

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF TRANS-BORDER CRIMES IN NIGERIA: 2015-2019

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Abstract

The continuous surge in threats to global security especially orchestrated by trans-border - crimes such as money laundering, arms trafficking, drug trafficking and human trafficking, has given rise to a series of new discussions and strategic thinking among scholars and security experts. Nigeria is not an exception to these threats as it has, lately, been witnessing a handful of these palpable security challenges threatening its peaceful corporate existence and economic prosperity. This paper thus examined the dimensions of trans-border crimes and its socio-economic implications for Nigeria. The paper employed qualitative methodology, secondary data collection and descriptive method of analysis. The paper argues that global interconnectedness facilitates increase in trans-border crimes, especially in Nigeria where the unofficial/unmanned borders surpass the official/manned borders. Therefore, it is found that drug trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking of persons, car smuggling and internet fraud are prevalent trans-border crimes in Nigeria. The socio-economic implications of trans-border crimes are mostly felt in fueling corruption, infiltrating businesses, hindering development and endangering lives and national security. Identifiable causes of increased trans-border crimes in Nigeria include porous borders, political corruption, and compromised security system. It is concluded that trans-border crimes pose serious national challenges that require multi track strategies and coordinated responses from the government, its agencies, transnational agencies, neighbouring governments and the citizens, to address. The paper, thus, recommended that to significantly minimize the menace of trans-border crimes in Nigeria, the government should adequately police the borders while the appropriate law enforcement officers must be well mobilized and equipped to so do.

Keywords: Border, globalization, porous borders, trans-border, trans-border crimes.

1.0 Introduction

Trans-border crimes, otherwise known as transnational crimes, bring to the fore a serious and growing threat to not only the national, but also the international security architecture, and further severe implications for public safety – public health and institutions – through the disruption of economic stability across the world. The global criminal networks are not only expanding but also diversifying their horizons leading to the convergence of threats that were traditionally different. They portend destabilizing impacts in the international system. Although complex interdependence defines contemporary international economic relations, it

is essentially important to seriously regulate trans-border activities to engender global peace and stability while promoting socio-economic activities needed for global economic development.

There is no gainsaying the fact that trans-border crime is a phenomenon that has defied global efforts over the years. It continues to undermine the peace, security, economic and human development of states in the international system. Illicit practices such as the smuggling of contraband goods, mineral resources and trafficking of arms and persons have manifested in different dimensions across the globe. Transnational crime is an age-long illicit business worldwide in which the perpetrators seek to maximize profit or gains by illegally smuggling and trafficking items prohibited by law into and outside their countries, in collaboration with their partners in other countries (Albert, 2006). Historically, although illicit trade across informal territories evolved long before the contemporary state system, contemporary transnational crimes are believed to have become prominent with the recognition of states' borders through the 1648 Westphalian state system.

In contemporary globalization, the movement of persons and goods across national borders is inevitable, but it equally provides an avenue for transnational criminals to undertake their cross-border criminal activities. Needless to add, therefore, that trans-border criminal activities undermine good governance and national security with impacts on the rule of law, human rights, economic activities and growth. Some of these activities involve the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and human beings, especially women and children, cybercrimes, peddling of narcotics and the smuggling of goods. These crimes and their impacts manifest in significant proportions in Nigeria, even as NDLEA, NAPTIP, Nigerian Customs Service and Nigerian Immigration Service battle to curtail these socio-economic menaces.

Nigeria as a significant actor in Africa, and particularly among its immediate neighbouring states, is faced with daunting challenges of responding effectively to these criminal activities which include lapses in national security apparatuses and the criminal justice system, and, weak regional collaboration and legal regulatory mechanisms. The closing of borders, which has been an age-long policy response, has been particularly defective because of its effects on both the national economy and that of the neighbouring states.

Nigerians, at home and in diaspora, see insecurity – especially orchestrated by trans-border crimes and criminal activities – as the single most significant threat facing Nigeria today. Insecurity in Nigeria is attributable not only to the unrestricted inflow of aliens, but also to the perennial increase in smuggling of arms, ammunitions and light weapons into the Nigerian territory. In the same vein, the smuggling of goods (foods, drugs, hard drugs and cars), oil and persons into, and out of, the country is inimical to not only Nigeria's economic growth but also its international image. Therefore, with increased incident of transnational crimes in Nigeria and its environment, it is important this study examines the socio-economic implications of drug trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking of persons and car smuggling as trans-border crimes in Nigeria. Through qualitative and descriptive paradigm, this paper analyzes specific

dimensions and implications of trans-border crimes for Nigeria's economy and security, drawing necessary data from current reports of relevant government agencies.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The key concepts that are often interchangeably used in the available literature on this discourse are: trans-border crimes, transnational crimes, transnational organized crimes, and international crimes.

Transnational organized crimes are well premeditated and organized criminal activities beyond the borders of a country which threatens peaceful coexistence and human security. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) signed in Palermo, Italy, defines transnational organized crime as a crime committed in more than one state in which a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another state, involving the organized criminal group. Similarly, transnational organized crime leads to a violation of human rights and further undermines the social, economic, cultural and political development of the affected societies (McDermott, 2015). Organized crime is not static, but changes as new and sophisticated crimes emerge. It ties between criminal networks attain flexibility, complexity and becomes global. Transnational organized crimes refer specifically to transnational crimes carried out by organized crime organizations. The transnational nature of organized crimes mean that the networks of criminal activities form relationships across borders by overcoming linguistic and cultural differences in their operations (Ahmed, 2017). Organized crimes can be described as a social network of individuals who commit illegal activities in a prolonged period with the objective to gain control and secure biggest economic benefits (Solis and Aravena, 2009). The period of time (prolonged or short), however, seems immaterial as long as the crime is purposely planned and executed to affect a multiple of states.

Trans-border crimes are criminal acts against more than one country. That is, they are criminal acts that violate the laws usually involving more than one country, whether at the planning or execution stage. It may likewise be in form of the impact of such act. Thus, it is reasoned that even if a particular act is not regarded as a crime in one of the affected countries, it (the act) qualifies as a trans-border crime once the criminal act is planned and executed beyond the boundaries of a state or the impact or effect is directly felt across the border. Thus, according to Moulaye (2009), trans-border crimes can simply be defined as a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders.

Trans-border crime is a collection of unlawful and infamous activities committed by individuals and groups across national and international boundaries (Ering, 2011). Supporting this assertion, Eze-Michael (2021) noted that trans-border crime entails individuals in multiple nations maintaining a system of operation and correspondence that is effective enough to carry

out unlawful transactions repeatedly. These crimes may be motivated by economic, sociopolitical, or religious motives/gains (Ering, 2011; Eze-Michael, 2021; Ikyase, & Umara, 2016).

Due to globalization, transnational crime has grown in scope and momentum, posing a threat to international peace and security (Ering, 2011). This is a result of its capacity to facilitate the movement of all kinds of contrabands including arms and ammunitions across international borders (Faleye, 2019), for instance, the movement of arms, ammunition and terrorists across Nigeria's Northeastern boundaries with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Ikyase, & Umara, 2016; Iweze, 2020). This reality has resulted in the proliferation of arms and weapons within the Nigerian state, leading to increased rate of attacks by the Boko haram, killer herdsmen and bandits, among others (Ikyase & Umara, 2016; Iweze, 2020; Egbefo & Babalola, 2022). Other trans-national border crimes include the trafficking of humans, drugs, and or other illegal items (Ering, 2011; Ikyase & Umara, 2016; Eze-Michael, 2021).

International crimes are generally crimes against international rule of law and international customs. International crimes usually manifest in form of human and people's rights violations, war crimes, crime of aggression and crimes against humanity, which may or may not involve multiple countries. For instance, the literature and scholarly opinions agree that the 1994 war in Rwanda was genocide (international crime) rather than a trans-border crime. In the same vein, although the line may be too arbitrary, it is pertinent to observe that terrorism is perceived an international crime, even if it happens within a country. It, however, becomes a trans-border crime when it joins forces with other criminal elements (for instance, Islamic States in West Africa Province) to terrorize the countries of the region. However, in the words of Osimen (2017), transnational crimes can be a subject of customary international law in certain circumstances. International crime may also qualify as transnational crime when the criminal conduct in one country has an impact in another or even several other states.

Therefore, as trans-border crimes are transnational in nature and usually perpetrated in collaboration with criminal networks across border, this paper uses transnational crimes, trans-border crimes and transnational organized crimes to mean one and the same thing.

2.2 Factors Facilitating Trans-border Crimes in Nigeria

Although trans-border crimes are global phenomena, there are different existential factors which act as impetus to its greater prevalence in one country or region than another. However, the underlying cause of transnational crimes is the wanton desire to greedily gain control of greater economic benefit, even to the detriment of others, by the perpetrators of these acts. In actualizing this goal, a number of atrocities are committed which resultantly affect the people and the state/region, to be discussed in subsequent section. The factors that facilitate the commission of transnational crimes in Nigeria include, and possibly a combination of, the following: corruption, poverty, bad governance, geostrategic position and forces of globalization.

The ‘fight’ against corruption by successive governments in Nigeria has yielded little or no dividend. Rather, the social problem has remained elusive and pervasive, with serious implications for increased trans-border crimes. It has been established that there has existed a close connection between members of organized crime groups and some top government functionaries in different strata. Organized crime syndicates have relied on total protection from high profile government officials and high ranking political figures. A recent example was the revelation from the ongoing investigation of DCP Abba Kyari for drug dealing in connivance with some notorious drug syndicate. So also is the UAE’s conviction of some unnamed individuals for financing Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria in which a prominent person in government (name withheld) was fingered. As cited in Ahmed (2017), Solis and Aravena (2009) posited that organized crime thrives and prospers as a result of the corruption of the state, which has eaten deep into the fabric of the society. Corruption is considered the most powerful promoter of transnational organized crimes where organized crime groups are involved in corrupting government officials such as the security forces – particularly the Police, Customs and Immigration Service – as well as the judiciary and the office of the attorney general, with deepening interest in involvement in the political arena (McDermott, 2012). Studying the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the 2013 Transparency International corruption index specifically linked the level of transnational crimes to the rate of corruption in the society.

In addition, trans-border crimes in Nigeria are being facilitated by poverty. The poverty rate in the country orchestrated by price inflation, unemployment and scarce opportunities helps to foster criminal acts particularly the trafficking in drugs, persons and cybercrime. The youth, mostly affected by the evils of abject poverty, would not hesitate to accept any offer thrown at them to better their economic lot and improve their livelihood, even if it means becoming part and parcel of international criminal networks or inadvertently constituting a security threat to another state. This can be seen in the way and manner young men and women desperately explore every available means – including desert and Mediterranean – to migrate out of the country as a matter of life and death. Such idle hands are also ready workshops for actual smuggling of hard drugs and arms and/or aiding such criminal acts. It is a commonplace, for instance, that poverty is a breeding site for increased internet fraud and other cybercrimes prevalent among the youth.

Another significant factor associated with the above is the issue of bad governance and inarticulate leadership. This has resulted in institutional deficiency which greatly hampers any effort of the government towards that end. This becomes complex with the manifest inconsistency on the part of the government (Thoumi, 2010) in putting in place appropriate and effective measures to checkmate the menace of transnational crimes in Nigeria. The activities of organized crime groups thrive in the weak and fragile institutions coupled with the country’s defective borderless borders (Osimen et al., 2017). Although Nigeria has enjoyed

twenty years of uninterrupted democratic practice, Ahmed (2017) observed the government officials have increasingly turned out to be corrupt and incompetent in fighting organized crimes. In other words, such government cannot prevent the proliferation of violent criminal organizations, as well as the illegal markets that sell/buy drugs, carry out money laundering and also smuggle humans for sale and sex (Solis and Aravena, 2009 cited in Ahmed, 2017). Accordingly, Bagley (2001) posited that organized crimes are noted to thrive best in the contexts offered by weak states that have poor governance.

The last factor facilitating transnational crimes to be noted here is the geographical position of Nigeria coupled with the forces of globalization. Thus, nature has placed Nigeria in such a strategic position that it cannot afford to close its borders against neighboring states. For instance, Nigeria has a good number of Fulani population which also scattered over states like Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Blum (2014) discussed how the geographical location of Nigeria (and Benin Republic) facilitates trans-border crimes, tracing it to the Berlin declaration which separated ethno-cultural homogeneous people (Yoruba) into the two countries. Again, on such geographical proximity, Nigeria has been a victim of trans-border crimes perpetrated by criminals from her immediate neighbours, and trans-border criminals of Nigerian origin have equally being involved in the illicit trade across Nigerian borders with her immediate neighbours. The porosity of the borders also signifies that such people and goods from other neighboring states can easily infiltrate the borders and transact their businesses with little or no restriction. These unrestricted trans-border movements invariably aid transnational crimes. Thus, Onuoha (2013) posits that the high level of insecurity in African borders is a function of how the borders are being administered and managed by the states.

As it were, the forces of globalization are to the effect that the world is now a ‘global village’ with increasing development in technology, information and communication. The negative side of the globalization process brings with it the influx of contraband goods, criminals, illegal migrants, terrorists and bandits. Hence, globalization has enabled criminals to move across the borders unhindered and even transact illicit businesses with effect for Nigeria’s socio-economic development and security of lives and property of the people (Akinyemi, 2013). It essentially becomes a serious issue for developing countries, like Nigeria, which lack the technological wherewithal to track and prevent transnational crimes, many of which negotiations and plans are conducted and perfected over the internet or outside the country.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative methodology and descriptive research design, which employed secondary data from books, journals (online and printed), official documents and newspaper reports. Thus, relevant data on the dimensions and effects of trans-border crimes in Nigeria were obtained from official online database of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and

Nigeria Customs and Immigration Services. To analyze the data, the study adopted descriptive and content analysis method.

4.0 Dimensions of Trans border crimes in Nigeria

As earlier noted, transnational crimes are crimes that have actual or potential effect across national borders as well as crimes which are intra-state but which offend fundamental values of the international community (Bonchuk, 2001). These crimes not only cross national borders but also, by their nature, involve cross-border transference as an essential part of the criminal activity. In other words, transnational crimes also include crimes that take place within a country but their consequences significantly affect another country – including transit countries. Transnational crimes manifest in various ways including human trafficking, smuggling/trafficking of goods (such as trafficking in arms, drugs, illegal animal and plant products and other goods prohibited on environmental grounds (e.g. banned ozone depleting substances), sex slavery and terrorism offences. It is incumbent to briefly examine some of these criminal activities relative to Nigeria.

Drug Trafficking

Smuggling of drugs across the borders by traffickers is one of the prominent trans-border crimes taking place in Nigeria's border with its immediate neighbours. It is important to note that *cannabis sativa* (Indian hemp) is an internationally controlled hard drug produced in Nigeria after its seedlings were brought into Nigeria from Myanmar by its soldiers returning from the second World War in the 1940s (NDLEA, 2009). Its cultivation and growth have spread widely owing to Nigeria's favourable climatic and soil conditions. The other form of controlled hard drug includes narcotic substances, namely, cocaine and heroin. These and other forms of hard drug are smuggled into Nigeria on transit route to Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East, taking advantage of Nigeria's strategic location as direct link with many transit and consumer countries.

According to the 2017 NDLEA report, a total of 10,009 arrests of suspected drug traffickers were made across the country in 2017, of which 9,387 were males and 622 were females. The North West led with 2,882 arrests while the South East recorded the lowest case with 882 arrests. The agency also secured 1,621 convictions in 2017, and 2,256 and 1,690 convictions in 2016 and 2015 respectively. Edo (45,339kg), Ondo (32,729kg) and Kano (18,654kg) in that order took the lead in quantity of drugs seized in 2017. A total of 309,356kg of drugs was seized in 2017 with cannabis and cocaine taking the lead of smuggled drugs. The highest quantity of seized drugs was in South West with 164,936kg and South East was the lowest at 3,192kg. In addition, Nigeria recorded the highest destination of drugs, above South Africa and Qatar. The inflow of drugs into Nigeria was about 34% in 2017 compared to 49% in 2016, whereas the outward movement of couriers was about 66% in 2017 compared to 51% in 2016.

It is equally important to note that Nigeria's vast porous land borders and the sabotaging disposition of its neighbours make entry and exit of hard drugs into the country by land relatively easy. According to its 2009 report, this has been one of the challenges confronting the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in the fight against drug smugglers in the borders. The implication of drug trafficking on the wellbeing of Nigeria as a country is enormous. The 2009 National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Report emphasizes that:

Activities pertaining to the production and distribution of illicit drugs cause several personal... and national security hazards. The economic consequences of the cultivation, processing or manufacturing, packaging, smuggling, retailing and peddling of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are disastrous. Some of the consequences of illicit drug ventures are the destabilization and distortion of national economic plans, frustration of monetary and fiscal control, and inflation due to laundering of profits. A serious implication of the vast assets derived from illicit drug trade is that it can be used to influence political decisions and overthrow legitimate government as we have seen in the gulf of Guinea (p. 21).

Trafficking or Smuggling of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

The trafficking or smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is another transnational crime prominent in Nigeria which poses a serious threat to Nigeria's national security and corporate survival. Following the end of the cold war and the escalation of intra-state conflicts (including coups and countercoups) from the 1990s, West Africa saw the massive proliferation of arms and weapons to the region. Several SALW found their way into developing countries in West Africa, and Nigeria in particular, apparently to prosecute several intra-state conflicts, and sometimes violent-ridden elections, in the region. These smuggled items are also being used by ethnic, religious and political groups to settle their differences.

Apart from the SALW manufactured in Nigeria and illegally distributed to different parts of the country, some actually found their way into other parts of West Africa. In the same vein, SALW produced outside the country also found their way into Nigeria through the external links, especially through Benin Republic described by Asare (2014) as serving as a transit point. There is no doubt that the current spate of ritual killing, kidnapping, bandit and Fulani attacks in different parts of Nigeria are direct consequences of small arms and light weapons' proliferation. *Premium Times* (2017) reported that the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) intercepted 470 pump action rifles imported from Turkey at the Tin-Can Island port in Lagos on September 21, just few days after it intercepted another 1,100 rifles on September 11. And, more recently, 73 locally manufactured guns and 891 cartridges were intercepted at Yauri, Zamare waterside in Kebbi. Moreover, investigations by the *Nigerian Tribune* revealed that a total of 21,548,608 arms and ammunition was shipped into Nigeria illegally between 2010 to

2017. Peterside (2018) posited that over 70 percent of the 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in Nigeria.

The more the security personnel intercepts and confiscates these weapons, the more they are found smuggled into the Nigerian society. The Boko Haram terrorist organization in North-East Nigeria has been a beneficiary of the arms proliferation. Most of the arms the terrorist organization used to engage the Nigerian military were smuggled into the country from Libya, Chad and Sudan through her porous Northern borders with the Republic of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger (Onuoha, 2011, cited in Asare, 2014).

Trafficking in Persons

Nigeria remains a source, transit and destination country when it comes to human trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines trafficking in persons as the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them. Trafficking in persons (children, women and adults) is another predominant transnational crime prevalent in Nigerian border regions with her immediate neighbours. In fact, Nigeria and Benin Republic serve as the origin, transit and destination country for trafficked children, and origin country for trafficked women. This is evident in the number of women and children returned to Nigeria from the Middle East, Europe and North America where they have been trafficked for slavery, child labour, prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Data from NAPTIP reveals that 75% of those who are trafficked in Nigeria are trafficked across states, while 23% are trafficked within states. Only 2% of those who are trafficked are trafficked outside the country (NAPTIP, 2016). In 2019, 203 cases of human trafficking were reported and investigated by NAPTIP in Nigeria. 701 suspects were arrested but only 25 traffickers were actually convicted. Despite the low number of reported cases and the even lower number of convictions, 1,152 victims of human trafficking were rescued in 2019. Of those victims, only 18.4% were rescued from outside the country, 80.6% were female and half of them were minors. Equally, between July 2003 and December 2019, NAPTIP rescued a total of 14,688 victims of human trafficking, and of the 7,487 total reported cases, 3,935 were investigated and 332 convictions were made (NAPTIP, 2020).

The UNODC on “Measures to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Benin, Nigeria and Togo” (2006) provides a comprehensive list of factors responsible for trafficking in persons to include: ignorance, poverty, large family size, lack of educational opportunities and lack of employment. The report also notes that:

Other contributory factors in trafficking in persons in the region include porous borders, corrupt government officials, involvement of international organized crime groups or networks, limited capacity of or commitment by immigration and law enforcement

officers to control trafficking at the borders and lack of political will or desire to enforce existing legislation or mandates. (p. 34)

It is important to add, therefore, that Nigeria is equally home to many trafficked children from Benin, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Niger, usually for domestic services, street hawking, plantation or construction works and other exploitative conditions, while some are engaged in petty crimes including drug peddling.

Trans-Border Car Smuggling

The smuggling of second-hand vehicles (locally called 'tokunbo') into Nigeria across the borders with her immediate neighbours is one of the thriving ventures in the list of trans-border criminal activities. Car smuggling is influenced by several factors which include the liberal economic policy and economic integration posture of West African States. Nigeria's cumbersome port system and high tariff on imported goods are the reasons many Nigerians to continue to patronize the Benin port to import goods into the country. However, these Nigerians are faced with the challenge of how to move their goods from Benin Republic to Nigeria. To some extent, it is believed that these individuals are prompted by the desires to evade taxes and the payment of the required customs duties and tariffs, and save their vehicles from being impounded/confiscated if their life span exceeds the years of second-hand vehicles allowed into Nigeria.

The smuggling of second-hand vehicles across the Nigeria-Benin border takes place across the various illegal routes known to the smugglers, sometimes in collaboration with security personnel at the border post. Armed robbery, especially the robbery of exotic cars, prevailed in the Nigeria-Benin border and surrounding towns in Badagry, Lagos state and other towns in Ogun and Oyo states. The stolen or snatched vehicles in Nigeria are smuggled into Benin or Niger while some move to Togo where they are re-sold (Albert, 2006).

Some other manifestations of trans-border crimes rampant in Nigeria include smuggling of contraband or prohibited goods, smuggling of fuel and diesel, internet fraud and money laundering, among others. Nigeria, from available literature, has been both transit and recipient state for these nefarious activities. These activities, no doubt, have significant impact on Nigeria's well-being, to be discussed in subsequent section.

4.1 Efforts of Nigerian Government towards Curbing Trans-Border Crimes

Successive governments in Nigeria often emphasize their commitments to tackle this menace. Indeed, a series of tangible measures have been taken to address one form of trans-border criminal activity or the other. This resolve manifests in the setting up of some state agencies empowered to curb the crimes and, possibly, arrest and prosecute individuals and groups involved in it. These agencies have offices at the various border posts to check persons and goods on entry and exit the country through her land borders and at airports/seaports for effective control and monitoring of who and what enters and leaves the country. According to Yorom (2010), these agencies include the Nigerian Customs and Immigration, National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), National Drug Law

Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), the National Commission for Small Arms, among others, usually reinforced by security personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Police Force and National Security and Civil Defence Corps.

Specifically, the agencies are set up to combat criminals engaged in smuggling and trafficking of fake and adulterated drugs, hard drugs, and trafficking in persons, goods, arms and others. For instance, the establishment of the NDLEA was in response to the 1988 UN Vienna Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance which enjoins all countries signatory to it to domesticate the convention and put in place an institutional framework to control the spate of drug-related problems. Likewise, NAPTIP was created in 2003 as a follow-up to the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to meet three of the protocols established at the convention which are: Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air; and Protocol against the illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition (NAPTIP, 2011/2012 Annual Report, 2).

In addition, an agreement to establish a joint border patrol (comprising men and officers of the customs and police force) between Nigeria and Benin was reached in 1992, and another joint patrol team (comprising only policemen from both countries) was agreed in 2001 and launched in 2005, to curb trans-border banditry in the territories. It should, therefore, be acknowledged that these agencies have helped in prosecuting the war against individuals and groups involved in trans-border crimes, especially the trafficking and smuggling of fake and hard drugs, trafficking of persons, among other illegal activities in the Nigeria-Benin border. For instance, the constant border patrol has enabled security personnel to intercept transnational criminals operating across the borders of the two countries. It has equally assured traders of adequate security to carry out their legitimate businesses in the border regions of the two countries.

It is noteworthy that trans-border criminal activities became so widespread in the early 1980s that the regime of General Muhammadu Buhari had to close Nigeria's borders with her immediate neighbours in 1984. No doubt, the border closure had severe socioeconomic consequences on Nigeria's immediate neighbours. And it was in the process of re-opening the border that a Quadripartite Agreement was reached between Nigeria and some of her neighbours – Nigeria, Ghana, Benin Republic and Togo. Measures to combat trans-border crimes in the borderlands of the four nations were included in the Agreement. Equally, the general upsurge in trans-border crimes especially armed robbery, smuggling and human trafficking was one of the reasons President Olusegun Obasanjo closed the border with the Republic of Benin in 2003. Other administrations have had cause to close the border(s) – the most recent lasted from Aug. 2019 to Dec. 2020 – for different reasons including checking indiscriminate smuggling of arms and goods and illegal movement of persons across the

borders. Nigeria is also a signatory to other bilateral and multilateral agreements against transnational crimes such that with the required political will and cooperation of concerned stakeholders, trans-border criminal activities can be minimized.

4.2 The Implications of Trans border Crimes in Nigeria

It is apposite to observe that trans-border crimes have had serious implications on Nigeria's socio-economic spheres. It fuels corruption and insecurity, endangers the people's social and mental health, infiltrates businesses and hinders economic growth. These certainly have their implications for national development. This becomes startling when one realizes that trans-border criminals are operating in close connection with terrorists and insurgents through the illegal and indiscriminate supply of deadly arms and weapons, hard drugs, crude oil, transport means and funds, against the state and its population. This explains why Opanike (2015) posited that security of lives and properties has taken flight in Nigeria because arms, weapons and resources are readily available through smuggling which often easily gets into the wrong hands.

Moreover, Nigeria's insecurity status is further amplified by vagaries of trans-border crimes plaguing the country and posing a serious threat to lives and properties. The communities and towns around the borders are especially regular victims and casualties of fierce exchange of gun fights between the criminals and state (security) agencies. In a bid to protect itself, the communities, sometimes, also result to self-preservation which includes attacking both the smugglers and security agents. The border communities are at times guilty of aiding and abetting the commission of trans-border crimes, usually by shielding the perpetrator or smuggled item(s). The level of insecurity in Nigeria today, especially the frequent infiltration of the country with guns and other weapons used by bandits, killer herdsmen and terrorist attacks across Nigeria cannot be divorced from trans-border criminals who made the weapons available to the undeserved. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the country has ravaged Nigerian lives and properties. Peterside (2018) posited that about 30,000 to 50,000 people have been reportedly killed in the country by non-state actors with illegal access to these weapons. This staggering figure has reached an estimated 70,000 deaths by the end of 2020 according to Nigeria Security Tracker (2022).

This ugly phenomenon invariably leads to increased crime rate and political instability. Criminal activities tend to increase daily in every part of the country as a direct consequence of trans-border criminal activities of smuggling and use of arms and light weapons, hard drugs and prohibited goods for personal gains. The unguided intake of hard drugs by an increasing number of youths and the immoral pursuit of wealth and crass materialism at all cost, including drug trafficking and internet fraud, do not only raise moral questions but also increase the crime rate in the country. This aligns with Adetula (2015) who posited that these acts encourage corruption in high places and undermines the capacity of state's machineries, worsened by the personal and capital mobility of the criminal/syndicate. The supply of smuggled items, for

instance, to the Boko-Haram terrorist group does not only hamper the fight against the group but also promote instability in the North East part of Nigeria.

Trans-border crimes equally have tremendous effect on the country's economy, which is largely dependent on importation of all manner of finished goods. The smuggling of legal goods into or out of Nigeria is a deliberate and strategic effort to circumvent the normal procedures, which include the payment of taxes, levies or tariffs, thereby denying the government its due income that should naturally accrue to it from importation or exportation. To this end, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has confirmed that the country's economy loses N2 billion daily to fuel smuggling (*The Guardian*, 2019). Equally, the smuggling of cars can also cause law abiding car dealers in the country to shut down operations as a result of the illegal activities of some of the other importers. The Comptroller General of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Ahmeed Ali, was quoted as saying Nigeria's economy is estimated to lose billions of naira annually to smuggling of cars through the land borders in a bid to evade the car duty and levy payable at the ports, thus, causing loss of more than 5,000 direct and indirect jobs at the affected ports (*The Guardian*, 2019). To this, Mobolaji and Alabi (2017) believed that where such effort is unraveled and the perpetrator(s) caught, the corrupt nature of the venture would ensure that such money is, eventually, not declared or remitted to the government covers.

Furthermore, the increase in cybercrime and money laundering further affects the country's economic condition as resources that should be used for the development of the country are being diverted to other places, sometimes to remain there for a lifetime. Thus, money meant for development is perfectly put into personal, sometimes unprofitable use. This, in turn, results in not only economic crisis but also social inequality. Also, illegal goods (contrabands or prohibited) are smuggled in and out of the country for selfish economic gains which is capable of endangering national economy. Smuggled goods also sell at a cheaper prize, thus, it commands higher patronage than certified goods and thereby destroying local market.

Flowing from the above is that trans-border crimes lead to increase in substandard goods and products that are not only inimical to a country's economic development but also risky to human health. According to the former National President, Poultry Association of Nigeria, Dr Ayoola Oduntan, on the occasion of the launching of operation "hawk descend" by the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) at Seme border, Lagos state, in 2015, "over 80% of the poultry products import by Benin (frozen chicken and turkey) finds themselves into Nigerian Markets causing loss of over \$2.5 billion and over 1 million job loss." Goods, especially drugs that are not certified fit for human consumption – including fake and expired drugs – are distributed to unsuspecting consumers, which is capable of killing the user, causing body deformity or health complications. The impact of substandard goods on the environment cannot be overemphasized.

As noted above, the use of hard drugs by youths especially affects their psychological state of mind and actions which make them to behave abnormally or out of control, as some of them have to be referred to the psychiatric hospital for proper rehabilitation. This also tasks not only the concerned individuals but also the national economy. The intensive flow of narcotics into the country should generate significant amounts of money into Nigerian economy. The total retail value of the seized drugs in 2012 was around \$1.1 billion for heroin, \$1.2 billion for cannabis, \$44 million for cocaine and \$110 million for the ATS (Ekici, 2013, cited in Ekpenyong, 2016). Unfortunately, these drugs, having been illegally procured through smuggling especially for non-medical purposes, will be burned or destroyed. In the same vein, smuggling and use of hard drugs also impair the country's international image as citizens are arrested, prosecuted or deported over different forms of such crimes. The NDLEA received 139 Nigerian nationals that were deported from other countries over drug related offences, mainly from Thailand, Italy, South Africa and US in 2017.

5.0 Conclusion

It should be noted, in the final analysis, that trans-border crimes constitute serious security threats to Nigeria in particular and West Africa and Africa in general. Its implications for national security and socioeconomic development traverse both the developing and developed countries. The increased global interconnectedness through technological advancement makes transnational crime a global and recurrent phenomenon. In fact, the idea of collective action against transnational crimes was affirmed at the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in Palermo, Italy, in December, 2000, where the general resolve to combat the global challenge with a global response was duly emphasized and acknowledged. In particular, the increased activities of arms smuggling and drugs trafficking across the borders are a security challenge in Nigeria. Thus, the sudden spread of banditry and other forms of insecurity in Nigeria would be greatly curtailed if the inflow of these items is reduced. Successive government's approaches towards tackling this menace have remained largely impotent owing to some pull factors such as corruption, poverty and unemployment and porosity of the borders. It behoves the government therefore to set in motion proactive strategies towards overcoming these obstacles with a view to curtailing trans-border criminal activities in Nigeria.

5.1 Recommendations

Thus, it is recommended that combating trans-border crimes requires the complementary dispositions of all stakeholders. The government (at the centre and states) should see to the provision of employment and poverty alleviation opportunities so as to de-market the illicit trade and movement while adequately sensitizing the population to the evils of trans-border crimes.

In addition, the welfare of the state's security apparatus, at both on and off the borders, should be improved on all fronts. This has the tendency of boosting their morale and discouraging bribery and corruption, especially at the border posts. That is, apart from prompt payment of

salaries and allowances, they should be supplied with the necessary machinery such as patrol vehicles, weapons and protective devices.

Also, the security agencies must be furnished with adequate and professional manpower, especially to man the porous borders and other strategic posts of entry and exit (including water ways) to ensure effective discharge of their duties. In the same vein, security agencies' personnel development and sanitization through regular training and re-training should be encouraged.

The government should prioritize the procurement of modern technological gadgets such as cameras, robots and scanners, among others, which will help to easily navigate the vast border areas. These should be strategically placed such that it will be hidden from the border communities to avoid being destroyed. Sniffing dogs can also be trained, especially by drug related agencies, to easily help detect illegal substances, and deplorable infrastructures particularly at the airports should be replaced or rehabilitated to work optimally in detecting smuggled items.

It is equally imperative that the Nigerian government should improve its surveillance system and forge a working collaborative mechanism with her immediate neighbours to address the smuggling of small arms and light weapons across her borders. This can be done through rejuvenating and adjusting existing agreements to ensure it conforms to contemporary realities coupled with strong political will to enforce it. Seeing that trans-border crimes undermine regional integration efforts, the ECOWAS can serve as a platform for multilateral agreement where member states undertake to adopt collective security measures or policies against trans-border criminal activities in the region. The ECOWAS and/or AU Court can also be empowered to try individuals/groups indicted for transnational crimes. The government of Nigeria should, above all, see the fight against trans-border crimes as embedded in the fundamental duty to promote the security and welfare of Nigeria and Nigerians.

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