxical, as Nigeria's extensive diplomatic, military, and economic commitments across Africa have sometimes overshadowed domestic security, development, and welfare concerns (Adeniji, 2005; Akpomera et al., 2013).

In recent times, the surge in cross-border crimes, terrorism, and armed insurgency has severely undermined Nigeria's national security, foreign relations, and international image. Weak border control policies, joint patrol arrangements, and near-borderless migration regimes—particularly with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon—have facilitated illegal migration, arms proliferation, and the expansion of criminal networks, driven by push-and-pull socio-economic factors (Akpomera & Omoyibo, 2013; Emejuru et al., 2020). Consequently, Nigeria's traditional role as a regional stabilizer has been challenged, as insecurity has generated refugee flows, internal displacement, and strained diplomatic engagements with neighbouring states. Scholars argue that Nigeria's sustained external generosity and diplomatic obligations, including energy exports and humanitarian interventions, have yielded limited domestic benefits while exacerbating internal vulnerabilities (Gubak, 2015; Jeremiah, 2020). Thus, the persistence of cross-border crimes not only threatens Nigeria's sovereignty and development but also significantly constrains its external relations, underscoring the need to critically examine how these criminal activities impede Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and national security.

This study is broadly aimed at examining the impact of cross-border crimes on Nigeria and its external relations, with specific objectives including ascertaining whether and how cross-border crimes impede Nigeria's external relations, examining the causes, nature, and dynamics of cross-border threats in Nigeria, and determining the extent to which the prevalence of cross-border criminal activities and operations undermines Nigeria's national security. In line with these objectives, the study is guided by key research questions that seek to explore the ways in which the menace of cross-border criminal activities has influenced Nigeria's external relations while undermining its national integrity and security, as well as to identify the causes, nature, and dynamics of cross-border crime in Nigeria.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of this study is anchored on the concept of *cross-border crime* as a form of criminal activity that transcends national boundaries and involves networks, actors, and operations across multiple states. Cross-border crime is understood as an integral component of *transnational organized crime*, characterized by structured groups that exploit differences in legal systems, weak border controls, and limited state enforcement capacities to pursue illicit activities (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2004; Shelley, 2014). In the Nigerian context, cross-border crimes include arms trafficking, human and drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism, kidnapping, and banditry, all of which demonstrate the adaptive and networked nature of transnational criminal operations in West Africa.

A second key concept underpinning this framework is *border governance* and *state capacity*, which refers to the ability of a state to effectively control its territorial borders, enforce laws, and regulate cross-border movements. The literature emphasizes that weak institutions, corruption among border and security officials, and porous borders create operational spaces for cross-border criminal networks (Andreas, 2003; Fukuyama, 2013). Nigeria's extensive and largely unmanned land borders, combined with infrastructural deficits and limited state presence in border communities, significantly undermine effective border governance and facilitate the mobility and entrenchment of criminal actors.

The framework also incorporates the concept of *national security*, understood beyond its traditional military dimension to include non-traditional threats such as transnational crime, terrorism, and illicit arms proliferation. According to the securitization perspective, these threats

pose direct risks to state sovereignty, public safety, and institutional legitimacy (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). In Nigeria, cross-border crime constitutes a critical national security threat by empowering non-state armed groups, escalating internal violence, weakening state authority, and overstressing security institutions, thereby undermining the state's capacity to provide security and maintain territorial integrity.

Furthermore, the framework integrates the concepts of *foreign policy* and *external relations* to explain how internal security challenges shape a state's international posture and diplomatic engagements. Scholarly works in international relations suggest that persistent domestic insecurity and transnational criminal activities erode a country's international reputation, strain bilateral and regional cooperation, and constrain effective foreign policy implementation (Holsti, 2004; Folarin, 2014). In Nigeria's case, the prevalence of cross-border crimes has adversely affected relations with neighbouring states, complicated joint border management initiatives, and weakened Nigeria's traditional leadership role within West Africa and the broader African continent.

In sum, this analytical framework positions cross-border crime as the principal independent variable interacting with weak state capacity and ineffective border governance, thereby generating adverse outcomes for national security and external relations. These interactions are examined through a multidimensional approach that links security studies, foreign policy analysis, and regional dynamics. The framework enables a systematic analysis of not only the causes and dynamics of cross-border crime in Nigeria, but also the mechanisms through which such crimes undermine national security and impede Nigeria's external relations in the contemporary international system.

Methods

The methodological thrust of the paper is based on a combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques to give it an objective academic blend. A historical analysis of secondary sources of literatures from books, journals and government documents were utilised. In the same vein, structured questionnaires were administered to a sample size of 90 respondents chosen purposively for this research endeavour.

Result and Discussion

This section of the paper presents an analysis of the collated data generated via a questionnaire survey. Data was presented using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative data were grouped, sorted out and served as the survey data. Furthermore, the data generated from the survey were sorted out, analysed and presented descriptively using frequencies and percentages (%), while data from in-depth review of secondary literatures was cited and used to support the quantitative data.

Presentation of Data

A total ninety of (90) questionnaires were administered during data collection of this study. Unfortunately, only seventy-five (75) out of the 90 were aptly treated and returned. Out of the remaining fifteen, ten (10) questionnaires were damaged due to the fact that more than one option was indicated by the respondents, while the remaining five (5) questionnaires were not returned or retrievable.

The data collated from the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that, 82% of the respondents were male, while 18% were female. This variance may be described by the fact that most of the security and law enforcement officers were men, as well as those members of the public that were willing to respond to the survey were men, with no sort of discrimination.

Data on the occupation of the respondents suggested that 55.5% of the respondents were security personnel, 33.4% either self-employed or privately engaged, and 11.1% having no precise occupation. Regarding marital status; 71.7% of the respondents were married, and 28.3% were not. Also, from the age distribution of the respondent, data gathered showed that 39.8% are between the age ranges of 18 to 25, while 41.6% are from the 26 to 40 and 18.6% are between 41 to 65 years.

Data from the educational qualification of the respondents indicated that, 20.6% of the respondents had, were SSCE /WAEC Certificates holder, 43.8% had attended tertiary institutions (BSc., OND and HND)), while 35.6% were master’s degree and PhD holders. A remarkable implication of this finding is that over 80% of the respondent were literate. Thus, it was very easy for them to singularly respond to the designed questions.

Causes of Cross-Border Crimes

Through a qualitative analysis of secondary the causes of cross-border have been linked to quite a number of factors ranging from greed or desire for financial gains. Unemployment and poverty rate, economic deprivation, porosity of national borders, poor governance and corruption, numerous regional conflict (civil wars, ethnic and religious crisis), lack of will power and uninspiring security framework. However, the presentation and interpretation of collated survey data from respondent who have direct concern with the security situation of the country, and those who bear the brunt of a failed system (members of the public).

Table 1. Perceived Causes of Cross-border Crime in Nigeria

S/N	Causes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Greed/ Desire for Financial gain	42	23	0	7	3	75
		56%	30.7%	0.00%	9.3%	4%	
2	Unemployment/poverty rate	52	16	2	2	3	75
		69.3%	21.3%	2.7%	2.7%	4%	
3	Economic deprivation	25	30	0	15	5	75
		33.3%	40.0%	0.00%	20.0%	6.67%	
4	Porosity of National Borders	45	25	5	0	0	75
		60.0%	33.33%	6.67%	0.00%	0.00%	
5	Bad Governance and Corruption	46	27	2	0	0	75
		61.33%	36.00%	2.67%	0.00%	0.00%	
6	Lack of will power and uninspiring security framework	15	20	12	18	10	75
		20.0%	26.67%	16.0%	24.00%	13.33%	
7	Numerous regional conflicts (Civil wars, ethnic and religious violence)	45	25	0	3	2	75
		60.0%	33.33%	0.00%	4.00%	2.67%	
8	Similarities in Language, culture and religion	6	10	11	27	21	75
		8.0%	13.33%	14.66%	36.0%	28.0%	

Source: Field Survey (2022)

While the aforementioned factors through a qualitative analysis of secondary data represents the cause of cross-border crimes in Nigeria, the percentages in the table above indicates how far the respondents could link these factors as the stimulus for people’s involvement in the cross-

border crimes. Table 1 shows that 56% of the covered population strongly agreed that one of the causes of cross-border crime is the level financial gain involved in the crime. That is, human greed and the desire for more financial benefits that comes with the crime is what allures or prompt most persons into engaging in cross-border crime. While 9.3% disagreed and 4% chose to strongly disagree with the submission.

Figure 1. Perceived Causes of-Border Crime in Nigeria

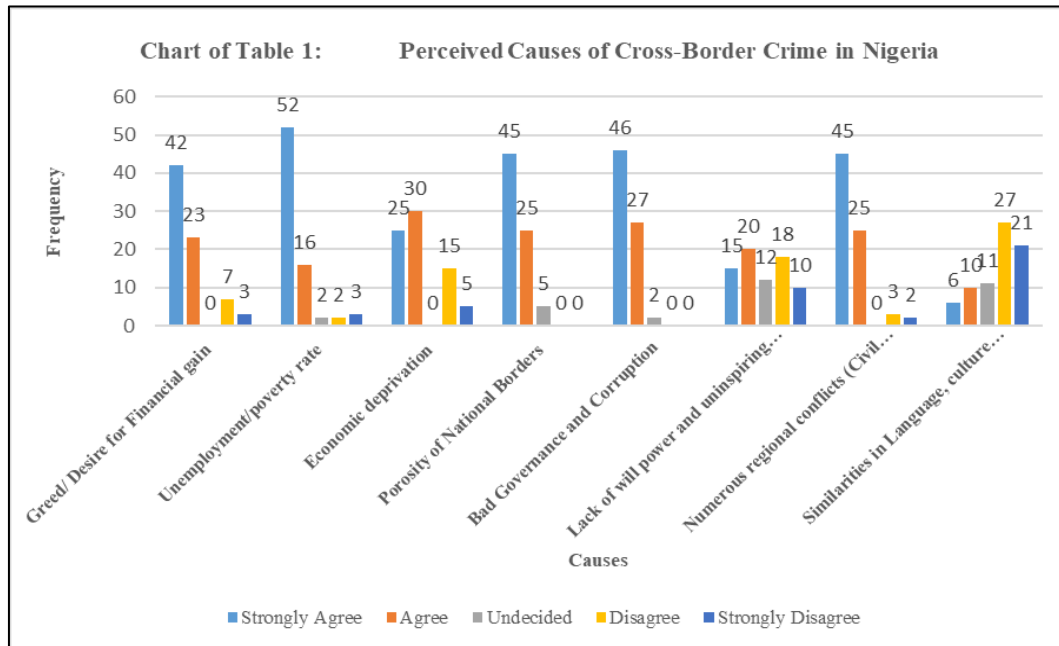


Table .1 shows that 69.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that the high and increasing rate of unemployment and poverty are one the basic causes of the spike of the spate of cross-border crime currently ravaging the Nation, with 21.3% further supporting the submission. However, 2.7% of the respondents could not be too sure of the main cause of cross-border crimes in the country, while 2.7% and 4% respectively could not agree less. Likewise, and as indicated in the table above, 33.3% and 40% of the respondents confirmed to the premise that unequal distribution of resources and the lack of access to opportunities deemed valuable in the society fuelled by the economic gap tend to lead to violent crimes. That is, persistent level of inequality as a result of economic deprivation reduces social trust and facilitates social disorganization, which in turn leads to youth violence and crime; hence the emergence and upsurge cross-border crime in the Nigerian society. On the other hand, 20% and 6.67% respectively, chose to this agree and disagree with this submission. Regarding the issue of porous border as a cause of cross-border crime in Nigeria, data analysis presented on the above table indicates that 60% and 33.3% of the respondent, strongly agree and agree respectively, that the porous nature of the Nigerian borders tend to contribute to the increase in cross-border crimes across the nation. 6.67% the respondents were indecisive.

Table .1. Indicates that in terms of attributing bad governance and corruption as a cause of cross-border crime in Nigeria, 61.33% of the respondents strongly agree to the submission, as well as 36% of the population, while 2.67% were uncertain. Furthermore, 20% and 26.6% of the respondents strongly agree, and agree to the fact that lack of willpower is the most significant cause of cross-border crime, as well as the laxity of and misconduct of the security structure of Nigeria

is a core cause of crime in the nation. However, 16% were not certain, 24% disagrees and 13.33% strongly disagree.

Table 1. also shows that 60% of the respondents vehemently agrees that numerous region conflicts like civil wars, religious and ethnic clashes, have in no small measure aided to increase and dynamics of cross-border crime in Nigeria; first, through the displacement of people and the issue of refugee. Second, it is the widespread of arms that comes with the conflict. That is, internal conflicts experienced by some Nigerians neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad and in a most case, the political conflict between northern and southern Cameroon, contributes immensely to the security challenge of cross-border crime in Nigeria. Finally, on Table 1, 28% of the respondents strongly disagrees to the fact that similarities in language culture and religion served as a cause of cross-border crimes in Nigeria, in fact 36% of the respondent also disagrees with the premise, while 14.66 % remained in doubt, and 13.3% chose to agree with the submission.

Table 2. Perceived Impacts of Cross-border Crime on Nigeria's External Relations

S/N	Impacts	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	The reputation of Nigeria has been damaged in the international community due to Cross-border crime	56	19	0	0	0	75
		74.7%	25.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
2	Due to the increase in crime, Nigeria is no longer a preferred destination for foreign direct investment.	53	20	2	0	0	75
		70.7%	26.7%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	
3	The spike of cross-border crime in Nigeria is the current stimulus of insecurity and increase in violent groups in West	50	23	0	2	0	75
		66.7%	30.7%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	
4	Cross-border crimes threatens and limits Nigeria's foreign relations	48	21	2	4	0	75
		64.0%	28.0%	2.7%	5.3%	0.0%	
5	Cross-border crimes threatens Nigeria's economy and aggravates contentious politics	46	29	0	0	0	75
		61.3%	38.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	

Source: Field Survey (2022)

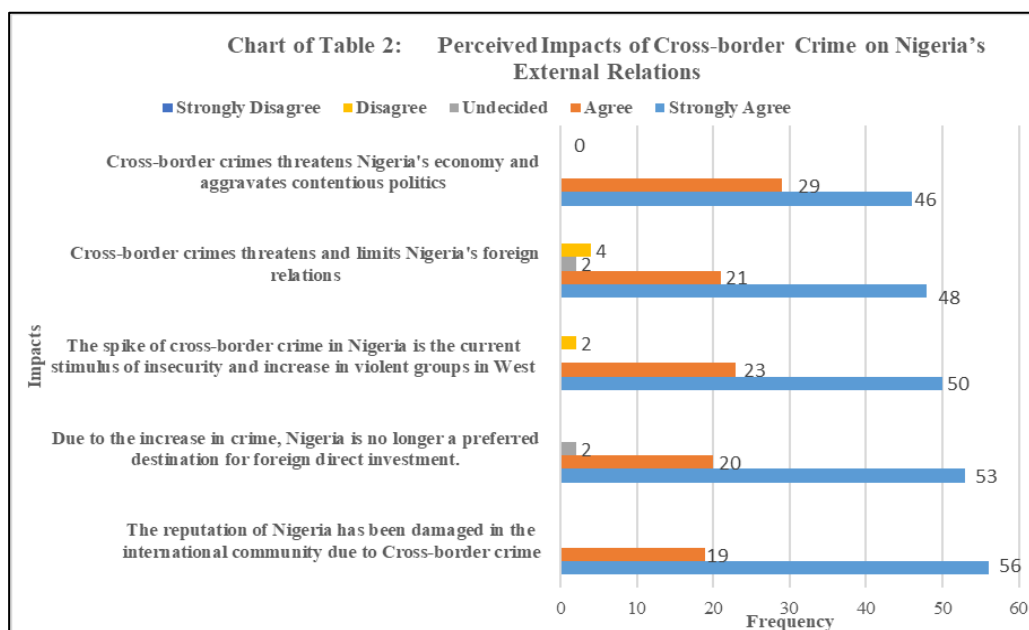
Table. 2 presents an analysis of the collated data on the impact of cross-border crimes on the external relations of Nigeria. The percentage indicates how the covered population adjudged the influence of border crime on the nation diplomatic relations. As seen on the table 74.7% of

the respondent strongly agrees with the viewpoint that the numerous cross-border criminal activities pervading the nation, has to a large extent damaged and dented the image of the nation. 25.3% of the respondent also supports this premise, with no disagreements.

Table.2 shows that 70.7% and 26.7% of the respondent respectively, strongly agrees and agree to the submission that following the numerous incidents of kidnaping of both foreign investors and Nigerian citizens as part of the activities of organized criminal gangs. Foreign investors are left with no other option than to relocate their business elsewhere, and most time these businesses are relocated to neighbouring countries like Ghana. Thus, the impression and message here is that is no longer a safe or preferred for location for investment. However, 2.6% of the respondent appears to be indifferent about this submission.

The table also shows that 66.7% of the covered population opines that the spike of cross-border criminal activities in Nigeria is the stimulant of the recurring conflict situations the region is facing, considering the easy access to small arms and light weapon. Similarly, 61.3% of the respondent strongly agrees that the economy of Nigeria is now at the mercies of these criminal activities, as they have to a large extent, succeeded in scaring foreign investors away, and also prevented our local farmers from accessing their farms. Local farmers are now afraid of going about their daily agricultural business for the fear of being kidnapped or even killed, since most of these kidnapers or bandits, make use of their farmlands as either their hideouts or camps. 38.7% also supported the notion that electoral and political activities are often aggravated by cross-border criminal activities as a result of the ease in arms and mercenaries smuggling into the country.

Figure 2. Perceived Impacts of-Border Crime on Nigeria’s External Relations



Finally, table 2. indicates that 64% and 28% of the respondent argues that increasing rate of cross-border criminal activities in Nigeria will only limit and damage its foreign policy objective in ensuring the security of the African continent. An objective that the nation itself is gradually defaulting as a result of the level of insecurity stemming out of the numerous cross-border violent activities in the country. However, 5.3% of the respondent appear to disagree with this submission, while 2.7% remain uncertain.

Discussion of Findings

The developments in the current wave of globalization have impacted on cross-border crimes in unexpected ways. It has created other forms of violence that strictly differ from the traditional warfare but are not any less destructive and destabilizing. Globalization generally, has transformed cross border criminals into innovators. Cross border criminal syndicates now operate with the succours of multiplex and advance organizational structures by taking advantage of modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in order to enhance their effectiveness, thereby making them more competitive (Alli, 2012). Although not typical to the Nigerian society, the nature of cross-border crime in Nigeria has drastically and rapidly transformed through the use of technology and sophisticated networks, weak or uncontrolled immigration system, and criminal diversification. Nigeria's weak or penetrable border security and system enabled the smuggling of contraband goods, as well as arms and ammunitions relatively easy (WARN 2013). They also prey on the dichotomy in legislation, legal structure and traditions, which seriously hampers with state's effort to respond swiftly to the threat of cross-border crimes.

Recently, cross- border crime has widened in scope and is characterized by increasingly global reach, involved in numerous forms of criminal activity, and expanding criminal markets to include large scale financial gains. This study therefore discovered that the greed and desire financial gain/ benefits in perpetrating a crime is one of the causes of cross-border crime in Nigeria. Thus, as Abia (2013) puts it, cross-border crime as those notorious and illegal activities perpetrated by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for financial and economic gains. Similarly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) describes Cross-border crime as a self-perpetuating syndicate of individuals who operates wholly or in part by illicit means, irrespective of the geographical location with the aim of obtaining power, influence and monetary gains. (FBI Report 2011).

This further explains why the level of corruption and illicit activities in Nigeria is always on the increase, as often times, highly place government officials out of greed and the desire to acquire large financial gains engage in different illegal activities like money laundering and embezzlement, arms smuggling and drug trafficking as seen in the case of DCP Abba Kyari and the NDLEA scandal (The Guardian March 2022). Furthermore, a survey of secondary data (literatures) indicated that, cross-border criminals commit terrorist's acts by targeting and blackmailing any security personnel or agencies who tries to bring them to justice. The current scandal between NDLEA and Abba Kyari serves as a very good illustration.

The study also discovered that unemployment/poverty and economic deprivation are premised to be the core causes of cross-border crime in Nigeria. Unequal distribution of resources and the lack of access to opportunities deemed valuable in the society fuelled by the economic gap tend to lead to violent crimes. That is, persistent level of inequality as a result of economic deprivation reduces social trust and facilitates social disorganization, which in turn leads to youth violence and crime; hence the emergence and upsurge cross-border crime in the Nigerian society. The alarming rate of poverty resulting from a huge unemployment rate, as well the breakdown of traditional social structures has contributed to an upsurge of violent crime in the country, in which the Nigerian security system have been too clumsy and ill-equipped to address. The inability of the Nigerian government to absorb the large number of university- graduates every year into the labour force, or even make available the necessary amenities that may have helped in no small measure, to engage the Nigerian youth in legal and lucrative business of their own, have prompted so many youths to look towards the side of illegal and unlawful activities in order to survive. The consequences of this is the rapid increase in organized criminality.

Thus, coupled with porous nature of the country's border and uncontrolled immigration system, the lack of willpower of the government to do the needful, as well as the numerous internal conflicts with the region. The study discovered that the effect of the menace of cross-border crime cuts across every sector/ segment of the nation, with a ripple effect on the nation's external

relations. The state of insecurity in Nigeria has adversely affected her foreign policy implementation and also had a great impact on the economic and political relations with other West African state, considering the fact that most of them are dependent on the Nigerian economy. Sadly, the plague has also frustrated the Nigeria economy as it has succeeded in deterring foreign investment from the nation, and damaged the country's image in the international system.

Conclusion

This research is centred on a comprehensive investigation and analysis of Cross-border crimes and the impact of these crimes on the external relations of Nigeria since 1999, as well as her national security. The study started with the background of study, the objectives and research questions of the study. Afterwards, it demonstrated the theoretical and empirical relevance or justifications of this study. The main concepts or terms used in this study were defined as applied in this study. The review of the related literatures concerning definition and nature, dynamics and types of cross- border criminal activities was carried out. The study also describes the wave of globalization and technological advancements not only as agents of positive change, but also as the major force contributing to the increase in cross border crime in the country as a result of their ability to devalue state borders. The networking which now exist between most criminal syndicates in the world are now much stronger and linked than before a resulting effect of technological progression on the side of the criminal groups, and clumsiness/ laxness on the part of the Nigerian government and institutions. The research further identifies the cause of this threat and its impacts, while giving an overview of the nation's external relations. The questionnaire design was used as the research instrument/technique to gather relevant data from identified respondents, which was analysed and presented as the findings of the research. Finally, a concise summary of the research was given, followed by the conclusion and recommendations.

The external relations of any nation are determined by the convergence of her domestic and external environment. In the same vein, security concerns just as a nation's international affairs, is a regular attribute in international relations. States are entities that guarantee governance and authority for societies but without order, relative peace and amity cannot prevail. Hence, these ingredients are vital requirements which enables a state to focus on the responsibility of managing development for human welfare, as well as maintain good external relation. Harmony between nations is traditionally governed by principles and purposes. Likewise, a good national image has become one of the trending features which a nation must possess in order to allure goodwill, investment and partnership form other members of the international system. Thus, any nation that nurtures a good image alongside having both natural and human resources is perceived as a potential force in the international community. Unfortunately, the present state of insecurity resulting from the numerous cross-border criminal activities in Nigeria, have in no small measure given the nation a bad image with withdrawn or limited opportunities within the international comity. Kidnaping, drug trafficking, illegal and uncontrollable cross-border migration, proliferation of small and light weapons and other security equipment in the possession of unauthorized persons, have contributed to increasing security challenges of terrorism, banditry, inter-ethnic conflicts and the destruction of means of livelihood, threatening the sovereignty and integrity of Nigeria. The primary objective of this research was to examine the impact of cross border crime on Nigeria's external relations. Thus, after a comprehensive investigation and analysis, it was discovered that the threat of cross-border crime, though not peculiar to Nigeria alone, have gradually transcended over the years to be the most devastating security challenge currently ravaging and threatening Nigeria's national security, economy and both her domestic and international image/status.

The study also discovered that the current wave of globalization has generally transformed cross-border criminals into innovators. That is cross-border criminal syndicates now operate with

the succours of multiplex and advance organizational structures by taking advantage of modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in order to enhance their effectiveness, thereby making them more competitive. While the security apparatus and system of Nigeria remain in its rudimentary stage with little or no form of technological advancement to march those of the organized criminals as out rightly seen in the area of border control. Poor border control system, unemployment, green/desire for financial gains, bad governance and numerous internal conflicts were identified by the study to be the core causes of the spike in cross-border criminal activities. The lack of willpower on the side of the government was also discovered as a cause of cross-border crime, in the sense that the indecisiveness or inability of the Nigerian government to do the needful, especially in the aspect of ensuring the security of the lives and properties of its citizens, has gradually evolved into being a stimulant for the current wave of insecurity the nation is faced with.

With unemployment and economic deprivation being a root cause of this security threat based on the findings of the questionnaire survey analysis employed in the course of the study. The study discovered that the unequal distribution of resources and the lack of access to opportunities deemed valuable in the society fuelled by the economic gap tend to lead to violent crimes. That is, persistent level of inequality as a result of economic deprivation reduces social trust and facilitates social disorganization, which in turn leads to youth violence and crime; hence the emergence and upsurge cross-border crime in the Nigerian society. Thus, the alarming rate of poverty that comes with this huge unemployment rate, as well the breakdown of traditional social structures has contributed to an upsurge of violent crime in the country, in which the Nigerian law enforcement system have been too clumsy and ill-equipped to address. The consequences of these is first, the adverse effect on the nation's foreign policy implementation, and on the economic and political relations with other West African state, considering the fact that most of them are dependent on the Nigerian economy. Secondly, on the Nigeria economy, in the sense that the constant kidnapping and hostage taking of both Nigerians and foreign investors/expatriates has succeeded in deterring foreign investment from the nation, almost crippled the agricultural sector, and damaged the country's image in the international system.

Significantly, it was discovered that efforts have actually been made by both the government and security agencies to curb these security challenges by setting up check points and roadblocks, which were futile in view of the Nigerian situation and the way the current wave of cross-border criminals operates sophisticatedly and terrorist-like by targeting and clamping down on any security personnel who tries to bring them to justice. As well as blackmailing security agencies and top security personnel/ government officials through their connection with other international crime syndicates.

Findings from the survey of secondary data shows that territorial boundaries, identity and human security are the mainstay of national security. Thus, the defence and security of Nigeria has much to do with our national borders, in the sense that when the border fails to perform its expected functions; serving as barriers, it establishes space for different crimes and criminal syndicates to find their way into the country to disrupt the relative peace and security of our nation with little or no restriction or deterrence. Organized criminal syndicates are constantly anxious to device new and sophisticated strategies to execute their illegal and destructive activities at a frequency or rate which law enforcement and security agencies, especially in Nigeria are or may not be able to march with, coupled with the evolution and advancement of the trends of globalization, and significantly the regional protocols of free movement of persons, goods and services provided by regional bodies like ECOWAS. The border therefore becomes just a drawn line on a colourful map highly abused at all and preferred times. This research therefore recommends:

A strategy and stratagem to gain operational control of the nation's vast and porous borders with a focus on building effective measures to constrain illegal and undocumented crossing at the border points of entry and exists, should be foremost in our policies and legislation with no escape clause for criminals. Such measures must be able to prohibit smuggling activities over land, air and sea. Also, it is recommended that the strategies must be flexible, complete and dynamic allowing frequent re-engineering to counter new security challenges and threats. The adequate periodic training and education of security personnel in the country. This is very necessary in the sense that some officers are not properly educated academically, or properly trained on evolving security techniques and technologies. The fight against cross-border crimes through enforcement and legislation alone, will not be sufficient to ensure sustainable development due to the fact that the basal causes to nearly all cross-border crimes have connections to economic discrepancy, bad governance, unemployment and poverty. These three key components are the cornerstone of state failure and weakness, but large-scale gains for criminal organizations and global terrorism.

The promotion and preservation of human security. This very important if the nation is to enjoy stability and relative peace. A country of hungry, unhealthy, uneducated, unemployed and poverty-stricken people is simply regarded as a failed state with angry and desperate people prone to crime. Thus, the government should equally fix social infrastructures such as roads, schools, health centres and vocational centres, as lack of empowerment among youths contributes greatly to social insecurity. On the aspect of the nation's diplomatic relations, this research recommends a foreign policy restructuring that observes the national security, economic development and the well-being of the citizenry of Nigeria as the centre of interest of the nation's foreign policy thrust. This is due to the fact every dynamic policy relation is built on essential national interest, sound domestic base and political stability. Therefore, Africa should scarcely be the purview of Nigeria's foreign policy, as it has sacrificed enough for the region with little or no corresponding benefit. Instead, Nigeria should look towards a global pursuit for the promotion of socio-economic development, cultural, scientific and technological collaboration with other nations of the world, especially in this era of globalization and technological advancement in artificial intelligence and the likes.

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