AN ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA- NIGER BILATERAL TREATY ON REFUGEE'S RIGHTS

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Keywords

Boko Haram, Nigeria-Niger Relations, Refugee Rights, Bilateral treaty, Border Security

Abstract

Research problem:
Over 300,000 Nigerian refugees sought refuge in Niger republic, primarily in the Diffa and Zinder regions, fleeing from Boko Haram and armed banditry.Therefore, this paper analyzes the protection of refugee rights in line with International Refugee Laws of 1951 and other bilateral treaty between the two countries. Despitethese legal protections of refugee, Nigerian refugees face severe challenges,including access to livelihoods, food insecurity, and many forms of abuses.Threat of 'refoulement' and harassment, improper refugee documentation, lack of trust in local integration etc. with these therefore, this paper aimed to interrogates the Nigeria- Niger bilateral treaty on refugee's rights,to determine why the bilateral treaties failed to promote the protection of refugee and completely eliminate refugee's right violations.

Method/theory:
This study adopted Liberal Internationalism, the theory believed that international law, economic interdependence, and democratic values can foster peace and protect individual rights, elevating human dignity above national sovereignty. The study used mixed method through questionnaire, FGD, interview and documents. A descriptive-qualitative analysis was also utilised.

Result:
The study found out that Poverty in Niger, the security consciousness, and un-organised nature of the refugees (the refugees are scattered around the border communities and the economic opportunity towns), as the result of cultural affinities, are the factors responsible of poor refugee management in Niger republic.

Conclusion:
The protection of Nigerian refugee rights in Niger remains a delicate balance between legal ideals and the harsh realities of the two countries. While bilateral cooperation has demonstrated resilience through various political shifts, the path forward requires sustained commitment to cross-

border security and the socio-economic integration of refugees to ensure their rights are not just recognized on paper, but realized in practice but the result is not encouraging.

Key contribution:

The paper established that the security cooperation along the north-east border has improved, and the movement of the displaced persons has decreased, there are number of Nigerian refugees voluntarily returned to Nigeria in 2023 with no refoulment threat (UNHRC, 2023).

Recommendations:

Strict compliance to international refugee law is vital here, which provide that the refugee can be incorporated in to the community and be given all economic right for survival. Preferably, adoption of a more comprehensive policy framework by both nations through bilateral treaty is required to transition from emergency humanitarian relief to durable solutions like local integration or voluntary return.

Introduction

The growing threats of cross-border-insecurity, cross-border-displacement, illegal migration, force migration, and crime along Nigeria-Niger borders are alarming, specifically with the Boko-Haram insurgents and armed bandits, which has terrorized North-East and North-West of Nigeria (Rufa'I, 2018). These growing threats has redefine Nigeria-Niger relationships by mass displacement, with Niger serving as a critical sanctuary for hundreds of thousands of Nigerians. These forced displaced Nigerians become refugees in Niger, with no certainty of right protection, grant of asylum or livelihoods. The position of refugee rights in Niger reveals a complex interplay between international legal protections and the practical realities of a region grappling with protracted insecurity and socio-economic fragility.

The Nigeria-Niger cooperation in refugee is primarily guided by international refugee laws of 1951and the OAU convention of 1969 on African refugees, alongside local legislation by both countries. The United Nations international refugee laws and OAU Convention are committed to "non-refoulement", access to livelihood, freedom of movement and education. Despite these legal frameworks, Nigeria-Niger faces difficulties in proper implementations of the treaties. The central principle of the refugee lawprohibits non admission to border and the return of a person to a state where his life and safety might be in danger. Therefore, refugees are protected by international refugee laws.

In contrary, Niger republic should have conduct it itself with international refugee law as a signatory to the law and ahosting state, to grant the refugees access to proper education, decent employment, access to land for agricultural activities, security and access to good health etc. meanwhile, aids is shared to both refugees and the citizens (IOM, 2022). Therefore, what is not clear is the condition of the Nigerians who have had to seek refuge in the Republic of Niger as there are allegations of "refoulement" by the Republic of Niger security agents (*The Africa Report*, 2022; Iduma& Musa, 2019; UNHCR 2016) and improper integration by the host communities in some cases (UNHCR, May 2022). However, IOM (2023) reported that the Nigerian refugees in the republic of Niger have an increasing shift toward integration into local communities. yet, the refugees faces significant risks, including gender-based violence, forced

recruitment into criminal groups, threat by security agents (threat of 'refoulement' and money extortions) camp displacement, other threats due to Boko Haram's spillover attacks into Niger territoryand the armed banditry, both from Nigeria.

However, despite the risks and threats, the refugeeinfluxes persistfrom Nigeria to the republic of Niger, due largely to the activities of armed bandits, boko-haram and other natural disaster like flooding. This pushed the two nations to transition from international refugee legal framework, to a more specific and the coordinated effort to manage the cross-border (in)security, cross-border-displacement and refugee crisis.The two nations formalized bilateral mechanisms to handle repatriation and protections of refugee, border management and cooperation facilitated by Nigeria-Niger joint commission for cooperation (NNJCC) and other treaties in combatting border insecurity.

Therefore, it's against this background the paper, interrogates the effectiveness of Nigeria-Niger bilateral treaties on the rights of refugees to establish how cooperation promote effective protection of refugee rights.

Statement of the Problem

The despite the existence of the international refugee laws of 1951 and the additional protocols, the OAU refugee laws and the bilateral relationships established by Nigeria and Niger to strengthen the protection of refugees rights, yet the result is not encouraging as the influx of refugee in both countries persists and the number increases tremendously from 258,000 in 2022, to 300,000 approximate in 2023 and more than 390,000 in 2025, all these challenges are as the result of the Boko-Haram insurgency and the armed banditry who displaced hundreds of thousands of Nigerians and pushed them to the republic of Niger as refugees. However despite the refugee influx persistence challenge, there is also a threat of 'refoulement' and harassment by the security agents, improper refugee documentation, lack of trust in local integrationetc. with these therefore, this paper aimed to interrogatesthe Nigeria-Niger bilateral treaty on refugee's rights,to determine why the bilateral treaties failed to promote the protection of refugee and completely eliminate refugee's right violations

Objective of the study

The broader objective of this study is to critically analyse the Nigeria- Niger bilateral treaty on refugee's rights, to assess its effectiveness in mitigating risks, threats and violations. While the specific objective is:

i. To interrogates the effectiveness of the Nigeria-Niger bilateral treaties on the Nigerian refugee rights, protections, and the policy of the "Non-Refoulement'.

Hypothesis

i. The weak commitment and cooperation by Nigeria and Niger republic treaty undermined the effective protection of refugees' rights, leading to repatriation and 'refoulement'

Cross-Border Security Challenge and Cooperation between Nigeria and Niger Republic

Mohammad (2020) argued that Nigeria's neighbouring states particularly, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger,viewed Boko-Haram insurgents as a Nigerian problem, despite sharing border with the trouble area. He further explained their actions to keep the insurgency at arm's length as long it remained within the boundaries of

Nigeria cannot be unstated. But their economic trust on Nigerian markets for the supplies of goods and other raw materials and commodities from Nigeria mismatched their actions. In the year 2014, when Boko-Haram had transformed from a local Nigerian security challenge to a regional terrorists group, threatening the peace of all neighbouring countries, particularly, those around Lake Chad Based. The countries accept the realities and started fighting and forming alliances to end the menace such as MNJTF. However, Mohammed (2020:12-17) showcases the effect of Boko-Haram on the Republic of Niger economy and their actions through inaction:

The republic of Niger securitized the insurgency and acted in the same way like Nigerian. The republic of Niger, avowed a state of emergency in the affected areas of Diffa, and konni,bringing military general as a governor, replacing the civilian governor, in 2015. The republic of Niger took decisive measures in the state of emergency and the effort to deal with the terrorist, with diverse strict actions, including restriction of movement, cautious of the freedom of speech (access to journalist to be precise), banning the use of motorcycles as a means of transport, curfew from late evening to morning, stoppage of black market (sale of petroleum products in plastic), stoppage of the use of Nigerian-registered vehicles for public transportation, etc. these are some of the actions taken by the republic of Niger at the beginning of the Boko-Haram crises, however, there was widely claimed of Human rights abuses by the military and reported by Alternative "EspacesCitoyen", leading to the arrest and detention of an activist MoussaTchangari, one of its leaders, for supposedly obstructing the fight against insurgency. Therefore, the Niger approach to the Boko-Haram fight was similar to that of Nigeria at the beginning. But there is no much concern in the write up on the displaced population by Boko-haram.

In a nutshell, this is how the Niger Republic responded to the fight against Boko Haram. The measures are though with serious effects on the security of human persons. The writer did not pay attention to the displaced civilian populations, more especially those who cross the Nigerian border to the Republic of Niger, either to compare their state or to identify their challenges, as the porosity of the border makes it easy for the displaced persons to migrate, and this has become a serious trans-border security challenge between Nigeria and the Niger. According to Onuoha (2014), for instance cross-border onslaught divulge structure of an originally, Nigerian-based terrorist group (Boko-Haram) and how it is becoming a magnitude of a security challenge in neighbouring states, including but not limited to the terrorist, migrants and the displaced persons. Therefore, to fight these challenges mutual cooperation's are needed. This disturbing trend, therefore, requires an effective strategy and a swift implementation to contain the transnational reach, mutual cooperation and bi-lateral agreement by the two countries on the bandits and Boko-Haram.

On the same vein, Bappah (2016, p. 1) concludes that not until the active intervention of troops from Chad and Niger in January 2015, did Boko-Haram terrorist were thriving, mainly because of the cross-border easy access. Nigeria Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2017), state that the insurgent activities of Boko-Haram in the North-East affect both Nigeria and the almost all it neighbouring states as the result of many factors alone the border line including porosity of the borders, cultural similarities and other socio-economic interrelationships, that looks more of the same

people at the border, and this facilitated the cross border migrationand most movement alone the border including that of Boko-Haram, Armed bandits and refugees. Therefore, Boko Haram aggravates the security to all countries sharing border with Nigeria from the North-East of the country, the challenges in Nigeria, and economic hardship to the affected while contributing to the failing security situation in Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad, due to easy access by both the Boko-Haram, Bandits and the victims of this cross-border security challenge (Goyei, 2018). However, haven seen how Boko-Haram infiltrated the Nigerian borders and transformed into a transnational group of terrorists, legal or illegal migrants more specifically, the displaced persons (DPs), there is also the other aspect of the study of the armed banditry who both pushed Nigerians to the Republic of Niger alone Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, and Kebbi borders with the Republic of Niger. The bandits shared lots of similarities with Boko Haram in the attack's outlook and human displacement.

According to Rufai (2021), armed banditry was initially an organized cross-border crime, facilitated by the Asebenawa, Tuaregs, Fulani, and Gobirawa (all are ethnic groups along Nigeria-Niger borders) from both British and French territories formed the major culprits in this area that are called Nigeria and Niger today. He argued that Communities around Kwotarkwashi, Mada, Chafe, and Dansadau (all towns/villages alone in Nigeria and Niger) were direct accomplices to the crime. Therefore, He stated that:

The upland of Kwotarkwashi and Chafe, furnished shelter to the felons, from where they planned and carried out their notorious immoral activities, which most often stemmed in serious casualties, or even death. To him, the geographical nature of the terrain contributed to these threats and development of other vices by making the perpetrators untraceable. A significant part of the rustled livestock and stolen goods were usually taken to the Niger Republic, Mali and other proximate countries, during this period, and through cross border movement (illegal).However, even the victims of this robbery at the beginning rushed to the republic of Niger border to seek refuge or safety (Rufa'I 2021).

In this respect, armed banditry is not a new phenomenon around Nigeria and Niger borders, nor is it a new challenge. There had always been armed banditry; it just resurfaced with serious security challenges to modern states and human security. In contemporary banditry, Rufai (2021) argued that in 2013, membership of the gang multiplied in number, strength, power and weapons, and even connections (Rufa'I, 2018). This is not unconnected with the porosity of the Nigerian border, as well as the Libyan uprising and the fight against Boko Haram which help in the increase of the movement, supplies, and trade of small arms and light weapons. He also argued that 'it became more heterogeneous and transnational in 2016, constituting members from Niger Republic, Mali, and Chad, mostly Tauregs with connections to Sahellian rebels' (Rufa'I 2021). Therefore armed banditry is a serious transnational challenge due to its changing faces and transnational outlook. In this respect, mutual cooperation's and effective bilateral agreements are needed between the two countries to fight the cross border challenges including migration and refugee crises.

Similarly, the International Crisis Group Africa Report (2020), reports that banditry has had a widespread humanitarian and socio-economic impact on north-western Nigeria and created a visor effect of safety and security challenge in the countries. The report stated that

over the last decade, more than 8,000 people have been killed mainly in Zamfara State with over 200,000 internally displaced and about 60,000 fleeing into Niger Republic as refugees. The ICGAR (2020:21) report further stated that:

The region also shares about two-thirds of Nigeria's 1,497 km international boundary with the Niger Republic, that is poorly managed. Cultural similarities and other bonds between the border-communities on both sides and regional protocols on freedom of movement have created opportunities for many vices like smuggling and other criminal acts. Numerous illegal crossings or even migration, coupled with pervasive corruption among securities and the border-officials, enable the traffic of illicit merchandise such as firearms. These show the effect of the crises and how it affects not only the north-western states of Nigeria but also the Niger Republic by hosting Nigerian refugees, putting more burdens on the Niger economy and the government, becoming a serious cross border challenge along the borders of the two countries (ICGAR, 2020:21-22).

However, in an effort to bring mutual cooperation and effective bilateral relations, the Zamfara State Governor in 2022, Mr. Bello Matawalle donated ten Hilux vehicles to the Republic of Niger to halt the menace of the armed bandits and to improve and help border patrol aimed at curtailing the menace of armed bandits around where they shared a common border. Similarly, the governor of the Maradi in Niger in 2022, Mr. ZakariOumoru, hosted a cross-border meeting in Niger Republic with the Nigerian governors of bordering Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara States to focus on cross-border crime, particularly armed banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling. They signed a memorandum of understanding, which pledges closer cooperation against cross-border crime (Campbell, 2019 in Usman and Abubakar, 2021). Porous borders between Nigeria and Niger are the major factor that aided illegal movements of people and goods across both countries which inevitably contributes to insecurity along the boundary and the refugee crises (Usman and Abubakar, 2021). Upon these understanding and identifications of crime alone the Nigeria and Niger border, none of the governors or the scholars above went deep to identify the forced migrants who sought solace in the Republic of Niger who are mostly from the identified states to know their conditions or even to know the compliance of the UNHCR and the Republic of Niger in respect to the implementation of international refugee laws aimed at diplomatic interventions and more bilateral agreements to assist in their challenges before their returned or even relocate them if they so wished. Notwithstanding, Idris (2021) argued that the stability of neighbouring countries often translates into peace and security of its neighbours, he described how the influx of 1% of Nigeria's population to any of its neighbouring countries as refugees will alter not only alter the demography of the country but also potentially overstretch its facilities and economy.

However, the Zamfara State Governor in 2022 Mr. Bello Matawale said there should be a joint effort between state, federal, and neighbouring states and beyond to halt banditry and they had to change strategy by engaging a joint task force with the Nigerien security forces to win the war against the insurgency (Armed Bandits). He further stated that:

Nigeria and Niger Republic have a joint task force, to ensure safety and security a lone borders and fight any security challenge especially, Boko-Haram and armed bandits, both states has provided some logistics and money to

ease their operation. "We share information about bandits that are coming from either Niger or Nigeria and we alert the Nigerien security to monitor and push them so that we can collectively fight these criminals. So this is what we are doing day at night" (Ailemen, 2022).

These elaborate the Cross border mutual cooperation and bilateral relations between Nigeria and Niger on the border security challenge, the transnational outlook of the armed banditry and other modern crime. It becomes a security challenge for not only the north-western states of Nigeria but also the Republic of Niger. According to the International Crisis Group (2021), the southern parts of the Maradi and Tahoua regions, suffer almost daily attacks from bandits operating from across the border in Nigeria. The report stated that the attacks has attracted little or no public attention, but their impacts are severe: since 2017, they (bandits) have stolen tens of thousands of animals, kidnapped hundredsof thousands of people, and killed many people; nearly 70,000 Nigerians have taken refuge in Maradi and 20,000 Nigeriens have been internally displaced (ICG, 2021). However, Different scholars attempt to explain Nigerian border porosity and the upsurge in trans-border crimes such as arms trafficking, Boko Haram, and Armed banditry among others, but they are more concerned with the national or transnational economic and security effects of the crime, but none explored the bilateral agreements in respect to displaced populations or their plights.

Theoretical framework

This paper adopted Liberal internationalism theory, which believed that international law, economic interdependence, and democratic values can foster peace and protect individual rights, elevating human dignity above national sovereignty (Jahn, 2018:43-61).

The proponents of the theory are: Woodrow Wilson, G. John Ikenberry and Anne-marie Slaughter. The theory holds that for a rule-based international order focus on democracy, free trades and multilateral cooperation. The theory encourages states to include moral considerations in their foreign policies. The theory is of the view that treaty reflects a humanitarian approach rather than a strictly security-oriented one.

In critiques, Jahn, (2018:43-61) argued that the theory has been on crises, until recently when the theory and its contemporary proponents spread of liberal principles, practices and institutions in the international sphere provide basis for reform. In this regards, both Nigeria and Niger approach involves humanitarian approach on refugees, especially on the "out of camp" policy that facilitates the integration of refugees into local communities. This aligns with liberal ideals of human dignity and opportunity.

Research Design

The study adopted the quasi-experimental design, especially in examining the condition and the challenges of Nigerian refugees in Niger Republic and the responsibility of the governments of Nigeria and Niger in improving their well-being as enshrined in the United Nations refugee law and other international humanitarian laws. This is diagrammatically represented thus: $\mathbf{O_1 \times O_2}$

Where:

O_1= first observation on the independent variable (**Nigeria-Niger relations**)

X= experimental treatment (detailing the relationship between the two countries over the years that resulted in the inflow of refugees in the wake of conflicts)

O_2= second observation on the dependent variable (**Management of refugee crisis**).

(respecting and implementing international refugees laws and other bilateral relationships to improve the conditions of the refugees and possibly return them to Nigeria).

Methods of Data Collection

This study made use of the mixed methods which entailed both the survey and documentary methods of data collection. For the survey, we adopted key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGDs); and we also used questionnaire where necessary in our pilot study.

Population and Sample Size

This study used the population of Nigerian refugees in Niger Republic as recorded by the United Nations caused by armed bandits and Boko Haram with an estimated number of 358,774 (UN Report, 2022). There are 287,145 Nigerian refugees in Niger Republic of which 80,000 or more are refugees specifically from banditry attacks while the rest are Boko-Haram victims.

The study used the Diffa region where Boko Haram victims are located and Maradi and Tahoua regions where banditry victims and few Boko Haram victims are located and Camp as a cluster of convenience.

Method of Data Analysis

The data generated were presented through the tabulation method, which is the method of transferring data from its gathering instrument to a tabula form. The data were analyzed through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to summarise the results of the subjects under investigation. While, on the other hand, the study adopted a simple descriptive-qualitative analysis that combined content analysis with logical inductions. As such, tables and charts were used in data presentation and analysis. While logical induction and the use of tables and charts helped us make sense of data generated using surveys, the content analysis method was instrumental in analyzing the contents of documents.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table: Bi-lateral Agreements between Nigeria and the Republic of Niger on Cooperation and Right Protection of Refugees

Name of the Agreement	Date and Place	Actors	Reason for Agreement	Impact on Refugees
Local Bilateral Committee (LBC)	Maiduguri, 1990	Borno State (Nigeria) and Diffa Region (Niger Republic)	To promote cooperation and mutual understanding	Cooperation
NNJCC	1970-1971	Nigerian Head of	To promote	Assistance and

		State Gowon and Niger President HamaniDiori	cooperation's and peace in the border communities, and strengthening of relations	Cooperation
joint security MoU	8th September 2019, Maradi (*Premium Times*)	Governors of Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states jointly signed MOU with the Governor of Maradi	Fight border insecurities	Border security
Nigeria, Niger Republic signed agreement on border	8th February 2023, Abuja	Nigeria and the Republic of Niger	Border security and coordination	to coordinate seamless deployment of services and a rapid responce along their borders
Nigeria-Niger border states	17th August, 2023	the governors of Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states	To secure foodstuffs to tackle refugees' pressure	provision of livelihoods

Source: Field Work, 2023

The above table shows bi-lateral agreements between Nigeria-and Niger on cooperation and right protection cases of refugees. The table presented concords between Nigeria and Niger, reason of the agreement, impact on refugees. It shows Local Bilateral Committee (LBC), Nigeria Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC), Joint Security MoU, Border Agreement and lastly cooperation by Nigeria-Niger Border States secure foodstuffs to tackle refugees' pressure. All these agreements are aimed at cooperation unity and development between Nigeria and Republic of Niger.

Table: Bilateral Agreements on Nigerian Refugees Return to their Origin Policy

Actors	**Impact**	**Number of the refugees**	**Destination & Date**
Governor UmaraZulum of Borno State	Supervision, provision and distribution of livelihoods/relief materials to refugees in the republic of Niger. (News-diary,2023)	1300	Askira-Uba
Borno governor and	relief materials distribution	600	Abadan and Munguno

flooding refugees in Niger.	and the refugees condition who are displaced more than once (News-diary, 2023)		5 Dec 2022 and SEMA Borno, 2023
Borno Governor and President of Niger	this bilateral relations took place in the diffa region of Niger, the Boko-Haram most affected area in Niger to discuss possibilities of repatriation of Nigerian refugees (Vanguard, 2021)	Refugees around Diffa region (victims of Boko-Haram)	Borno State July 1, 2021
Governors of Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states, met in Niger Republic with the governor of Maradi	To discuss border challenges including insecurity and the plights of the refugees, (daily trust, 2021)		Maradi: a day border-states-multilateral-security-meeting

Source: Field Work 2023

The table above shows the bilateral agreements/assistance on Nigerian refugees return to their origin policy. Contrary to the opinion of some refugees that Nigerian government does not engaged in any agreement to bring them back. However, the table shows the impact of the agreement, the number of the refugees (house-holds) leaving or target to leave the Republic of Niger and their original destinations.

Table 6.2.11: Factors Responsible for Poor Refugee Management of the Nigerian refugees by Niger Government

Factor	Impact	Verification
Poverty	There is a level of food-in-security in the republic of Niger for both the refugees and certain percent of the country's population. The refugees faces food livelihood challenges (world vision 2023)	More-than ten (10) million persons of Niger making 41.8% of its total population were living in extreme poverty in 2021 (World Bank, 2023)

Unwillingness of the refugees to stay on camps Settings	"In camps set up by the United Nations, families cram into tent-like temporary housing with dirt floors. Many are forced to beg in nearby towns" while other refugees prepare to rent house in the community and carried out minor jobs to earn a living (unanimous, 2023. Roll N, 2023).	due to cultural similarities the refugees spread in the border opportunity villages and live side-by-side with the people to earn a living (UNHCR, 2022)
Bad-governance	Ineffective governance leaves vulnerable populations at risk	
Economic condition of the Republic of Niger.	The refugee crisis has led to a redressing the Niger national priorities, to bring on top security and economy. Moreover the country is suffering from influx of refugees from Nigeria and Mali.	Niger republic has a poorly diversified economy, with agriculture accounting for 40% of its GDP. More-than ten (10) million persons of Niger making 41.8% of its total population were living in extreme poverty in 2021 (World Bank, 2023)
Security consciousness	Facing security crises in the areas bordering Nigeria among others	bilateral treaty on Joint Border operation and the formation of Multi-national joint task force (MNJTF)
Un-organised nature of the refugees (the refugees are scattered around the border communities and the economic opportunity towns), as the result of cultural affinities	This makes it difficult for government, NGOs and the willing individuals to reach out to the majority of the refugees. They can only reach the camp refugees who are mostly women and children	Nigerian refugees are scattered along Maradi- in the western Niger border with Sokoto-Kebbi Zamfara and Niger states and others an along the Diffa and Konni regions of the eastern Niger (UNHCR,2022)
Number of the Nigerian refugees	the number of the refugees is too high, there are an estimated 358,774 Nigerian refugees along in the Republic of Niger among others, this make it practically impossible for the Niger government to abandon its citizens to cater for the needs of other country citizens open the	as at 2020, the republic of Niger hosts more than 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers who are mostly from Mali and Nigeria (UNHCR,2021).

	challenges facing the economy of the country and the standards of living of a common citizens (Counter-part, 2023)	
Lack of sound community involvement by the government	to incorporate the refugees	Strick compliance to Internal refugee law is vital here, which provide that the refugee can be incorporated in to the community and provide land for farmers and other necessary equipment for survival. To increases the capacity of communal governments to act as resilient hubs for inclusive local development, bringing together civil society (especially women, youth, and other excluded groups), the private sector, other tiers of government both Nigeria and Niger, donor agencies to support locally defined priorities in the communities. (counter-part, 2023)

Culled from FGD and KII, 2023

To further justify other findings, from the questionnaires, the above table shows more factors responsible for poor refugee management of the Nigerian refugees by Niger government, which are summed from FGD, and KII.

The table further indicates that poverty and the economic conditions of the Republic of Niger, unwillingness of the refugees to stay in camps settings, bad governance, security consciousness, un-organised nature of the refugees (the refugees are scattered around the border communities and the economic opportunity towns), as the result of cultural affinities and the lack of sound community involvement by the government.

The economic condition of the Republic of Niger as one of the poorest countries of the world is crucial, as sometimes assistance is given to both hosting communities and the refugees. This finding corroborates the findings of the UNHCR that "assistance is given to both hosting communities and the refugees……" Furthermore, the conflict in the neighbouring countries of the Republic of Niger put more burden to the economy of the Republic of Niger by increasing the security budgets thereby sacrificing the other segment of the economy to secure its border from the Terrorist surrounding the country, among which are Boko Haram and armed bandits from Nigeria, Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb in Mali and some parts of Burkina Faso, Chad fighters, Libyan fighters, Central

African Republic crises and their own Niger rebels. Therefore, this shows that economic condition of the country is no doubt one of the challenges to poor refugee welfare. This corroborates the argument of counter-part international on a situational report on resilience governance 2023, that:

The unstable economy, security concerns, and the refugee crisis have led to a realignment of national priorities, undermining the political will for reforms. The regions of Maradi, Tillabéri, and Zinder are particularly vulnerable and face serious development, humanitarian, and climate crises. Ineffective governance remains a challenge and limits the ability of the government to protect chronically vulnerable populations from the shocks of instability, conflict, and extremism. By strengthening local governance in target regions, RGN will improve recovery and allow the Nigerien people to collectively develop solutions that address their challenges and increase resilience (counter-part, 2023).

However, apart from the economic challenges, the cultural affinity has also helped in the persistence of the plights.

Discussion of Findings

On the Bi-lateral Agreements between Nigeria and the Republic of Niger on Cooperation and Right Protection of Refugees, the study found out that there have been numbers of bilateral agreements between Nigeria and republic of Niger since their independence from British and France in 1960s. In November, 1970 presidents of Nigeria and Niger republic, established Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC), To promote cooperation's and peace in the border communities, and strengthening of relations, assistance and cooperation, this commission is expanded to including refugee management, the joint security management between border states to fight border insecurities, coordination of frequency utilization along borders among others.

It's evident that security cooperation along the north-east border has improved, and the movement of the displaced persons has decreased, there are number of Nigerian refugees voluntarily return to Nigeria in 2023 with no refoulment threat (UNHRC, 2023). While on the North-west border, despite the effort by two countries through bilateral relations, yet the border insecurity persisted, it become eminent looking at the growing attacks of banditry along the border line and the increased number of the displaced persons and the increased of the refugees of the Nigerian origin, more efforts and cooperation's are needed to halt the security challenge and address the refugee crises. To ensure seamless deployment of services to refugees along their border, Nigeria-Niger Border States, cooperate with Niger to secure foodstuffs to tackle refugees' pressure on the Niger economy.

Bilateral Agreements on Nigerian Refugees Return to their Origin Policy, the Borno state Governor in 2023on a bilateral relations monitor the provision and distribution of livelihoods/relief materials to refugees in the republic of Niger. (News-diary, 2023). He also visits and interacts with Nigerian refugees at Bosso, a border town in Niger Republic.The Borno state Governor Meets Nigerien President in Diffa in 2023 and discussed possibilities of repatriation of Nigerian refugees (Vanguard, 2021). Finally, through coordinated efforts some Nigerian refugees were brought back to Nigeria, without threat of 'refoulement'

There is a level of food-in-security in the republic of Niger for both the refugees and certain percent of the country's population. The refugees faces food livelihood challenges (world vision 2023) More-than ten (10) million persons of Niger making 41.8% of its total population were living in extreme poverty in 2021 (World Bank, 2023). This may probably have connections with country's level of poverty, the country range between top 1-15 most poor rest countryes of the world (global finance magnitude, 2026), the poverty rate is approximately 40.8% - 45.5% of the country's population. (WorldBank report, 2026). It's been argued that some time aids is given to both communities and refugees. "In camps set up by the United Nations, families cram into tent-like temporary housing with dirt floors. Many are forced to beg in nearby towns" while other refugees prepare to rent house in the community and carried out minor jobs to earn a living (unanimous, 2023. Roll N, 2023).The number of the refugees is too high, there are an estimated 358,774 Nigerian refugees along in the Republic of Niger among others, this make it practically impossible for the Niger government to abandon its citizens to cater for the needs of other country citizens open the challenges facing the economy of the country and the standards of living of a common citizens (Counter-part, 2023). Strict compliance to Internal refugee law is vital here, which provide that the refugee can be incorporated in to the community and provide land for farmers and other necessary equipment for survival. To increases the capacity of communal governments to act as resilient hubs for inclusive local development, bringing together civil society (especially women, youth, and other excluded groups), the private sector, other tiers of government both Nigeria and Niger, donor agencies to support locally defined priorities in the communities (counter-part, 2023). Therefore, poverty, the security consciousness, and un-organised nature of the refugees (the refugees are scattered around the border communities and the economic opportunity towns), as the result of cultural affinities, are the factors responsible of poor refugee management in Niger republic.

Conclusion

The paper examined the role of the Nigeria and Niger governments in promoting the protection of refugee rights through its mandates of cooperation and development and the efforts of other bilateral agreements and concords between Nigeria and the Republic of Niger on refugees' rights protections in line with international refugees' laws. In this respect, the protection of Nigerian refugee rights in Niger remains a delicate balance between legal ideals and the harsh realities of the two countries. While bilateral cooperation has demonstrated resilience through various political shifts, the path forward requires sustained commitment to cross-border security and the socio-economic integration of refugees to ensure their rights are not just recognized on paper, but realized in practice but the result is not encouraging.

Therefore the Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for cooperation's and their governments should put more efforts to refugees right protections, this is because the refugees enjoys only privileges of welfare and protections from United Nations and its partner organisations in line with international refugee laws or international humanitarian laws. The efforts of the Nigerian Border States cannot be overemphasised; therefore more efforts are required from the federal and state government to ensure direct humanitarian aids to Nigerian refugees in the republic of Niger. In this regards, the Nigerian refugees in the Republic of Niger enjoys all rights related to cultural, social and

religious from the hosting communities than the governments of both nations. Finally, the cordial relations and bilateral treaties between Nigeria and Niger should be maintained and improved.

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