

ECOWAS REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND TRANS-BORDER SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) treaty was signed in Lagos on May 28, 1975, with a mandate to promote cooperation among member states and thus create a regional economic bloc. The essence of the treaty is to remove obstacles to the free movement of goods, capital, and people in the sub-region. While this integration project is noted for economic prosperity and development, it tends to have occasioned trans-border security management challenges in West Africa. Therefore, this paper examines the management of trans-border security challenges emanating from regional integration efforts in the West African sub-region. It is anchored on Neo-functional integration theory and relies on qualitative secondary data sourced through documents. This paper posits that achieving socio-economic prosperity for West Africa required eliminating certain barriers and restrictions to economic activities. However, the paper establishes that the implementation of integration programmes has thrown up new challenges for trans-border security management due to seemingly unregulated migration. It concludes that the integration programme wrapped in the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of goods and persons has constituted bottlenecks for trans-border security management in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended among others that Nigeria's government should strengthen its border patrol and establish a joint border patrol between Nigeria and other neighbouring countries to ensure effective trans-border security management.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Trade liberalization, Trans-border, Regional integration, Security Management

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Introduction

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 served as a forum for the major European countries to work out their concerns and effectively partitioned African territories for advancing colonization process. Prior to this scenario, the people of West Africa like in other sub-regions of Africa were involved in trans-national trades in various commodities and articles complementing the strengths and weaknesses of another. Adepoju (2005) noted that among West Africans, migration was generally described as a way of life that dates back to the pre-colonial era and was originally for resettlement and trade. This implies that cross-border trading and movements predated colonialism in West Africa. Traders used caravans of horses and camels from place to place with no restrictions on movement and trade in commodities like salt, spices, textiles, and even slaves. However, the partitioning of Africa led to the creation of artificial borders marked by identifiable landmarks such as rivers, mountains, and forests regardless of the tribes and ethnic groups that reside within and around these landmarks. The new boundaries have since divided such that we can in Nigeria and the Benin Republic, the Nemans in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, the Hutus in DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda, and among other instances (Afolabi, 2018). Adepoju (2005) states that despite the creation of these boundaries, ethnic groups along the borders of adjacent colonies kept their kinship ties and continued to regard cross-border movements as part of their internal movements.

Independence and the creation of modern nation-states in Africa exposed the challenges brought about by the artificial borders making the free commercial movement of people and goods difficult. Thus, the realization of the need for integration for the promotion of free movement and free trade in West Africa while ensuring unity among the people led to the formation of ECOWAS in 1975. This is because regional integration is trade-induced and as such all obstacles to trade must be removed (Antwi-Danso, 2009). The main focus of ECOWAS has been to integrate the economies of its members and uplift the standard of living of their peoples (Akinyemi & Aluko, 1984). As pointed out by Adepoju, (2005) the ECOWAS has created a borderless sub-region within which facilitates the free flow of goods and services. This apparently aligns with the position of ECOWAS founding Heads of State who believed that increased wealth and sustainable development can be created if there is free movement and economic integration (Afolabi 2018).

In view of the above, Adepoju, Boulton, and Levin (2007) argue that the determination to ensure accelerated regional development through

economic integration was the main consideration for the enactment of the Protocol on free movement. The essence is to remove impediments and all forms of restrictions or barriers to trade and movement of its citizens across borders (Adepoju, 2002). Additionally, among other reasons, the benefits from an integrated market through a borderless West Africa were in consonance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and UN human rights (Adepoju, 2011). The primary purpose of ECOWAS is to integrate the fifteen West African markets to aid the free movement of persons, goods, capital, and labour so that the community can advance harmoniously as one region in its search for sustained economic growth and development. Since 1975, several steps and initiatives have been taken to fashion deliberate strategic policies, programmes, and structures that can serve as a driving force for regional integration in West Africa.

Article 27 of the Treaty establishing ECOWAS affirms a long-term objective to establish community citizenship that could be acquired automatically by all member states' nationals. A key objective of the preamble to the treaty is to remove obstacles to the free movement of goods, capital, and people in the sub-region. As such, migrants of ECOWAS origin, irrespective of their migratory status, enjoy basic rights which are contained in protocols and subsisting texts, treaties, and decisions of the Heads of States and Governments of the Community. The signing of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, and the Right of Residence and Establishment in 1979 makes provisions for freedom of movement and residence (ECOWAS, 2006). This protocol affords citizens of the community the right of residence and establishment anywhere within the territory of Member States (ECOWAS, 1979). The primary aim is to create a borderless sub-region, which facilitates the free flow of goods and services (Adepoju, 2005).

The Member States of ECOWAS include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, and Guinea Bissau. Others are Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. According to Adjei and Clotey (2007), the establishment of ECOWAS was based on the conviction that the promotion of harmonious economic development of the member states required effective economic cooperation and integration largely through a determined and concerted policy of self-reliance. With the abolishment of visas and other entry requirements for citizens travelling to a sister country, a citizen of an ECOWAS member state who possesses valid travelling documents and an international health certificate can spend a period not exceeding 90 days in another state (Adepoju, 2002). Notwithstanding the protocol, a member state has the right to deny entry of any immigrant considered

to be inadmissible by its laws (Article 4). Even though the rights and privileges stated in the ECOWAS protocols for member states were meant to promote socioeconomic prosperity for member states, there have been allegations of violations by some individuals (Afolabi, 2018). This follows the fact that certain individuals, organizations, and nonstate actors within ECOWAS have continued to utilize the privileges provided under the free movement protocol to allegedly engage in acts inimical to trans-border security.

Arguable, regional integration championed by ECOWAS appears to be confronted with several impediments. For instance, Nigeria has continued to face difficulties in trans-border security management due to free entries and exiting of people and goods. This has resulted in a rising wave of crimes and insecurity occasioned by the easy trans-border movement. It is however instructive to note that, the Nigerian government has attempted to secure the national border as is constitutionally demanded. Despite the effort of the government, achieving transborder security appears to be elusive in Nigeria due to the porous nature of the borders. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders and weakened security system, weapons can easily come into the country without checks. Smuggling and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country have enabled militants, bandits, insurgents, and other criminal groups to have easy access to arms and ammunition with which they perpetrate mayhem in Nigeria (Achumba, Ighomereho, & AkporRobaro, 2013).

As should be noted, Nigeria covers 23,768 square kilometers with more than 3,650 kilometers of land and maritime borders (Oji & Okeke, 2014). According to Osimen, Anegbode, Akande, and Oyewole, (2017, p.1):

The international border between Nigeria and her neighbouring countries is roughly 4745sq.km. The major border countries with Nigeria are Cameroon (1,690 kilometers) in the east, Niger (1,497 kilometers) in the north, Benin (773 kilometers) in the west, and Chad (87 kilometers) in the north-east. Nigeria also shares maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe. The current border corresponds to the inter-colonial border between British and French territories that was set up in 1889.

Apart from having numerous borders, Arinze & Simon (2016) noted that Nigeria is among the countries in the world with the highest amount of porous borders which serve as either unchecked or unmanned entry points for illegal guns into the country. To ensure transborder security

management, Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and Police, and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) are security operatives constitutionally mandated to undertake the task of manning the borders and monitoring entry and exit of goods and people in Nigeria. Despite the security architecture outfits put in place, there are still daunting challenges of trans-border security management in Nigeria. It was reported that Nigeria is responsible for about 70% of illegal small arms in the West Africa sub-region (West Africa Network for Peace, {WANEP} 2013).

Undoubtedly, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for the unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012). These migrants who are mostly young men and women form the bulk of trans-border criminals. They constitute serious challenges to trans-border security management by engaging in human trafficking, smuggling, the proliferation of arms, and drug trafficking. This indicates that there have been incidences of trans-border crimes resulting from the relaxation of borders in line with ECOWAS regional integration programmes. In fact, illicit trade, smuggling, drugs, human trafficking, and other ancillary trans-border crimes have been on the increase (Okorn & Ndum, 2021). Such illicit activities are inimical to the goal of the ECOWAS regional integration project and thus undermine its success. This is manifest in illegal activities such as include money laundering; arms smuggling, leading to the local proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) as well as illegal oil bunkering and illicit trafficking in mineral resources, and business fraud.

The above scenario is very worrisome as Nigeria and other ECOWAS member states have continued to face the challenges of responding to such criminal activities. These challenges include lapses in national security apparatuses, a poor justice system, and uncoordinated state security agencies. These institutional weaknesses result in weak collaborative efforts and misguided legal regulatory frameworks incapable of enhancing trans-border security management in Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria continues to face serious trans-border security management challenges due to the operations of the ECOWAS regional integration programme encapsulated in the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of persons, goods, and services. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines ECOWAS regional integration and trans-border security management in Nigeria.

Conceptualization of Regional Integration, Trans-border Crimes, and Trans-border Security Management

The quest for socio-economic development and political relations tend to have necessitated regional integration among countries of various sub-regions. Schiff and Winters, (2003), observe that regional integration is linked to the activities of globalisation, which have provided the platform for liberalization and necessitated regional economic integration across the world. This helps to position the participating countries to be involved in the global supply chains. Thus, regional integration can be defined as the conscious coming together of countries with a common interest and similar challenges to form a united front to pursue their collective interest and tackle their problems. In this sense, regional integration portends that neighbouring countries are expected to harness their similar and different endowments and challenges for the collective socio-economic cum political development of a region. The overall essence is to tackle the twin challenges of unhealthy competition and insecurity by creating opportunities for development and economic growth (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Anyanwu & Conceição, 2014). In other words, regional integration efforts can be very useful in meeting the daunting challenges of addressing youth unemployment, adapting education systems to market demands, and creating efficient social safety nets.

Trans-border crime refers to acts that violate the laws of more than one country (Passas, 2003). It entails illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either for financial, socio-political, or religious considerations. This suggests that trans-border crime represents a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across international borders, either, for financial or economic benefits (Ering, 2011). To Sunday and Okechukwu (2014) trans-border crimes are a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders. These acts would include human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling or trafficking of weapons, terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, illicit trafficking in diamonds, corruption, and business fraud, to mention but a few (Blum, 2014; Addo, 2006).

Indicatively, trans-border crimes pose threats to the security and stability of Nigeria and other West African states that have drastically increased the threat to international peace and security (Sunday & Okechukwu, 2014). Addo (2006) stated that the control and regulation of cross-border activities are essential for ensuring peace and stability, and for promoting

pertinent political and socio-economic activities needed for integration in West African Economies. Most West African countries especially Nigeria are confronted with daunting tasks of managing transborder security. The essence is to prevent illegal entries and exiting of people and goods while at the same time allowing easy movement of goods and people. The causes of trans-border crimes in Nigeria are multifaceted including corruption, porous border area alongside poor demarcation of the border area, poverty, and institutional framework (ECOWAS protocol on free movement) among others.

This indicates that trans-border security management has to do with conscious government programmes and strategies aimed at preventing illegal transactions and crimes along the border areas. The overall essence of trans-border security management is ensuring the safety of lives and property of citizens while maintaining territorial integrity. It has to do with the government functions of immigration, customs and excise, and policing, with the aim of controlling and regulating the flow of people and goods across a country's territory. Trans-border security management also involves manning and maintenance of boundary beacons that mark the physical limits of the country's territory. This suggests that it is a collaborative process between a country and its neighbours to the prevention of movement of illegitimate goods, persons, and terrorists into a country (ECOWAS, 2017).

Theoretical Framework- Neo-functional Theory

The analysis in this paper is anchored on Neo-functional theory. Neo-functionalism is one of the most prominent theories of integration and a core part of the wider debate between supranational and intergovernmental perspectives on integration. Neo-functionalism developed a model to explain the growing level of integration and the role of supranational bodies in the furtherance of this integration. Neo-functionalism rests on a core number of intellectual pillars. Proponent of neo-functionalists includes Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, Ernst in 1950-1957, and Karl Deutsch (Ghosh, 2009).

In the mid-1950s, the theory of neo-functionalism emerged. It is a theory of regional integration that clearly defines the process by which states eliminate barriers to trade hindering economic, political, and socio-cultural activities among member states. Some major scholars associated with neo-functionalism include Leon Lindberg, Joseph Nye, and Amitai Etzioni.

Certain conditions such as the increase in transaction flows, mutual responsiveness, shared values, and relatively geographic and social mobility of persons are critical integrative mechanisms (Ghosh, 2009, p. 207).

Neo-functionalism reformulates the functionalist ethics in regards to regional institutions, the functionalist sees integration as a vital tool for political and economic development which imposes more functional activities among states and emphasises the need for functional organisations cooperation. The theory argues that cooperation among states will lead to economic growth and development that can satisfy the economic needs of their people. It also posits that economic integration leads to an increase in interaction between actors in the integrating region. As such, supranational bodies design and pursue strategies to deepen integration. Integration from the viewing point of Neo-functionalists is that institutions such as ECOWAS foster socio-economic and political growth.

It should be noted that the Neo-functionalism theory faces some weaknesses such as a lack of trust and competition among international actors as everyone always tries to maximize its gains. Despite this weakness, the theory of Neo-functionalism applies to this paper because it explains the essence of establishing an organization to foster integration and it also enables states to function effectively under the established organization. In line with the Neo-functionalism theory, ECOWAS member states interact and function effectively while engaging in political, economic, and social affairs. This is a result of ECOWAS as an organization being able to manage and control the activities and affairs of states to achieve the set goals of ECOWAS protocol on free movement. Neo-functionalism theory also emphasizes that people tend to function effectively when they integrate; in essence, ECOWAS regional integration can be fully achieved when member states come together and work as a team.

The theory of Neo-functionalism is also very relevant in interrogating how the ECOWAS regional integration programme through the protocol on free movement constitutes challenges to trans-border security management in Nigeria. The theory explains why and under which conditions states decide to transfer political authority to regional organizations, how regional organizations expand their tasks, competencies, and members, and what impact they have on states and societies in their regions.

Integration, Trans-Border Crimes, and ECOWAS

Integration has to do with sub-regional cooperation and the formation of a political and economic union between neighbouring countries. This

is because of the narrowness of different countries' markets which propel them to join forces to develop their industries and reap the benefits of economies of scale. Through integration, countries attract foreign investors by organizing a frontier free market with a critical mass of potential consumers and creating jobs and employment opportunities for their citizens (Nomvete, 1992). In this regard, integration is seen as efforts towards strengthening ties reflected through a process in which national political actors shift their expectations, loyalties, and political activities from the nation-state level to a large center with institutions possessing or demanding authority over the nation-state.

The above seems to have prompted Schiff and Winters, (2003) to posit that most developing countries have progressively embraced integration as a key strategy for socioeconomic development, political relations, and poverty reduction. By integrating with neighbouring countries, large and small economies become better positioned to participate in regional supply chains, thereby expanding their market access (Okorn & Ndum (2021). In other words, neighbouring countries are expected to harness their similar and different endowments and challenges for collective socio-economic cum political development of a region. The overall essence of integration is to tackle the twin challenges of unhealthy competition and insecurity by creating opportunities for development and economic growth (Peprah, 2016).

Thus, integration serves as a mechanism for driving more robust and equitable economic growth capable of reducing poverty and unemployment (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Anyanwu & Conceição, 2014). The overall essence of integration is to promote economic development by removing barriers to movement, trade, and business across borders. It is however worrisome that the benefits of integration are tainted with associated trans-border crimes. The transfer of criminal activity from one country to another is a spillover effect of integration policies that loosen the borders for the purpose of development and enhancing great friendly balance.

Trans-border crime entails acts that violate the laws of more than one country (Passas, 2003). The implication is that trans-border crimes are crimes that have an actual or potential effects across national borders that offend fundamental values of the international community.

This suggests that trans-border crime³ represents a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders, either, for financial or economic benefits and also for socio-political and religious considerations (Ering, 2011). In this

vein, Sunday and Okechukwu, (2014) argue that trans-border crimes entail a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders. These acts would include human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling or trafficking of weapons, terrorism, illegal oil bunkering, illicit trafficking in diamonds, corruption, and business fraud, to mention but a few. Ortuno and Wiriyachai (2009) explain that trans-border crimes include human trafficking, arms smuggling, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and money laundering seen to cut across one geographical area.

The failure to check and properly control their various activities causes security issues especially the influx of arms around the border. Nwanegbo, Odigbo, & Udalla, (2020) posit that organized trans-border criminal groups or individuals tend to carry out their illicit activities using major technological tools such as information networks, financial systems, and other sophisticated means. In West Africa, the criminals take advantage of the ECOWAS regional integration programme which often seriously hamper state efforts to respond adequately to the threat of trans-border crimes.

Trans-border crimes became very rife and prevalent in the 1980s and by the 1990s (Williams, 1998). The situation has taken a more worrisome dimension in the fourth republic that Nigeria is counted amongst the most terrorised countries in the world. Trans-border crimes have grown in scope to involve large-scale financial fraud and cybercrime. The illicit proceeds make the criminal syndicates willing to protect their activities through violent and notorious organizational strategies to deter capture (Luna, 2008). The conditions favourable to crime include poverty, weakness of the security apparatus, porous borders, and a lack of cross-national cooperation among others.

Trans-border crimes undermine good governance and security, with a negative impact on the rule of law, economic activities and growth, human rights, and general societal and cultural advancement within the sub-region. Some of the trans-border crimes perpetrated across the borders of countries of the ECOWAS include the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition as well as human beings, especially women and children (Addo, 2006). Recruitment of child soldiers in armed conflict, trans-national syndicates involved in crimes such as peddling of narcotics, armed robbery activities, and the smuggling of goods are the other trans-border related crimes (Addo, 2006). Indicatively, trans-border crimes pose threats to the security and stability of West African nations. The nature of trans-border crimes in the West Africa Sub-region

has changed rapidly over recent years through the use of technology, the loosening of travel restrictions, and criminal diversification which has drastically increased the threat to international peace and security (Wakili, 2014; Sunday & Okechukwu, 2014). This is worsened by the spate of insurgency, banditry, and terrorism in West Africa.

One of the key targets of establishing ECOWAS was to ensure that nations within the West Africa sub-region attain economic prosperity aided by free trade and free movement of people and goods with the ECOWAS member countries without barriers to traders and businessmen and women. For instance, Afolabi (2018) explains that Article 27 of the ECOWAS treaty affirmed the need for economic integration, which includes the free flow of citizens, goods, and services by calling on the Member States to ensure the gradual removal of all obstacles to the free movement of citizens, services and capital (Paragraph 1 of Article 27) (ECOWAS, 1999).

Afolabi (2018) asserts that the ECOWAS protocol on free movement was a good step in the right direction. This was to ensure a borderless region where member states can relate freely in trading. ECOWAS member states were therefore as a matter of fact required to stop demanding VISA and residence permits, and allow West Africans to work and undertake commercial and industrial activities within their territories (Paragraph 2). The re-creation of borderless West Africa was in consonance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and UN human rights (ECOWAS, 1999). In this regard, Aning and Pokoo, (2014) state that ECOWAS has been a champion of international cooperation and initiator of policy measures for responding to drug trafficking and organized crime in the West African region.

Although the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of people and goods is primarily aimed at achieving economic prosperity for the West African sub-region, Okorn and Ndum (2021) argue that the ECOWAS protocol seems to pose security challenges due to the massive influx of illegal migrants who equally engage in crimes. These illegal migrants allegedly engage in smuggling, arms, and human trafficking; oil theft, and many other trans-border crimes. Furthermore, Afolabi (2018) and Chambas (2013) separately argue that the lack of political commitment by member states has bedevilled ECOWAS efforts towards regional integration. It is in view of the above that Okorn and Ndum (2021) lament that the West African sub-region seems to be under attack from international criminal networks that are using the sub-region as a key global hub for the distribution, wholesale, and increasing production of illicit drugs and arms. The porosity of the border areas tends to make it

difficult for the security operatives to control the movement of people and goods. This constitutes a serious source of concern and a threat to the economic prosperity which the founding fathers of ECOWAS had when they conceived the ideas of regional integration.

Adetula (2015) considers the integration process and trans-border security in West Africa to include the responsibility of African governments coming to the realization that it is very difficult and almost impossible for individual nations (especially developing nations) irrespective of their economic might to single-handedly achieve economic development and independence. This aligns with the position of Nwanegbo, Odigbo, & Udalla, (2020) that policy measures, military measures, law enforcement measures, and socio-economic measures are essential to curb trans-border crimes in the sub-region. The border areas have been closed on different occasions by the Nigerian government to curb the activities of smugglers. This approach appears to be an all-in-one approach that aims at curbing trans-border security challenges. Peprah (2016) earlier posits that the lack of political commitment by member states has bedevilled ECOWAS efforts towards building a viable sub-regional economic community. In this regard, a partnership among ECOWAS countries would be necessary to effectively meet the various forms of challenges impeding the integration process of ECOWAS. This is because the issue of member states' national security remains a serious factor inhibiting the full integration of ECOWAS member countries.

Afolabi (2018) highlights that poverty, weak state institution, and the porosity of the border constitute the drivers of trans-border crimes in Nigeria. There are so many unmanned border paths through which criminal elements, smugglers, and traffickers alike access the country. In response to the above factors identified as responsible for trans-border crimes, Adetula (2015) and Annan (2012) separately recommended measures such as law enforcement, military, policy, and socio-economic measures to curb trans-border crimes in Nigeria. Chambas (2013) posits that many non-tariff barriers and arbitrariness on the part of customs, immigration, and other security agencies and officials still constitute obstacles in the way of free trade within the sub-region.

The Prospects of ECOWAS Regional Integration and Challenges of Trans-border Insecurity in Nigeria

By virtue of Article 27 of the ECOWAS treaty, ECOWAS member states were required to stop demanding visa and residence permits, and allow

West Africans to work and undertake commercial and industrial activities within their territories (Paragraph 2) was in consonance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and UN human rights. The provisions in the protocol on free movement (ECOWAS, 1999) are as follows:

- i. The Community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member States.
- ii. The right of entry, residence, and establishment is to be progressively established in the course of a maximum transitional period of fifteen (15) years from the definitive entry into force of this Protocol by abolishing all other obstacles to the free movement of citizens and the right of residence and establishment.
- iii. The right of entry, residence, and establishment which shall be established in the course of a transitional period shall be accomplished in three phases.

In view of the above, Venables, (2003) states that the emphasis has been placed on the acceleration of economic growth and poverty reduction in the various countries to avoid citizens of some countries becoming an economic burden on a few Member States. The Protocol abolished all visa requirements that were hitherto required to enable one to enter any West African country. This has been due to the coming into being of the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons, goods, and capital. However, (Gberie, 2015) explains that ECOWAS regional integration programme has led to several bilateral agreements with European and American partners in forging strong ties with counter-narcotic law enforcement agencies in the region as a pathway to fighting crimes and criminal activities in the sub-region. This implies that ECOWAS has over time been able to come up with policies, resolutions, protocols, conventions, decisions, declarations, and joint initiatives aimed at curbing illicit trades and trafficking within the region.

Similarly, Aning and Pokoo, (2014) note that ECOWAS has been a champion of international cooperation and initiator of policy measures for responding to drug trafficking and organized crime in the West African region. This position aligns with the assertion of Gberie (2015) who explains that there is a range of "policy and operational responses" that is linked to anti-drug trafficking mechanisms initiated by West African governments through the ECOWAS. Such include the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted in February 2013 and the finalization of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Security Strategy in November 2013 (Gberie, 2015). Also, Ralston 2014 argued that the ECOWAS integration program has

created and improved a “real-time communication system in the airports within the West African sub-region to report and arrest potential suspects of crimes, drugs trafficking and other trans-border crimes in the region. These are clear testaments of the positive impacts of the ECOWAS regional integration program. In this sense, integrated regions of West Africa tend to lower taxations and sometimes are mostly flexible in terms of conditions of trade with member states thereby enhancing greater incentives and benefits among member states. Such flexibility enhances the ease of doing business and improves the economic fortunes of the member nations. The integrated economies of West African countries have manifested better opportunities for collaboration through a unified policy that strategically improved the socio-economic and material wellbeing of the people.

However, the porous border of West African countries has continued to endanger transborder security management in Nigeria. This is due to the failure of Nigeria’s government to implement appropriate mechanisms for monitoring movement and illegal activities across these borders. Nigeria’s porous borders allow for the proliferation of light weapons, which have found their way into the country from the Maghreb following uprisings in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, and Libya. The ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons, goods, and services has also created a space that criminals exploit to facilitate cross-border trafficking. This is because many people in the sub-region do not possess valid travelling documents. There are also concerns that the privileges enshrined in the ECOWAS protocol have been abused by some citizens of the sub-region. Some of the abuses include smuggling of goods and illicit trade in narcotics, human trafficking smuggling of arms and ammunition, trans-border prostitution, and several other crimes. Afolabi (2018) observes that these crimes and acts of economic saboteurs have led to the expression of resentment among officials and the general public in the destination nations. Member countries are beginning to take measures to check these ugly trends so as not to degenerate into serious national emergencies in the future.

Nigeria for instance has established a Border Patrol Unit within the Nigeria Immigration Service to police her borders. ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Citizens is perceived to have helped in encouraging tourists, unemployed and impoverished from ECOWAS states to take to crime in Nigeria. This is due to the visa-on-arrival policy of Nigeria’s government. As such, citizens of other West African countries are allowed into Nigeria without proper check. In this regard, the implementation of the protocol undermines the capacity of security agencies in Nigeria to control and protect the country against the entrance of criminals into the country (Ike,

2013; Mbachi, Ogochukwu & Ikeanyibe, 2017; Afolabi (2018). The bases of these concerns are increasing criminal activities in Nigeria mostly by West Africans from other nations who take advantage of the provisions in the Protocol to engage in armed militia group formation, armed robbery, cyber-crimes, fraudulent, and money laundering activities.

Adepoju (2015) contends that the piecemeal implementation of the protocols highlights the need for member state governments to harmonize national laws which conflict with regional and sub-regional treaties and address the issue of the right of residence and establishment of migrants and obligations of the host countries by amending national laws and investment codes that restrict “foreigners”, including nationals of Community States, from participating in certain kinds of economic activities. In this sense, certain areas of the protocol such as free movement of persons, travel cards, traveller’s cheques, tariff regime, customs, and immigration formalities to enhance intra-regional labour mobility and cross-border trade need to be strengthened for effectiveness. The outcries about the activities of Fulani herdsmen in some parts of Nigeria have heightened the security tempo in the country. Instances are where a great number of herders migrate freely into Nigeria without any valid documents (Adepoju, 2015). This makes it difficult for the relevant authorities to have accurate records of immigrants as well as the destinations and purpose of these immigrants in the country. There have been instances where suspected Herders successfully attacked communities and disappeared into the Tin-air without traces.

Major Drivers of Trans-border Security Challenges in Nigeria

Trans-border insecurity has constituted a major issue of international concern. Transborder security challenges obviously undermine good governance and security. This tends to suggest that the ECOWAS Protocol has contributed to the poor capacity of border security agencies to determine threats to national security in Nigeria. Drivers of trans-border insecurity are usually factors that trigger, motivate, or serve as a catalyst to perpetrators of trans-border insecurity. Although there is no justifiable reason for involvement in criminal activities it is believed that certain factors propel trans-border insecurity. Some of the drivers of trans-border insecurity are as follows.

Bribery and Corruption at the Borders

Every border is policed by customs, immigration officials, and other security personnel from sister agencies. It is the responsibility of these security operatives to prevent illegal migration and illicit business transactions

across the border lines. However, some of the officers allegedly indulge in corrupt practices and take bribes from criminals. As such, bribery and corruption have been identified as one of the driving forces for the perpetuation of several acts of crimes and criminalities across the border. Corruption is therefore a general problem in West Africa and in Nigeria to be specific. This prompts Afolabi (2018) to argue that bribery and corruption among West African public officials have demeaned the fight against trans-border crimes.

Similarly, Okorn and Ndum(2021) note that efforts to curb trans-border insecurity have always been impeded by endemic corruption perpetrated even by some supposed government agencies. These acts are done in the forms of bribery, abuse of office, and influence peddling to nepotism and squander mania (Okorn & Ndum (2021). The danger of security personnel colluding with criminal networks is a frustration of meaningful efforts in the fight against transborder crimes in the West African sub-region. In fact, bribery and corruption tend to have weakened the institutions saddled with security responsibilities. Some high-ranking security personnel seems to be implicated on grounds of accepting bribes from drug traffickers to look away from trans-border criminals. Addo (2006) noted that the heads of these criminal businesses are in strong alliances with some top border officials who also benefit from the proceeds of the crime. Due to the huge financial rewards associated with these illicit business transactions, many officials cannot overcome the temptation of consenting. This contradiction promotes trans-border crimes in Nigeria.

The Porosity of the Borders

Most West African borders are poorly manned. While Nigeria's border problem is related to colonial history, its porosity has been exacerbated by the failure of succeeding governments to properly administer these borders (Okorn & Ndum 2021). For instance, out of the 1978 entry points into Nigeria, only 84 are approved and 1894 illegal route lies around the country (William, 1998). The high level of insecurity across the borders is largely due to the way they are administered and managed, and less to do with how colonialists drew them. The borders in West Africa linking to Nigeria have been the most problematic because of the activities of internationally reputed criminals engaging in smuggling and trafficking of virtually everything from human trafficking, ammunition, arms, and drugs manufactured goods, agricultural produce, prostitution, and child labour to religious fanaticism, terrorist attacks and insurgency.

Weak Institutions

West Africa's primary attraction to traffickers is not just about geography, but rather its low standard of governance, low level of law enforcement, and high rates of corruption due to the weak institution (Brown, 2013). This shows a deficiency in the application of laws against criminals. As such, criminals seem to have no trouble operating from the sub-region on account of its permissive environment, and large unregulated water, land, and forest spaces. Pape (2005) avers that weak public government institutions and state breakdown among West African countries trigger crimes such as trans-border crimes. Also, McGuire (2010) is of the view that the lack of capacity by state institutions to enforce laws is a catalyst for trans-border crimes in West Africa.

The fragile state conditions tend to promote destructive conflicts and the perpetuation of disorder (Adetula 2015). As such criminal groups explore for and take advantage of these weak state apparatus to perpetrate crimes. Sequel to this, Gberie (2016) points to the fact that West African governments do not respond properly to national security needs and the exigencies of governance except by highlighting them in the international arena. The governments are noted as being lukewarm in their disposition to national security matters and the states have become insecure because they have failed to uphold local governance, authority, and territorial integrity which have in turn opened their borders to multiple threats with devastating implications on security systems, regional integration, and economic progress, (Adetula 2015).

Poverty

One of the major factors that propel trans-border crime in Nigeria and other West African countries is poverty. Where there is a high poverty rate, there is every tendency that illiteracy, poor governance, corruption, ethnic violence among others, drug trafficking, and the movement of weapons will surely be high in such a place. This indicates that there is a nexus between poverty and crime even though some high-tech crimes operate as industry and are not hunger-induced. As a matter of fact, the West African sub-region with a high population of youth people experiences a high level of crime in absence of remedial policies and programmes. The pressure and quest for survival often push some people to engage in crimes and criminal acts.

The Efforts of ECOWAS in Tackling Trans-Border Insecurity

In her bid to facilitate trans-border security management, ECOWAS regional integration programme put in place measures to overcome the challenges and as well charged member countries to incorporate those measures in their overall national policies, programmes, and legislation for implementation. For instance, ECOWAS has taken measures to approve the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and has set up an ECOWAS drug control unit in the sub-region to control functions and provide technical support and expertise to member states on drugs control and illicit drugs trafficking within the regions. Victor (2017) states that the control and regulation of cross-border activities are essential for ensuring peace and stability, and for promoting pertinent political and socio-economic activities needed for integration in West African economies.

ECOWAS has adopted several policies, resolutions, protocols, conventions, decisions, declarations, and joint initiatives to curb illicit trans-border trade in West Africa. Some of them include ECOWAS Convention A/P1/7/92 on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, Decision A/DEC.9/12/99 establishing the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), 2008 Political Declaration - the Abuja Declaration 2008 to address the security threats posed by drug trafficking in the sub-region (Aning, and Pokoo, 2014). Other measures consist of the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan 2013 and the ECOWAS Maritime Security Strategy. ECOWAS also encouraged and signed several bilateral agreements with European and American partners in forging strong ties with counternarcotic law enforcement agencies in the region (Gberie, 2015). The steps taken by ECOWAS in curbing the tides of illicit trading in drugs and drug trafficking are indeed laudable and worthy of commendation.

The foregoing suggests that ECOWAS recognizes that the regional integration program accompanied by free movement within the region by citizens of member states comes with challenges of trans-border security management. This implies that ECOWAS regional integration has serious consequences on trans-border security management in Nigeria. The ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of persons, goods, and services requires the removal of border restrictions. This in turn undermines trans-border security management.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The leadership of ECOWAS has consistently pursued the integration goal of the West African sub-region by subscribing to the vision of the founding fathers of ECOWAS. The essence is to improve the living conditions of the citizenry, ensure economic growth and create an environment conducive to true development and integration. These seemingly robust efforts have been marred by challenges associated with trans-border security management. Many have taken advantage of the protocol on free movement to engage in nefarious acts such as illicit trading, trafficking, arms smuggling, and several other crimes.

Although the ECOWAS regional integration programmes have in no small measures impacted curbing trans-border security issues such as illicit trades and trafficking, it is however worrisome to note that often the privileges of free movement as contained in the ECOWAS Protocol have been abused by some citizens of ECOWAS states. This poses a serious security concern in the West African sub-region and Nigeria in particular. This indicates that regional integration is beyond lowering tariffs and eliminating trade barriers. It requires proper transborder security management to achieve socio-economic and cultural integration.

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