BORDER SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL THREATS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA-NIGER BORDER DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT
Border security is of utmost importance when it comes to safeguarding a nation's security and sovereignty against any possible threats. Its primary objective is to manage and regulate the movement of individuals across borders, thereby mitigating the illicit transport of goods and persons. The boundary that divides Nigeria and Niger, known for its expansive nature and lack of strict control, has become a central point for numerous cross-border threats, thus necessitating a thorough examination of its dynamics. This paper aims at making a comparative analysis of the security issues that both Nigeria and Niger share at the border, delving into the intricate network of transnational challenges and their implications for the well-being and safety of individuals in the region.The border that separates Nigeria and Niger has experienced a convergence of diverse issues, including terrorism, insurgent activities, drug and weapons smuggling, human trafficking, and criminal enterprises that operate across the border. This analysis also aims to clarify the complex and multidimensional nature of these challenges, by exploring the underlying factors and evaluating their significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of the communities residing in the borderlands.In doing this, the similarities and distinctions in the security dynamics of both nations, taking into account the geopolitical, cultural, and economic factors that exert influence upon these dynamics will be explored.

Introduction

Border security is of utmost importance when it comes to safeguarding a nation's security and sovereignty against any possible threats. Its primary objective is to manage and regulate the movement of individuals across borders, thereby mitigating the illicit transport of goods and persons. Spencer, cited in Uzoma and Eudora (2016:214) expressed that the border represents the initial barrier against acts of terrorism and serves as the ultimate safeguard for a nation's territorial sovereignty. The ability of a nation to define and consolidate its borders determines to

a larger extent its capability in building stable and peaceful societies within its territories. Nation states are recognized under international law based on their capability to secure their borders and protect the citizenry (Okumu, 2011). Nigeria, an expansive nation comprising 923,768 square kilometers, possesses 36,450 kilometers of both land and maritime borders (Uzoma and Eudora, 2016). Its location in the Gulf of Guinea results in borders shared with Benin Republic to the West, Niger and Chad to the North, and Cameroon in the North-east and South-south. Additionally, Nigeria shares lake borders with Chad and Niger, as well as maritime borders with the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean (Okumu, 2011). The enormity of Nigeria's borders highlights the imperative need for efficacious management and control in order to ensure national security.

Furthermore, the trans-border security relations between Nigeria and Niger are emblematic of a critical facet of regional cooperation intended to tackle shared security challenges. Given their geographical proximity and the movement of people, goods, and ideas across their borders, Nigeria and Niger Republic have a longstanding history of interconnectivity. This relationship has resulted in both prospects and predicaments, particularly in the realm of security. The vast and penetrable border between Nigeria and Niger Republic has engendered a conducive atmosphere for various trans-border security apprehensions. These apprehensions encompass, but are not restricted to, cross-border criminal undertakings such as smuggling, human trafficking, arms trafficking, drug trade, and the movement of extremist groups. Consequently, both countries have acknowledged the necessity for collaborative endeavors to effectively counter these threats and promote stability in the region.

Therefore, by placing the experiences of Nigeria and Niger side by side, this paper endeavors to highlight potential lessons, exemplary practices, and collaborative measures that may prove instrumental in addressing shared security concerns. Transnational threats surpass borders and necessitate cooperation, rendering this analysis a timely and relevant undertaking. While acknowledging the inherent intricacies and tensions in border management, the paper strives to contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of the ever-changing security landscape in this particular region. Through the examination of the dynamics at the Nigeria-Niger border, the paper seeks to establish a basis for evidence-based policy recommendations that can augment border security, safeguard human security, and foster collaboration between these two adjacent nations and the wider international community.

Theoretical Framework

As a framework of analysis, Critical Human Security Theory is employed. It is one of the theories proposed by scholars in their efforts to explicate the concept of human security. This theory represents a fusion of critical studies on security and the specific clarification of human security put forth by Newman (2010). The critical theory of human security embodies the essence of critical security theory and the idea of human security. The contribution of critical security studies is rooted in its critical examination of the assumptions that underlie the prevailing understanding of security, particularly during the Cold War era. In accordance with this, critical security poses three fundamental questions that necessitate careful consideration, as articulated by Sheehan (1999:3). These inquiries are:

1. What is security?
2. Who is being secured by the prevailing order and who or what are they being secured against?
3. With whose security should we be concerning ourselves and through whichstrategies should this security be attained?

The aforementioned inquiries aim to highlight the limitations of traditional security, which primarily focuses on the state. In this regard, the state was even identified as a source of insecurity as opposed to security. Other aspects of security, including environmental security, economic security, and societal security, were also acknowledged as important areas of focus in discussions on security (Dahajar and Alheri, 2018). Furthermore, the aim of security was examined at the individual, state, and global levels.

Furthermore, within the domain of critical security studies, there has been the emergence of two distinct schools of thought. The first school, known as the Copenhagen school, is led by Barry Buzan. The second school, referred to as the Welsh or Aberystwyth School, draws inspiration from the Frankfurt School and is

advocated by Ken Booth and others (Nunes, 2007). The Copenhagen school challenges the militaristic conception of security upheld by realists and broadens its scope to encompass various dimensions, including environmental, economic, political, and societal aspects of security. However, in the realist framework, the state continues to play a significant role in addressing security concerns. For instance, Buzan argues that the state bears the responsibility of addressing all security challenges (Sheehan, 1999). Moreover, Buzan asserts that since the state is the central actor in global politics and the primary agent for resolving insecurity, it is crucial for the state, rather than individuals, to remain the focal point of security discourse.

On the other hand, the Welsh school argues that the individual human being should be considered as the ultimate point of reference for security, and that security policies should aim for human emancipation. This school places particular emphasis on the struggles faced by disadvantaged individuals who should be liberated from the physical and societal obstacles that hinder their ability to freely make choices (Booth in Alberth and Carlsson, 2009:9). These obstacles include, but are not limited to, war and the threat of war, poverty, illiteracy, and political oppression.

Booth's proposition regarding security as liberation can be distinguished by an all-encompassing and non-statist approach to security, rejecting the realist emphasis on the utilization or threat of force. This proposition closely aligns with the notion of human security introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994, which advocates for a shift in focus from the state to the individual human being. According to Gaan (2010), this perspective challenges the predominant role of the state in security matters. However, Newton (2010) asserts that this perspective also recognizes the reality of state power and aims to collaborate with the state in addressing security issues. Unquestionably, the study of human security illustrates a fundamentally open-minded and liberal outlook toward the state. The theory argues that, if properly established, the state will act in the best interests of individual human beings. In fact, Newman further contends that critical human security cannot be reduced to a simple rejection of the state, as such reduction would be both intellectually and politically unproductive.

The theory of security revolves around placing the individual human being at the core of security concerns. This contrasts with the state-centric approach, but it acknowledges the significance of a strong state in ensuring individual security. Newman describes human security as primarily consequentialist and structurally less revisionist in comparison to critical security studies. Human security challenges the conventional neorealist understanding of transnational security and proposes an alternative perspective. While human security recognizes the challenges faced by people in different regions of the world, it also acknowledges that the most significant threat to their security may originate from their own state rather than an external adversary. The solution lies in addressing attitudes and institutions that prioritize high-level politics over the individual experiences of deprivation and insecurity. In this way, decision-makers within the state can assume the responsibility of effectively addressing these challenges.

Given that the primary focus of human security studies revolves around redefining individual human beings as the central concern of security, it emphasizes the need to develop policies that will bring about this desired change as anticipated. Human security encompasses a wide array of issues, including the environment, migration, development, health, and medical epidemics, among others, that have an impact on the well-being of individuals. This is done with the expectation that governments will allocate greater resources to address security matters.

Similarly, after a thorough examination of major theories in security studies, including realism, liberalism, securitization theory, critical security theory, and environmental theory, Omeje (2010) concludes that none of these theories specifically align with the African context. Consequently, scholars and policy makers of African origin must develop more appropriate and context-specific alternative theories that accurately depict security concerns on the continent and offer solutions.

It is essential to recognize that human security, despite its focus on individuals, cannot be achieved without the involvement of the state. Tanaka (2015) argues that the state plays a significant role in ensuring human security and advocates for collaboration with international organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and other nations to effectively eliminate threats to human security.

Conceptual Exploration

Human Security

The notion of Human security acknowledges the security of human lives as the primary objective of national and international security policy. This concept emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with the state-centered notion of security and its ability to comprehend the vulnerabilities faced by humans in the modern world, as well as the appropriateness of military interventions as responses to these vulnerabilities (Sekiko and Messineo, 2012). Human security, as a concept, also encompasses the security of individuals and communities, manifesting as both the absence of fear and the absence of deprivation (Kaldor, Martin and Sabine 2007). Severe threats to human security encompass a wide range of issues, from acts of genocide and slavery to natural disasters like hurricanes or floods, to widespread violations of the rights to food, health, and housing. Kaldor (2007) provides additional elucidation that human vulnerability is all-encompassing, facing peril from 'new wars' in which the participants are no longer nation-states, disregarding the customary code of conduct observed in 'old wars', and incapable of being conquered through conventional warfare. Additionally, these novel conflicts are intertwined with other global menaces such as illness, environmental calamities, impoverishment, and deprivation. "Yet our security conceptions, drawn from the dominant experience of the Second World War, do not reduce that insecurity; rather they make it worse.' (Kaldor 2007:10). Correspondingly, Mahbub ul Haq suggests human security as a new paradigm of security. He opined that: "the world is entering a new era in which the very concept of security will change-and change dramatically. Security will be interpreted as: security of people, not just territory. Security of individuals, not just nations. Security through development, not through arms. Security of all the people everywhere - in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment." (Haq 1995:115).

Conversely, scholarly works on international relations and development issues described the concept 'human security' using several terms: as a new theory or concept, as a preparatory point for analysis, a world view, a political agenda, or as a policy framework (Shahrbanou 2005). While the definition of human security remains an open question, there is no dispute among its advocates that there should be a shift of focus from a state centered to a people-centered approach to security, that concern with the security of state borders be replaced with the security of the people who live within those borders (Shahrbanou 2005). Since security could be simply described as "absence of insecurity and threats", to be secure then, is to be free from both fear (of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, violence, persecution, or death) and from want (of gainful employment, food, and health). Impliedly therefore, Human security is concerned with the capacity to identify threats, avoid them when possible, and alleviate their effects when they arise. Human security entails aiding victims cope with the repercussions of the widespread insecurity resulting from armed conflict, human rights violations and massive underdevelopment (Shahrbanou 2005). As it appears therefore, the word "security" encompasses two ideas: one is the conception of "safety" that goes beyond the concept of mere physical security in the traditional sense, and the other the idea that people's livelihoods be guaranteed through "social security" against sudden disruptions (Shahrbanou 2005).

Border Security

Just like many other concepts within the parlance of social and management sciences, border security is also prone to a number of interpretations. It could be described as the control of trans-border movement of people with a view to reducing the illegal flows without necessarily limiting the flows (Uzoma and Eudora, 2016). Border security is indeed a complex idea. It encompasses aspects of the military, economy, politics, environment, geography etc. According to Fauzan, Abdallah and Ahmad (2019), border security could generally be understood as the safety of life support systems and the absence of threats to the lives of the people and their activities in the borderlands. Nelson (2010), opined that border security included in a larger category than the term could often be referred to as homeland security. Basically speaking, border security is viewed by Fauzan, Abdallah and Ahmad as:

> *…includes safeguarding a state's land, water, and water domains; deterring threats along these borders; and securing all points of*

> *entry, which are locations such as seaports, airports, and border crossings, where officials are stationed to oversee the legal entry and exit of persons and merchandise (Fauzan, Abdallah and Ahmad, 2019:3).*

Additionally, Nelson (2010), identified three main functions of border security. These are: detection, interdiction and deterrence. Detection involves the identification trans-border movement of goods and humans and categorizing potential threats. Interdiction on the other hand has to do with the consolidation of border security control. This is usually done by engaging border security agencies or employing modern electronic technologies that could aid the improvement of efficiency in border control. Deterrence is implemented when a number of obstacles are created along the border regions to prevent illegal trans-border movement. For instance, constructing walls along the border, placing barbed wire or installing other modern technological gadgets that could provide preventive measures. Border security has to do with managing the movement of people, goods and other tangible items that cross the boundaries of a country (Nelson, 2010). In broader sense, Okumu (2011:5), generally views border security to entail:

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.

To sum it up therefore, border security is about asserting "territorial sovereignty by enforcing the boundary" and by protecting it through permanent surveillance. It is the state of protecting the country from illicit trans-border flows of goods and people which could be inimical to human security.

Closely related to the concept of border security is the concept of border control which is also frequently used in border security studies. Andreas (2003) asserted that the central aim of border control is to prevent the entry of covert transnational actors which is defined as non-state actors operating beyond national borders in matters considered to be deviant to laws of the state.

Trans-Border Security Relations

Trans-border security relations encompass the engagements, pacts, and synergies between nations or territories aimed at resolving security predicaments that traverse international borders (Ferril et al, 2021). Such predicaments may encompass challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, human trafficking, drug trafficking, cyber incursions, and sundry others. Given that several security threats are not restricted by geopolitical frontiers, intergovernmental collaboration is pivotal in efficiently handling and curtailing these hazards. The following are some pivotal components of trans-border security relations as outlined by Nelson, (2010)

i. **Information Exchange**: Nations frequently engage in the exchange of intelligence and information regarding potential threats, criminal activities, and developing security concerns. This process aids in the establishment of a collective comprehension of the issues and permits for coordinated reactions.

ii. **Joint Military and Law Enforcement Operations**: Transnational law

enforcement operations and joint efforts can be conducted to detain criminals, disrupt illegal activities, and recover stolen assets. Examples include joint patrols, task forces, and extradition agreements.

iii. **Reciprocal Legal Assistance**: Countries may establish agreements to provide legal assistance, including the sharing of evidence and facilitating the enforcement of judicial decisions such as arrests and searches.

iv. **Border Oversight and Customs Collaboration**: Collaborative measures can enhance border security, impeding the movement of illicit items and individuals across borders. This necessitates the exchange of best practices, technology, and training.

v. **Regional Organizations:** Regional organizations and alliances frequently play a role in encouraging transborder security cooperation. For instance, the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) encourage security collaboration among their member countries.

vi. **Efforts to counterterrorism**: The threat of transborder terrorism necessitates international cooperation for tracking, disrupting, and preventing terrorist activities. Countries can engage in intelligence sharing, coordinate efforts to combat radicalization, and work together to dismantle terrorist networks.

vii. **Cybersecurity**: Given the rise of cyber threats, nations collaborate to combat cybercrime and secure critical infrastructure. Sharing information on cyber threats and vulnerabilities is crucial for enhancing cybersecurity measures.

viii. **Disaster Response and Humanitarian Assistance**: Natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and humanitarian crises can have transborder impacts. Nations work together to provide prompt assistance, share resources, and coordinate relief efforts.

ix. **Diplomacy and Conflict Prevention**: Addressing the underlying political and economic factors that contribute to transborder security challenges often requires diplomatic efforts and conflict prevention strategies.

x. **International Agreements and Treaties**: Multilateral agreements, treaties, and conventions provide a framework for cooperation in areas such as extradition, mutual legal assistance, and counterterrorism measures.

In a nut shell, transborder security relations underscore the interconnectedness of security challenges and the necessity of international collaboration to effectively address them. Nevertheless, such cooperation can encounter challenges due to differing national interests, legal systems, and cultural contexts. Successful transborder security relations necessitate a balance between sovereignty and shared responsibility for regional and global security.

Nigeria-Niger Border Dynamics and Transnational Threats

The Nigeria-Niger border dynamics are characterized by a range of complex factors and transnational threats that have significant implications for both countries and the broader West African region. Here are key aspects of the Nigeria-Niger border dynamics and the transnational threats they face:

Border Length and Complexity: The Nigeria-Niger border is approximately 1,500 kilometers long, making it one of the longest borders in Africa. It traverses diverse geographical terrain, including arid zones, rivers, and densely populated areas. The vastness and porosity of the border pose challenges for effective border management.

Transnational Threats:

1. Terrorism: The border region has witnessed the activities of Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic

State's West Africa Province (ISWAP). These groups have exploited the porous border to conduct cross-border attacks and establish safe havens.

2. Arms and Drug Smuggling: The border is a conduit for the illicit trafficking of arms, drugs, and contraband. Criminal networks operate in the region, exacerbating insecurity and undermining state authority.

3. Human Trafficking: Human trafficking networks take advantage of the porous border to engage in the illegal movement of people, leading to issues related to modern slavery, forced labor, and sexual exploitation.

4. Nomadic Conflicts: The borderlands are home to pastoralist communities who frequently engage in conflicts over resources and grazing land. These conflicts have the potential to escalate into more significant security challenges.

5. Cross-Border Banditry: Criminal gangs involved in cattle rustling and banditry frequently operate across the border, exploiting the vast and sparsely populated areas.

6. Border Communities: The borderlands are inhabited by diverse communities with complex socio-cultural ties that span the border. Local communities often rely on cross-border trade and social interactions, making the border an integral part of their lives.

Challenges:

1. **Lack of Infrastructure:** There is inadequate border infrastructure, including border posts and roads, which hampers effective border control.

2. **Corruption and Weak Governance:** Corruption within border security agencies and weak governance in some border areas can facilitate illegal activities.

3. **Limited Resources:** Border security agencies often lack the necessary resources, equipment, and training to effectively police the border.

Bilateral Cooperation: Both Nigeria and Niger recognize the importance of bilateral cooperation in addressing transnational threats. They have engaged in joint military operations and information-sharing mechanisms to combat terrorism and criminal activities.

International Involvement: International organizations and partners, including the United Nations and regional bodies like ECOWAS, have been involved in supporting efforts to enhance border security and counter transnational threats in the region.

The Nigeria-Niger border dynamics and transnational threats highlight the need for comprehensive border management strategies that address security challenges while also recognizing the economic and social ties that exist in border communities. Effective border governance, cooperation, and international support are essential to mitigating the security risks associated with this expansive and porous border.

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