Developing Nigeria's Border Paradigm: The Panacea for National Security, Socio-Economic and Political Development

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Abstract

The complex terrain of Nigeria's borders and neglects of border settlements in terms of the provisions and availability of basic amenities; encouraged the frontier dwellers to cross the international boundary seeking for some of the basic necessities of life. This made them vulnerable of being attacked by aliens and terrorists; easily recruited and co-opted by criminals from either of the borders; compelled to engage or aid trans-border crimes as well as providing hiding place for some unscrupulous elements in the society or face the wrath of the syndicates and traffickers. This Library research established that, neglecting the border regions and the porosity of our international boundary has fuelled the current security challenges confronting the nation. The paper recommends the total checkmating of activities at the border region; provision of basic/necessary materials for the dwellers of border towns and the boosting of international collaboration by countries sharing the common border against illicit traffickers as the panacea for national security, socio-economic and political development.

Keywords: Panacea, Boundary Development, Trans-border, Frontier

1. Introduction

Ethnic nationalities in Africa were living independently prior to the 1884/85 Berlin conference. The conference was one of the imperialist strategies for extending and consolidating their hegemony on the African continent by carving for themselves 'sphere of influences'. The delineated or demarcated colonial boundaries, now sovereign countries became distinct territories which were then directly administered by the imperialist majorly for economic reasons.

Such dichotomy among other things, physically and mentally divided hitherto united kin and kiths into two or more separate entities; impacted seriously on the socio-economic and cultural beliefs and practises of the colonies; which not only further created, but effectively accentuated the efficacy of the use and adoption of centre-periphery theory and relationship between the colonial masters and the colonists; this is further entrenched into the relationship among the governmental units in Nigeria states.

In recent times, the Nigerian state has been bedevilled by ethno-religious and political crisis or violence that have threatened the peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic nationalities. The militia kind activities of Boko Haram; Oodua People's Congress (OPC); Movement for the Emancipation for the Niger Delta (MEND); Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) using latest and sophisticated weapons has led to the loss of lives and properties of both Nigerians and nationals of other countries.

The activities of these groups and other ethno-religious upheaval in the land have negative effects on the nation and is jeopardizing it political economy. The powers and sources of the weapons of most of these and other groups may not be unconnected with the porosity of the Nigerian borders with her neighbours. This work revisits the Nigeria's border problems in the face of increasing challenges for national security.

1.1. Research Methodology

The research adopted qualitative method. It relies on the use of secondary sources of data. Relevant literatures such as Textbooks; Journals; Newspapers and Magazines; Conference, Seminar and Workshop papers and Internet materials were used to generate and analyse data for this study.

2. The Politico-geographical Location and Neighbors of Nigeria

Knowing and understanding Nigeria's neighbours according to Ologe, (ny) are imperative for number of obvious reasons:

- The country's relationships with her neighbours have implications for its own security;

- Security threats in neighbouring countries do affect Nigeria and vice versa;

- There are many Nigerians living in these countries and the way they live and are treated have implications for security in Nigeria;

- There are many criminal cross-border activities taking place between Nigeria and her neighbours;

- Though Nigeria is in West Africa, her other neighbour belong to a different Sub-region;

- All of Nigeria's neighbours are former French colonies and have an approach to public law and international transactions and relations which is different from that of Nigeria;

- From time to time there have been ugly border incidents between Nigeria and her neighbours.

For these reasons it is necessary for one to know who Nigeria's neighbours are and what her boundaries with them are like. Nigeria is located in West Africa, roughly between Latitude 4°N and 14°N and Longitudes 4°E and I5°E. The country's southern point is near Brass in the Niger Delta, which is roughly north of the Equator. The country's northern boundary is approximately at 14°N. Her western boundary runs roughly along Longitudes 3°E. The eastern boundary runs from a point to the south west of the estuary of the Cross River to northwards almost to Longitude 15°E, South of Lake Chad. Nigeria covers about one seventh of the productive area of West Africa Ologe, (ny) CSS134:24 & Barbour, (1982).

Being an ex- British colony, Nigeria has an approximate total land mass of about 923,768 square kilometres and shares international boundary with mostly Francophone colonies. Nigeria shares about 773 kilometres boundary with Benin Republic; 1,690 kilometres with the Republic of Cameroun; 1,497 kilometres with Niger Republic; 85 kilometres with Chad Republic and with the Republic of Guinea at the gulf of Guinea (Salifu, 2013 & Mongabay, 2013).

Along these common borders are lot of settlements on each side which facilitates socio-economic activities both at official and unofficial levels. Such settlements at the border regions are called or described as 'frontiers' or 'gate ways' for either entry or exit from one country to another (Asiwaju, 1993: xviii). Dwellers of those border regions are crucial and fundamental in defining and determining the nation's quest for security and socio-economic, cum-political development.

3. The Nature of Nigerian Frontiers/ Gate-ways Settlements

Nigeria as a federation has thirty six States with seven hundred and seventy four Local government areas that a central government is overseeing. The Federal government is centrally located or situated at the nation's capital, Abuja. Abuja with less population, serves as the seat of government; gate way and seat for diplomats. To a fair standard, it is well developed with necessary modern gadgets and other socio-economic items when compared to other parts of the country. Health/medical facilities, electricity; more stable power and water supply and maximum security are all provided for the dwellers, in an attempt to meet international best practices. Hence every citizen is attracted to the nation's federal capital territory.

The States are the second well developed unit in the Nigerian fiscal federalism. There are more people in the States, than those in the federal capital territory. However, most States capital like the federal capital are relatively well developed with necessary items and equipment's and battle ready military and Para-military operatives to ensure the security of lives and properties. Both the federal and state capital serves as the seats of government at different levels; while the Local Government Areas, which are the third units in the Nigerian state, serve as the periphery.

 Local Governments have largest number of the nation's citizens dwelling in them. There are many villages and hamlets in the local government and most of the local government headquarters are far from the state and federal capitals. Therefore, most of the local governments lack the basic amenities, like good road network, portable drinking water, electricity, functional health care facilities and well equipped and battle ready military and Para-military operatives in case of attacks and upheavals. Yet, a significant numbers of the local governments share

international boundaries with Nigeria's neighbours. As such, they serve as the frontiers or gate ways for immigration activities coming to any part of the Nigerian state either through the land or sea.

According to Asiwaju (1993: xi), Border regions are, by reason of their proximity to an international boundary, unique due to the following characteristics:

(i)   They are a coherent area split into two or more separate jurisdiction spheres;

(ii)   Their immediate neighbours are in a foreign jurisdiction;

(iii)   Their peripheral location puts them at a structural disadvantage vis-a-vis core areas of the state. This uniqueness poses unusual challenges to routine planning and development as well as to national mobilization efforts. Nigerian borderlands are especially well known for their state of social and economic backwardness. Nigerian borderlands are disadvantaged not only in reference to the core areas of the nation, but also and even more critically in their relation to the adjacent borderlands of proximate foreign jurisdictions, each of which is far less materially resourced than we are. Quite apart from the bad advertisement which this gives to the nation vis-a-vis immediate external world, there is the tendency, as is increasingly being reported in the national press, whereby Nigerian border citizens get drawn more to the other sides of our international boundaries for no other reason than the fact of what Kano-based Sunday Triumph of July 9, 1989, in a special report on the Kuande Local Government of Benue State on the border with Cameroon has referred to as the 'goodies' on such other sides of our borders.

Corroborating with the above statement, Aikhomu (1993:ix) states:

> It is a truism to state that compared with the core areas of our nation, those sub-regions lying near our international borders have always been backward and neglected in all aspects of human development and progress. This state of affairs, which has global application in Africa and other parts of the world, is based on the age-long centre-periphery dichotomy resulting from a process whereby all developments starts at the core areas of the state and then out towards the periphery. This is despite the realisation of the need for a nation to accord its border citizens a special place in its developmental programmes.

From the above discourse, one can clearly discern that Nigerian border regions and settlements are disadvantaged in all aspects of life, with the visible evidence of the absence of basic amenities for human survival, yet people are still residing there with the knowledge of the state authorities. Some of the settlers are farmers, fisher men/women, business men/women and the security personnel at some strategic posts. The frontier settlers are mostly citizens, who also pay tax, levies etc but no corresponding developments. Some of these people also engage in trans-border trade and commerce and some form of social relationship like inter-marriages, visiting each other across the border for medical or educational purposes etc. Some of such cross border activities could be official or unofficial, perhaps taking advantage of border terrain and some other illegal routes (Ekpenyong, 1993:85).

3.1 The Effects of Nigerian Porous Boundary Management on the state and its Economy

There are many socio-economic and security consequences of poor boundary delineation and management on Nigeria and her neighbours. Some of which are discussed below:

1.   **Increase in Trans-border Crimes:** In many or most of the countries in Africa and especially in the West African sub-region, poor boundary delineation and management has facilitated the propensity for cross border crimes. Such trans-border crimes are in form of human trafficking; importation and exporting of contraband goods; evading task payments; aiding or collaborating with local and foreign syndicates' etc. Corroborating with the above assertion, Addo (2006) identifies categories of cross border crime in Nigeria and West Africa to include but not limited to: Small Arms; Recruitments of Mercenaries and Child Soldiers; Human Trafficking; Narcotics; Money Laundering and Internet Crimes. According to him, the porous, complex and disjointed nature of the international boundaries of most countries in Africa and most especially in West Africa are some of the reasons for the incessant nature of such crimes. On his part, Musah (1999) states:

     > The truth is that as long as the Nigerian borders remain porous and inefficiently manned by reasonable security personnel, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), pipelines will remain open and the prospect for efficient border patrol and management, and promotion of human rights

will be greatly undermined. Cross border terrorism around Nigeria had been in existence since the '60s. Initially it has been manifested in the form of individual or group traders and business men and women smuggling goods across the borders, as well as transnational syndicates who engage in the trafficking of drugs, SALW, human beings, among other things as means of livelihood.

The criminal enterprises across the Nigerian borders use similar techniques to that of legitimate traders and business men. For example on May 31, 2013, in the heart of Kano city, particularly in Bompai area, security operatives uncovered a large cache of weapons in a specially built bunker, underneath a living room in a house said to be occupied by a Lebanese. Weapons discovered include: Anti-tank weapons, guns, bombs, grenades and ammunitions (Bala, 2013). Regrettably, more than half of these SALW are in the hands of non-state actors and criminal groups. Nigeria is both a producer and consumer of SALW in West African sub-region observed Lawan (2013). Corroborating, the then Nigerian information minister and supervising minister of defence, Mr. Labaran Maku decried the porosity of the nation's border with her neighbours and concord that the inflows of light arms, weapons miscreants through the porous Nigeria/Cameroun border is alarming (Thisday, Sunday, 8 Sept.2013). At the border post between Illela in Sokoto state and Niger Republic, Muhammed (2013), reported that over eleven children were rescued from human traffickers, as confirmed by the West African Network for Protection of Children (WAN), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). These are just the few that were apprehended or tracked, what about the millions of such criminal activities that have been and are going on unnoticed?

2. Alien and Terrorist Raid and Attacks: Suspected terrorists and armed bandits have been raiding and traumatising border town settlements along the Nigeria borders and beyond. On December 19, 2012 for instance, a France national working as an Engineer was abducted by militants in Kastina to an unknown destination (Daily Trust 1/10/2013). On 23/10/2013, two Americans, Ship Captain and an Engineer were abducted and two other persons killed at the gulf of Guinea by Sea pirates (Utebor, 2013). Settlements along the Nigerian/Cameroun border like Gamboru-Ngala, Konduga, Gwoza, Bama, Mubi etc in Borno and Adamawa states respectively have experienced incessant raids and attacks from gunmen that often escape. For instance, on Sunday, October, 20th, 2013, Suspected Boko Haram terrorist in Army uniform mounted road block on highway in a village at Gamboru-Ngala and massacred twenty traders in a cold blood and escape to the bush (Daily Trust, 18/10/2013; This day, 22/8/2013 & The Nation 21&22/10/2013). In most of the attacks, lives were lost, properties were destroyed after looting and some innocent teenagers were reported missing.

Armed attacks and extortion at illegal check points, robbery and criminal activities experienced especially along Benin-Nigeria corridor of the West African borders also constitute common border crimes. Nigeria and Benin Republic are involved in organized crimes. This appears to be the factors for endemic local corruption, which facilitate illegal trafficking during the last decades and has contributed to the proliferation of fire arms. Nigeria and Niger also, often experience cross-border raids and attack based on pastoral disputes between cattle herders and settler farmers.

Towards the Sahel savannah of the northern Nigerian border sides, it is obvious that the nature of the borders the country shares with the Republic of Niger is very porous and remains the most ill-manned by security personnel of Nigeria. A number of factors may be said to be responsible for this. While it may be argued that local residents of both countries living in this area shares the same cultural, religious, geographical and social affinities, it could also, be argued that porosity of the Nigerian-Nigerien borders is due to the colonial style of arbitrary boundary delineation. These two arguments may be put forward to justify the reasons for the porous state of the Nigeria borders to the north, resulting in transnational terrorisms within these countries (Business Day, 2013).

3. Terrorist and Insurgents Activities/Training Camps: It was disclosed by the Nigerian Army authorities that insurgent's trainer was captured in Republic of Niger, where he and others have relocated to re-mobilize and re-arm insurgents with the aim of carrying out fresh attacks on Nigerian communities (Bashir 2013). Salifu, since 2013, observed that the militant movement Boko Haram, which has its roots in Nigeria, poses a potential danger to Nigeria's neighbours should it influence spread across the Nigerian borders. The risks presented by this militant group are amplified primarily through the prevalence of porous borders in the West African Sub Region. Countries like Chad, Benin, Cameroun, and Niger are all potential targets due to their proximities to Nigeria, their demographics and their socio-economic affinities. The porous nature of these borders heightens the potential spread of terrorist activities into the neighbouring countries. The proximity to Nigeria is therefore, a particular threat to the Niger's already fragile security, given the relative ease with which terrorist elements can cross into the country. The observation and fear of Salifu is today confirmed, as the dreaded group Boko Haram

is attacking villages/ communities across the Nigerian border. It should be noted that citizens of Cameroun and Niger have been suspected of participating in militants and terrorist activities as far back as the '80s during the reigns of Maita-tsine, and now in the era of the Boko Haram in Nigeria (Taiwo, 2010).

Countries like Niger, Chad and Cameroun Republics are currently experiencing terrorist activities largely because they share common border with Nigeria; the group's activities in neighbouring countries such as training recruits, planning and execution of planned strategies are escalating due to porosity of the borders and they are also using the neighbouring states as safe havens (Bashir, 2013 & Thisday, 22/10/2013).

4. Electoral Malpractices: Elections and electoral activities could easily be jeopardised in Nigeria by Nigerian citizens and nationals of neighbouring nations and vice versa, in view of the border proximities and it poor management. Non- Nigerians could and do take advantage of the vast and complex borders, marital affinity and other commercial attractions to visit Nigeria, get registered and cast their votes during elections. Some of such alien do or could be claiming dual citizenship, while that might not be the actual case. Unscrupulous politicians could or do recruit and use such categories of people to undermine credible elections in the nation. Genuine Nigerians could as well engaged in electoral malpractices or disrupt elections and cross over to any of the neighbouring nations unhindered. Abubakar (2013), opined that in Nigeria today, politics is militarized and violence is used as an electoral tool, leading to the inculcation of a culture of violence in the society. Armed groups are not a new phenomenon; however, today's armed groups are better armed, better trained and increasingly sophisticated in their actions. Armed violence is about access to resources, whether through committing crimes, playing on communal tensions, stealing or winning elections. Similarly, there is the fear of outbreak of incessant political violence and clashes between and among different political parties and aspirants' supporters due to the kinds of armed thugs used by politician today as result of the proliferation of arms in the country. Some pundits are of the view that some politicians and top government officials are aiding the proliferation and importation of arms and ammunition for political reasons (Ojudu, 2007). Unfortunately also, many Nigerians are de-enfranchised due to the complex nature of the Nigerian borders with her neighbours because of the logistics and risk involved. Fake electoral materials could as well be produced elsewhere and smuggled into the nation due to the porosity of the border regime (Zwingina, 1990).

5. Brain Drain: As result of porous border regime, many Nigerians both skilled and unskilled are crossing the border to secure job and other opportunities elsewhere. It was reported in Sunday Triumph, July 9th 1989 that there was exodus of many Nigerians to Cameroun and to other neighbouring countries seeking for jobs and other vocations; while some cross to make it easier for them to go to Central Africa and later Europe, their ultimate destination. Conversely, other country's nationals are in Nigeria, claiming Nigerian citizenship just to earn legitimate living. Corroborating, one time Nigerian minister of education, Ihechukwu Madubuike (2007:250), states:

> Several crises engulfed the educational sector leading to a massive brain drain. As a result, some of Nigeria's best professionals left the country for Europe, Saudi Arabia and the United States of America. It is reckoned that in America alone there are over 1000 Nigerian physicians and Para-medical practitioners plying their trade. Their absence has been a loss to healthcare delivery in Nigeria. So also is the loss of other professionals to national development due to the brain drain syndrome. In the last decade, over 10,000 Professors have left the domes of the ivory tower in search of greener pastures elsewhere.

At both ends, nationals of other countries in Nigeria, and some Nigerians in Diaspora were at one time or the other accused of unruly behaviours which affects the security of their host state and by implications tarnishing the image of their home country. This is evidenced by the arrest and deportation of some Nigerian nationals from other countries, within and even outside Africa. Nigeria too has done same to nationals of other countries for similar reasons.

6. Smuggling and Diverting of Items: Visiting any of the Nigeria's neighbours, one will find lot of Nigerian goods, items in used in those places. Most of those items were originally and ideally meant to be used on the Nigeria territory, but are siphoned to neighbouring countries. Bribery and corruption are attributed as the causative agent of some of these anomalies according to Walter Carrington (Nwogu, 2013). Nigerian schools', health, petroleum products/materials and currencies are all over Nigerian neighbours unofficially. Similarly, contraband items, drugs and others are easily smuggled into the Nigerian state. In April 1984 for instance, Nigeria recalled all its existing currency notes in exchange for new notes. This step was designed to pre-empt the

return of the old currency, much of which had been smuggled out of the country by politician and to establish a new baseline for Nigeria's financial system that could more easily be monitored. Nigerian border was further closed for sometimes to checkmate some anomalies (Mongabay.com, 2013).

7. Increase of Ethno-religious Crisis: As a result of poor international and internal boundary demarcations, many tribe and hitherto different ethnic groups were compulsorily merged into one state. The most prominent ethnic group in terms of population; educational attainments; wealth and possible connections seem to be dominating the less privilege ones in all aspects of development and allocation of the limited scarce resources. As a result of continual subjugation and the quest for political and economic liberation, the poor boundary paradigm of the Nigerian state have made it easier for ethnic and religious group to acquire weapons and attack their perceived enemies. In Nigeria, there were and are cases of horrific ethnic and religious violence which sophisticated weapons were used (The Nation, Sept. 3rd 2012). The ethno-religious crisis in states like Plateau, Kaduna, Taraba, Benue, Nassarawa etc, where lives and properties were destroyed, could not come to an abrupt end due to the importation and proliferations of small arms and light weapons into the country. In August 2010 for instance, security agents in Maiduguri arrested a commercial driver carrying 25 AK-47 rifles and hundreds of rounds of ammunition in a Peugeot 504 vehicle. These arms allegedly smuggled into the country from Cameroun were destined to Jos, where ethno-religious violence has cause serious devastation in human and material terms (Gusau, 2010:1). Many ethnic groups in the country have well equipped and trained militia, waiting for opportunities or the slightest provocation to vent their angers or take revenge. This is most unfortunate for the Nigerian state, the acclaimed giant of Africa.

Porosity of the Nigerian borders both on the land, air and maritime has increasingly excercibated the activities of ethno-cultural, cum religious militia like the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC); Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Boko Haram activities, among others. These armed groups with ethno-regional strongholds have at one time or the other pose a serious security threat to the cooperate existence of the government and the Nigerian state at large owing to the sophisticated weapons at their disposal (Luqman & Moshood, 2013).

The aforementioned have serious socio-economic, security and political implications on the nation's sovereignty and stability. For instance, such illicit and unofficial commercial activities like piracy, crude oil theft, money laundering and human trafficking across the borders have serious effects on the nation's economy, according to the then Nigerian Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Dele Ezeoba (Punch Mobile, 2013). These and other trans-border crimes directly deprive the Nigerian state of significant amount of money as revenue; Nigerians are losing what is meant for them to other nationals, especially at the borders; entry to and exit from Nigeria is not fully documented/ noticed; many people in the North-Eastern Nigeria are afraid and confused whenever they see soldiers on the way because the militants also use Army uniforms; rebels and terrorists could possibly be training and later, mobilize and deploy themselves to fight and unseat government at whatever level or threatened the peace and security of the nation and citizens etc. In some villages in Borno state, close to the international borders, schools are forced to be closed; government workers and political office holders are forced to leave their places of work due to the attacks and threats of insurgents in the area. All these are happening against the backdrop that Nigerian authorities have recruited, trained and posted its officers to the various known points of entry and exit to organise patrols of its borders for various reasons, including:

- Monitoring and controlling movements of people into and out of the country;
- Combating smuggling and illegal trafficking in goods across the border: and
- Defending the country against external aggression.

Having critically examined the impacts or effects of poor boundary delineation and management on national and regional security, vis-a-vis on the political economy of the Nigerian state, the question border and international security pundits are asking are, where are the customs; immigration and other security operatives recruited, trained and deployed to man these border post? Are the syndicates' 'spirits' that the security personnel cannot see and apprehend them? Are the Nigerian authorities ignorant of the challenges pose by porous boundary security and management in the land?

4. Conclusion

The concerned authorities are to awake from security and military slumber to firmly establish operational control

and influences on Nigeria's border regions. The incumbent micro-security breaches and challenges fuelled by poor border paradigm could escalate to macro- security out bust that can engulf the entire region if the present trends are not checked. Therefore, checkmating the illegal trans-border activities and developing the frontiers will among others, boost the nation's economy; protect the lives and properties of the Nigerian citizens; the citizen will have and repose much confidence on the ability and capability of their home governments; the Nigerian state will be stable politically; rural-urban migration will be curtailed or minimized and investors will be attracted to the nation's rural areas to invest. Peace and security are the panacea or sine qua non for socio-economic, political and national development that no rational government should overlook.

5. Recommendations

1) Developing the border regions by providing the necessary materials and equipments will forestall the magnitude of Nigerians migrating to other countries and unfortunately dying on the way.

2) The good and functional infrastructures at the periphery or frontier settlement will advertise the nation positively as an oil producing state for several decades.

3) The dwellers of the region will ensure the security of the Nigerian state by cooperating with and intimating the security operatives of any suspected security breaches.

4) The dwellers will settle peacefully and concentrate on their legitimate business, such as farming, pastoralist, and other genuine business in and across the borders and pay their tax accordingly.

5) Nigeria and her immediate neighbours should strongly collaborate; re-invigorate and boost their common border surveillance for maximum security.

6) Security operatives should be well trained; equipped with modern gadgets and be appropriately rewarded to track down syndicates.

7) Regional and sub-regional organizations should enforce existing international laws, treaties and conventions against defaulters whenever they arrested to serve as deterrence to others.

8) Government should liaise with appropriate bodies/institutes and sponsor researches to discover the secret routes and salient latest modus operandi of the syndicates and terrorists.

9) Modern and effective detecting materials should be procured and stationed at all known and vulnerable land, air and sea entry and exit points of the nation.

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