

**Security Of Nigeria's Border, Arms Smuggling And
Criminalities In The North West And North Central Nigeria.**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationships between border security, arms smuggling, and the escalating levels of criminality in North West and North Central Nigeria, through the lens of the Failing State Theory. The specific objectives were to; examine the impact of border security on the increasing level of criminality in the North West and North Central Nigeria and also investigate the impact of arms smuggling on the escalating criminality in the region; The sampling technique adopted was cross-sectional survey where a combination of stratified and simple random sampling techniques was used to select 400 respondents from 1,902 sampled population. The sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane. All together 450 questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents and 400 were retrieved. Six key informants were interviewed physically out of which three came from North West and the remaining three from North Central. A simple linear regression was used to analyze the data collected on each of the variable while multiple regression was used to conduct analysis on the comparison that exist between the dependent and independent variables used in the study. The study recommends establishment of a robust border management agency through The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) which will further promote a reliable security at the border. More so, The Nigeria Custom Service (NCS) should help to improve intelligence gathering, and targeted economic empowerment programs, aim to inform evidence-based policy interventions to mitigate the devastating consequences of arms smuggling and criminality in Nigeria. The research also underscores the need for community-based initiatives by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to address socio-economic drivers of criminality, such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Ultimately, this also recommends that The Nigeria Armed Forces(NAF) should facilitates effective strategies to combat arms smuggling, banditry, and related criminality in Nigeria, and promote regional and global security

Key words: Security, Nigeria, criminality

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of insecurity has been a major challenge to the corporate existence to the Nigerian nation. A lot of factors has been adduced to this. These ranges from illegal border crossing of transnational criminals especially from neighboring nations through the Nigeria's land borders. Other factors can be attributed to arms smuggling and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The porosity in border security in Nigeria has exacerbated the level of criminality. This is manifested in the form of banditry, kidnapping and outright terrorism, the north western and north central part of Nigeria out of the six geo political zones have witnessed a significant downturn in its socio-economic development. It is pertinent to note that once the border of a country is devoid of protectionism, all other forms of criminality are pruned out.

Specifically, the activities of the Boko haram terrorist group has spread throughout Nigeria but with more devastating impact in the northeast and northwest regions of Nigeria. This challenge became higher-headed with the northcentral regions becoming one of theatre of operation for the terrorist group. At the peak of its activities in the north central region, the United Nations headquarter bombing on 26th of August , 2011 which claimed 21 lives and left 60 people wounded (BBC NEWS, August 2011).. Numerous innocent individuals have died as a result of Boko Haram terrorist acts, this is in addition to the willful destruction of property valued at billions of naira through bombings, kidnappings, and banditry. A host of factors can be attributed to the seeming intractable nature of porosity in the Nigeria borders, chief among them is the ethnic mix and configuration of West African border communities because of arbitrary colonial demarcations. This is an aftermath of the Berlin conference in 18184/1885 where Africa and West Africa were partitioned along colonial interests, leaving ethnic groups of the same origin and affinities in different international territories. It therefore becomes challenging to

police the movement of people in and out of Nigeria especially when these persons exhibit similar physical attribute, language, culture and religion.

Closely related to this is the challenge of complying and implement the provisions of ECOWAS protocol on movement of persons, goods and services within and among West African member states. Also, the yawning gap created in terms of ungoverned spaces in between Libya and Central Africa as a result of the internationally induced collapse of President Muammar Gaddafi government, has largely been fingered as a major factor for the proliferation and smuggling of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. The ineffective nature of Nigeria's border security measures has made it possible for the aforementioned confluence of forces to confront the Nigerian state in light of the availability of small arms and light weapons associated with human movements. The issue of porous borders has been a topical subject matter in several security, globalization and transnational discourse. The purpose of law enforcement forces, especially the Nigerian police, is to uphold domestic legislation in areas of sovereign jurisdiction, international borders, and borderlands that are defined geographically. It is crucial to remember that boundaries are the official bounds of a sovereign jurisdiction that are subject to stringent enforcement by state authorities, including the police, with regard to the territory on the opposite side of the boundary. Borders typically provide criminals with shelter and act as brokers of illicit vices (Asiwaju, 2006: 10 in Bonchuk 2014).

Nigeria's biggest problem right now is international terrorism, which is supported by crime, religious fanaticism, a porous border, and difficulties with cross-border security. Indeed, for a long time without any concrete remedies, Nigeria's porous borders and cross-border and frontier activities have contributed to crimes and security issues across Nigerian boundaries.

The country as a nation state is under a severe internal socio economic and security threat especially the North western and central parts of Nigeria. For instance, In June 2019, a clash occurred between Nigerian and Nigerien border officials in the Babura Local Government Area of Jigawa State. The incident resulted in the death of a Nigerian immigration officer and the arrest of several others (Vanguard, June 2019). Moreso, In April 2018, bandits attacked the Yargamji village in the Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State, near the border with Zamfara State. The attack resulted in the death of at least 10 people and the destruction of several homes (Vanguard, April, 2018). At a more general level, the threat has social, economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation's stability, and can be traced to the porosity of the border which has greatly enhanced ethnic militia armies, banditry, arms smuggling, small arms proliferation, kidnapping, ethnic and religious conflicts, poverty, terrorism, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation. The efforts of the government to eradicate porous border, banditry and arms smuggling have been slow and costly in terms of public funds spent, lives and properties lost. Extensively from the analysis above, above, the main illegal activities that occur within Nigeria's borders include the smuggling of illegal immigrants and contraband goods, the trafficking of weapons and human parts, drug trafficking, vehicle crime, and the trafficking of illegally exploited natural resources, such as the illicit trade in diamonds, oil, and timber, among other things. Due to these borderless borders, growth and flourishing entry without adequate control or monitoring have led to arms smuggling, armed banditry, kidnapping, corruption, and other issues that have become security concerns in Nigeria, with armed banditry and arms smuggling emerging as two of the most formidable issues the nation faces today.

One constant determinant in recognizing a state's sovereignty is its borders. The concept of sovereignty highlights the necessity of drawing boundaries as a strong support system for territorial integrity. But because the African States were a colonial construct, they were forced to live in a state of rampant balkanization as a result of the blending of numerous ethnic groups without consideration for cultural distinctions. As a result, the Nigerian state, like other former colonial enclaves, inherited boundaries that are insecure and inadequately porous, which makes it easier for illegal activities to move about. The porous borders, which are statutorily guarded by the various services of security personnels frequently alleged of compromising the strict implementation of border security measures allow agents of death—criminals, traffickers, bunkers, armed robbers, cultists, terrorists, assassins, kidnappers, bandits, and black marketers of arms to operate and obtain weapons.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to gather respondents' opinions on border security, arms smuggling, and the rising degree of criminality in northwest and north central Nigeria, this study uses a mixed technique of quantitative and qualitative research design, combining key informant interviews with surveys. In particular, the quantitative survey questionnaire was utilized to accomplish research objectives one, two, and three on border security and arms smuggling, while the key informant interview was employed to address research questions pertaining to the level of criminality and arms smuggling that were raised under objectives four and five. Responses to the survey questions were also validated through key informant interviews. The research population includes both non-security individuals like lecturers and security personnel like police officers, immigration officers, customs officers, and Nigeria army officers. Because these significant

stakeholders are aware of the growing border security, arms smuggling, and rising levels of criminality in North West and North Central Nigeria, they were chosen as the research population. Thus, the rationale behind the study's population's use.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Porous Border

Over time, Nigeria's border points have been marked by their porous nature, lax control, and a shortage of security personnel. As a result, smuggled weapons and ammunition are now regularly entering the nation, posing a serious threat to national security and causing a horrific phenomenon of violent conflicts, terrorism, and war. In order to successfully solve the security issue posed by the porous border scenario, border security authorities and the residents of borderline villages must work together in concert. The challenge is made much more difficult by Nigeria's pervasive inclination toward bribery and corruption, as well as the shortcomings and scarcity of border security personnel, equipment, and training. With a 923,768 square kilometer land area and more than 36,450 kilometers of land and maritime borders, Nigeria is a diverse nation. It shares land borders with the Benin Republic in the west, Chad, and Niger in the north, 1,700 kilometers with Cameroon in the east, and 853 kilometers with the Atlantic Ocean, also known as the Gulf of Guinea, along its southern coast. On the whole, Nigeria is bounded by a total of 4,910 kilometres outstretch of borders (Yacubu, 2005; Stohl and Tuttle, 2009; Nte, 2011). The region's insecurity and cross-border crimes have been exacerbated by the region's permeable borders. In a same vein, it encourages the proliferation of many illicit activities, including the smuggling of contraband items, tainted drugs, stolen cars, cars with expired license plates issued for use in Nigeria, and other commodities including shoes and poultry products. Tire rims, oil barrels, and dried trees can all be used to illustrate the porous nature of borders. These national

borders were drawn in a way that leaves them disorganized, unsafe, and poorly managed. The way Nigerian borders are now maintained permits weapons and criminals to enter the country freely and go unnoticed. One of the main causes of national insecurity has been inadequate management and control of these borders, or poor surveillance of them. Many extensive steps must be made in order to improve border security. These include establishing suitable organizational and legal frameworks, enhancing infrastructure, providing personnel and border posts with the necessary tools, efficiently exchanging information and data, enhancing local community conditions and incorporating them into border management programs, and clearly defining national and international borders. Additionally, enhancing national law enforcement, immigration, and customs service's coordination and cooperation to guarantee a more effective and efficient method of controlling and monitoring the flow of commodities and people across border (Simon, 2011).

International relations took on a new dimension with the end of the ideological conflict between the two major blocs, encompassing the issue of porous borders and the repeated crimes related with them. This posed a significant risk to global security and peace. Particularly with the advent of globalization, this appearance of border permeability increased (Simon, 2011). Countries had distinct political, cultural, and socioeconomic spheres that came together to form regional arrangements and other transnational activities because globalization fostered the opening of national borders. Africa's history of border porosity dates back to the colonial era and the second administration, prior to African nations gaining their independence, Africa was more about defining a political and economic sphere of influence than it was about drawing borders. However, colonial authorities drew these boundaries without taking into account the sociocultural foundations of the African people or providing an explanation for why they were

dispersed throughout the continent (Akinyemi, 2013, p. 43). When we talk about borders, we mean the areas where governments have complete legal authority; they are the lines that demarcate the boundaries between the legal domains of one nation and another. As stated by Ikome (2012), Boundary is a tool that sheds light on the characteristics and patterns of the many interactions that occur between domestic and foreign parties. Gerstein et al. (2018) define national borders as a state's geographic boundaries where the state government has complete legal authority over all activities, structures, and residents within the boundaries. For them, the idea of a border is frequently connected to the creation of boundaries that regulate admission into an independent nation's territory and, in certain situations, the prevention of the free movement of people, products, and services.

According to Vaughan-Williams (2009), the idea of a state border facilitates the design of both national and international legal and political systems, as well as the requirement that such planning be feasible. It is fundamental to the idea of the boundaries of internal authority and monarchy in general, which is mirrored in Max Weber's characterization of the archetypal state of the state as a (successful) human society that asserts its exclusive right to exercise official power in a certain domain. It upholds the notion of local integrity in the international sphere, which is stated in Article 2, Article 4 of the United Nations (UN) Charter. Since the end of World War II, this charter has served as the foundation for concepts like the rule of law and the equality of all provinces before international law ; protection from the promotion of tribalism in some provinces; and autonomy and conservation of the environment (Vaughan-Williams, 2009). In the past, borders have been drawn internationally between different parts of a nation. This border could be formed by the sea, mountains, rivers, or something else entirely, but it is always a function of compliance, conquering, and peace accords. In O'Dowd (2003: 24), borders ?

areas of economic and political opportunities in nations and provinces as well as dozens of other interested parties and agencies, both legal and informal. The border serves two basic purposes protection from external and internal threats and territorial demarcation (Newman and Paasi, 1998).

Arms Smuggling

Notably, the smuggling of weapons continues to be a major problem on a global, regional, and national scale. One consistent point that emerges from the many perspectives on arms smuggling is that it encompasses a broad range of weapons and the means by which they are forcibly inserted into a state. For example, firearms and other destructive weapons or devices like an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, a grenade, rocket launcher, a missile, or a mine are all considered weapons and ammunition of war under the 2006 ECOWAS Convention on Arms Smuggling and other Related Materials, which serves as the sub-regional benchmark for regulating arms and ammunition among member countries in West Africa. Automatically loaded handguns and revolvers, rifles, and carbines, machine guns, assault rifles, light machine guns are also examples of arms (Iwebi, 2017, Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Nigeria is a destination of smuggled arms (Chuma-Okoro, 2011), the causes include criminal activities, revolts, subversion, sabotage, religious crisis, communal conflicts, social agitations, insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, riots, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social unrest, ethnic tensions, cross border smuggling, porous borders, black marketeering, privatization of security, insecurity, poverty, economic crisis, mass unemployment, among others (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Accordingly, Shagaya in Eke (2000), maintained the “the history of Nigeria may be described as one of the continuous encounters with border problems as she shares borders with five African Countries: Benin, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Four of these are Franco-

phone countries, of which they have no clearly delineated and well-defined boundary with Nigeria”.

Over time, Nigeria has encountered a number of border crimes involving the residents of her close neighbors, leading to the unprecedented incursion of issues from the borders with Chad, Benin, and Niger. These crimes, according to Aronowitz (1999), are a group of illegal activities whose perpetrators and effects transcend national boundaries. According to Adeola (2012), the phenomena is currently causing a lot of concern worldwide, particularly in nations where it is quite common, like Nigeria. The foundations can be seen in the growing sophistication and dispersion of criminal networks together with the evil weaponry smuggling operations. According to the World Customs Organization's 2013 Illicit Trade Report, smuggling is a global threat, although it is more common in Africa, with Nigeria appearing to be the worst-affected country. An unlawful means of conducting business is smuggling. It is defined as a covert activity by Deflem and Kelly (2001) as the importation and/or exportation of commodities through unethical or illegal means in order to avoid paying taxes and other regulations that forbid or restrict the importation or exportation of such goods. Smuggling is done for self-serving reasons, such as making more money by opposing the relevant organization that determines the nature of the commodities before allowing them into the nation. Adetula (2014). Nigeria has struggled in the fight against smuggling due to the length of its unguarded borders and the poor performance of its intergovernmental agencies, which hinders effective border monitoring. Adetula (2003) asserts that smuggling typically has a major impact on an economy. The main effects on the nation are as follows: the government losing money from tax evasion; local industries collapsing; the market for local products being destroyed; and occasionally, violent altercations between officials and desperate smugglers that frequently result in casualties on both

sides. The smugglers are unfazed in their plot to destroy this nation's economy in light of these ongoing seizures.

This was more plainly put by Mustapha (2004:9): "Globalization has increased the internationalization of economic activities, but it has also created opportunities for global criminals and smugglers to flourish". Weapons smuggling has led to a "risky and unhealthy state of inhabitation" in many countries, including Nigeria. This has resulted in a steady and uncontrollable number of violent conflicts, including ethnic and communal rivalries and clashes, armed banditry, and killings.

Adeola and Oluyemi (2012) claim that Nigeria's vulnerability to the influx of weapons smuggled into the nation through its border checkpoints has caused the country to become mired in a number of complex issues. According to Eliagwu (2003), in July of 2002, there were over fifty documented cases of violent clashes and conflicts across Nigeria, resulting in thousands of fatalities, numerous injuries, and numerous cases of homelessness. Since more and more people are illegally in possession of weapons, there is a grave risk to both national and regional security from the growing arms smuggling activities along the country's borders. As a result, having illegal firearms makes it easier for individuals or groups to carry out horrible goals such as armed robberies, kidnappings, conflicts between cults, terrorist attacks, etc. This was demonstrated with the attack by the daughter of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, which resulted in the deaths of a police officer and two children, Akinolu and Akindeko (Odeh, 2003).

The incident was linked by The Guardian to 41-year-old Niger Republic national Hamani Tijani and other gang members who were apprehended by law enforcement for stealing more than 2,000 exotic cars and murdering more than 1,000 people between 2000 and 2003. Additionally, early in 2003, a story on Republic of Benin Television featured loads of advanced

weaponry that had been seized by officials from the country's customs agency. Hamani Tijani is said to have transported the cargoes into the nation (Odeh, 2003). One question remains crucial, availability of these arms and ammunitions that are smuggled into Nigeria? In contrast to the increasing trend, at least 1,249 companies in 92 countries produce over eight million new weapons annually, while 10–14 billion units of ammunition are produced annually (Nte, 2011, Iwebi, 2017).

Between 2007 and 2015, African nations spent more than \$300 billion on weapons, which is equivalent to the amount of foreign aid given to the continent over the same time frame (YawKuome, 2016). As a result, it is estimated that 79% of these weapons and ammunition were smuggled into different nations throughout the world, with a significant portion of them being illegally placed in the hands of civilians in Africa (Ibrahim, 2003; Stohl and Tuttle, 2009; Nte, 2011; Yaw-Kuome, 2016, Iwebi 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The Failing State Theory

Lastly, the failed state theory is adopted in this research. The initial method for looking at failed states was presented by Robert Rotberg (2004) and William Zartman (1995). Since they view the state as a provider of services, they propose that a state is said to have collapsed when its fundamental duties are no longer carried out. State collapse, to put it another way, occurs when a state can no longer fulfill the purposes for which it was established. Zartman and Rotberg both distinguished between the range of services that states are permitted to offer, including infrastructure provision, social services like health and education, property protection, political participation rights, security to the rule of law, and infrastructure protection. Most of the

hierarchy is composed of these services. According to Rotberg, the most essential service that states offer is security, since it is a prerequisite for the provision of all other services.

2.4. Justification For Adopting Failing State Theory

It is pertinent to note here that numerous theories have been used to buttress this research but the research prefers the failing state theory because the theory explains why a state is failing which directly corroborate with the present situation in Nigeria. Under this, whenever a state could no longer guarantee security at the border which is the entry point to the state, such society is bound to experience series of criminalities because automatically the state is devoid of a moderated protectionism which can degenerate into dumping and other economic instabilities. Notably from the above, the instability in the economy of Nigeria, social unrest, irregularities in the political system, kidnapping and human trafficking, banditry and arm smuggling, small and light weapon proliferations, regular unknown gunmen attacks and host of others numerous to be mention which has dominated the country and especially the north west and northcentral Nigeria is connected to the porosity of Nigerian border which invariably turning the state to a failed state.

Review of Empirical Literature

A review of the literature reveals a wealth of empirical research illustrating the connection between Nigerian banditry, weapons smuggling, and porous borders. This part thus contributes to the acceptance of the fact that a porous border facilitates increasing level of criminalities. For instance,

Nigeria shares land borders with Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Benin Republic and also shares maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Cameroun and Sao Tome and Principe.

Out of the thirty-six states, fifteen share international land boundaries with African countries. Ironically, the borders of Nigeria are not adequately protected by the border security forces. The traffickers of all sorts live across the border and are familiar with the routes beyond the connected security agents which is the only one holding the border, according to respondents at the Nigeria Customs office. It is not surprising that migration can be achieved as the flow of people and goods into the country is very small and uninterrupted.

The ECOWAS migration policy allows people to move quickly and indirectly to neighboring countries with protection for ninety days. With this, Nigeria has been the major recipient of illegal immigrants even beyond the West African region. Border porosity has also strengthened illicit trade relations such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, and much more. The Nigerian respondents argued that their proposal was due to the existence of the West African border. Some of those who have been affected across the Nigerian borders with the intention of crossing into Niger, Chad, Benin Republic, Cameroun and do not have the necessary travel documents. The tightening of Nigerian borders appears to be promoting further human trafficking measures, as well as a lack of adequate protection and identification structures of human trafficking, where traffickers benefit from the lack of effective border surveillance, security, and detection systems. Visas are obtained through fraudulent or fraudulent means, usually in connection with immigration agents. In addition, traffickers, a few secret rental sites, had shortcomings in border protection and insufficient means of detection in Ghana and Nigeria. Children are also taken from rural communities to urban areas where rural insecurity and inequality occur. The location of traffickers depends on their intent to smuggle. It is important to remember.

However, Italy is the preferred reference from Nigeria to many women victims. No doubt that there are internal elements that have threatened the peace and security of Nigeria. However,

terrorist activities such as those being orchestrated by Boko Haram since 2009 have been linked to forces beyond the shores of Nigeria. Nigeria is the origin, transit and destination of arms trafficking which means Nigeria produces, imports and exports small arms majorly through her ill-manned borders. Most of the studies had concentrated on importation of small arms or cross-border trafficking or smuggling of arms downplaying the local manufacture and supply of small arms mostly through the poorly guarded borders (Think Security Africa, 2012: 25).

socio demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage	
Age	34-40 years	206	48.7	
	41-50 years	107	25.3	
	51-60 years	95	22.5	
	61 years and above	15	3.5	Mean (44.52yrs) SD (8.52)
Gender	Male	261	61.7	
	Female	162	38.3	
Marital status	Single	91	21.5	
	Married	243	57.4	
	Widow/Widower	67	15.8	
	Separated	12	2.8	
	Divorced	10	2.4	

Religious affiliation	Christianity	123	29.1
	Islam	281	66.4
	Traditional	19	4.5
Educational qualification	Primary/secondary	26	6.1
	OND/NCE	88	20.8
	HND/B.Sc	171	40.4
	Msc	130	30.7
	PhD	8	1.9
Kind of job	Police	109	25.8
	Immigration	88	20.8
	Custom officer	78	18.4
	Nigeria army officer	101	23.9
	Lecturers	47	11.1
Region you are staying	North Central	225	53.2
	North West	198	46.8
Years in service	1-10 years	224	53.0

11-20 years	119	28.1
21-30 years	64	15.1
31 years and above	16	3.8

Source: Researcher's Field Study Survey (2025)

The above table explains the socio demographic characteristics of respondents ranging from variable, category of age, variable and percentage.

Border security and increasing level of criminality in the northwest and northcentral Nigeria.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Borders in this area is very porous	38(9.0%)	30(7.1%)	55(13.0%)	231(54.6%)	69(16.3%)	3.62
Anything either legal or illegal can come in through our borders	32(7.6%)	24(5.7%)	73(17.3%)	235(55.6%)	59(13.9%)	3.63
The security outfit are often bribery in a bid to into our borders	40(9.5%)	42(9.9%)	65(15.4%)	230(54.4%)	46(10.9%)	3.47

The security around the border is fairly good	40(9.5%)	28(6.6%)	86(20.3%)	214(50.6%)	55(13.0%)	3.51
Any food items come into the border freely	41(9.7%)	29(6.9%)	88(20.8%)	238(56.3%)	27(6.4%)	3.43
The porosity of the borders has threatened people security in this region	88(20.8%)	11(2.6%)	62(14.7%)	204(48.2%)	58(13.7%)	3.31
There has been continuous influx of people through the borders who are not even Nigerian	38(9.0%)	7(1.7%)	124(29.3%)	203(48.0%)	51(12.1%)	3.52
Weighted Mean						3.50

Source: Researcher's Field Study Survey (2025)

It can be revealed that 54.6% of the respondents agree that borders in their area is very porous, 16.3% strongly agree, 13.0% neutral, 7.1% disagree, and 9.0% strongly disagree. On average, the respondents indicated that borders in their area is very porous, with a mean of 3.62. Results

also indicated that 55.6% of the respondents agree that anything either legal or illegal can come in through their borders, 13.9% strongly agree, 17.3% neutral, 5.7% disagree, and 7.6% strongly disagree. On average, the respondents indicated that anything either legal or illegal can come in through their borders, with a mean of 3.63.

Impact of arms smuggling on the increasing level of criminality in the north west and north central

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
There has been immense increase in arm smuggling into Nigerian which have further heighten the insecurity in Northwest and North Central	73(17.3%)	5(1.2%)	76(18.0%)	173(40.9%)	96(22.7%)	3.51
Arms smuggling determines increasing level of criminality in the North West and	112(26.5%)	23(5.4%)	69(16.3%)	134(31.7%)	85(20.1%)	3.13

North Central						
The numbers of arms in this region of the country by non-security operatives of the country was smuggled into the country	46(10.9%)	14(3.3%)	81(19.1%)	209(49.4%)	73(17.3%)	3.59
The arm smuggling does not have anything to do with the high insecurity occurring in this region of the country	97(22.9%)	7(1.7%)	96(22.7%)	146(34.5%)	77(18.2%)	3.23
Only authorized security personnel use arm in this region	71(16.8%)	3(0.7%)	78(18.4%)	174(41.1%)	97(22.9%)	3.53
Criminality in the	110(26.0%)	23(5.4%)	71(16.8%)	134(31.7%)	85(20.1%)	3.14

Northwest and North central are connected to illegal arm smuggling						
Free movement of arms determines increasing level of criminality in the northwest and north central in Nigeria	66(15.6%)	25(5.9%)	76(18.0%)	217(51.3%)	39(9.2%)	3.33
Weighted Mean						3.35

Source: Researcher's Field Study Survey (2025)

The table above present the descriptive analysis of arms smuggling. It can be revealed that 40.9% of the respondents agree that there has been immense increase in arm smuggling into Nigerian which have further heighten the insecurity in Northwest and North Central, 22.7% strongly agree, 18.0% neutral, 1.2% disagree, and 17.3% strongly disagree. On average, the respondents indicated that there has been immense increase in arm smuggling into Nigerian which have further heighten the insecurity in Northwest and North Central, with a mean of 3.51. Results also indicated that 31.7% of the respondents agree that the arms smuggling determines increasing level of criminality in the North West and North Central, 20.1% strongly agree, 16.3% neutral, 5.4% disagree, and 26.5% strongly disagree. On average, the arms smuggling determines increasing level of criminality in the North West and North Central, with a mean of

3.13. Results also indicated that 49.4% of the respondents agree that the numbers of arms in this region of the country by non-security operatives of the country was smuggled into the country, 17.3% strongly agree, 19.1% neutral, 3.3% disagree, and 10.9% strongly disagree. On average, the numbers of arms in this region of the country by non-security operatives of the country was smuggled into the country, with a mean of 3.59. Results also indicated that 34.5% of the respondents agree that the arm smuggling does not have anything to do with the high insecurity occurring in this region of the country, 18.2% strongly agree, 22.7% neutral, 1.7% disagree, and 22.9% strongly disagree.

SUMMARY

This study examines border security , arms smuggling and increasing level of criminality in the Northwest and Northcentral of Nigeria . Border security in Nigeria's North West and North Central regions faces significant challenges, including porosity, arms smuggling, banditry, and small arms proliferation. These issues contribute to the escalating level of criminality, threatening national security and stability. This research has carefully examines the impact of these factors on criminality, exploring the intricate relationships between border security, arms trafficking, and violence. This study further explain a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationships between border security, arms smuggling, banditry, and small arms proliferation, and their collective impact on the escalating level of criminality in Nigeria's North West and North Central regions. It was further reveals that the porosity of Nigeria's borders facilitates the influx of illicit arms, fueling violence and criminal activities.

Furthermore, the study reviewed literature within the confine of the study variables by different scholars. Various textbooks, journals, articles and other scholarly materials were depended on to

get conceptual meaning of terms, concepts as well as professional viewpoints. The influence of porous border in necessitating arms smuggling and other criminalities in the north west and north central part of Nigeria was carefully discussed with corroborating theory that helps to carefully analyzed it ranging from frustration and Aggression theory to Human Security theory to Social Contract theory and finally the Failing State Theory which were complementing one another in generating holistic approach to explaining how border security is connected to arms smuggling and increasing level of criminalities in the north west and north central Nigeria. To get reliable data however, the study relied on both primary and secondary data. While the primary data was based on questionnaire and interview, secondary data was sourced from relevant documents which are capable to ameliorate the research.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the fact must not be overemphasized that the northwest and north central regions of Nigeria are grappling with a complex web of security challenges, including banditry, arms smuggling, and escalating criminality. At the heart of this crisis is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which has fueled the growth of banditry and other organized crimes . The situation is further complicated by the porous nature of Nigeria's borders, particularly in the northwest, where arms and ammunition are smuggled in from neighboring countries. This has facilitated Nigeria's borders becomes weak, poorly policed, and vulnerable to illegal activities, partly due to globalization and the many illegal entry points . The Nigerian border has been infiltrated by the inflow of small arms and light weapons, crime syndicates, terrorists, and other groups, causing devastating security issues. The lack of effective border control and law enforcement has enabled the free flow of arms and ammunition into the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, the Nigerian government should enhance border security infrastructure, including the installation of advanced surveillance systems, expansion of border patrol units, and construction of additional border posts. Secondly, regional cooperation should be fostered among West African countries to expand regional capacity for border security, intelligence sharing, and joint operations against transnational organized crime. Furthermore, community engagement and awareness programs should be implemented to educate border communities on the dangers of cross-border crimes and encourage their participation in border security efforts. Additionally, law enforcement agencies should receive specialized training on border security, counter-terrorism, and anti-smuggling operations. The establishment of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs for armed groups and individuals involved in cross-border crimes is also crucial. Moreover, socio-economic development initiatives should be implemented to address poverty, unemployment, and other push factors driving criminality in the regions.

Extensively from the above, Nigeria should strengthen its international partnerships to combat cross-border arms trafficking, particularly with neighboring countries and global organizations like INTERPOL. This collaboration should facilitate intelligence sharing, joint operations, and capacity-building initiatives. Secondly, the government should enhance border security infrastructure, including advanced surveillance systems and expanded border patrol units, to prevent illicit arms influx. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies require specialized training on arms trafficking detection, investigation, and prosecution. The establishment of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs for armed groups and individuals involved in criminality is also critical. Additionally, community-based initiatives should focus on awareness campaigns, socioeconomic empowerment, and alternative livelihood programs to reduce the

appeal of criminality. The government should also review and strengthen legislation related to arms possession, sale, and trafficking, ensuring stringent penalties for offenders. Moreover, Nigeria should prioritize regional and national security coordination, fostering information sharing among security agencies and encouraging a whole-of-government approach. Regular assessment and monitoring of arms smuggling trends and criminality patterns are vital to adjusting strategies and ensuring effective implementation. Lastly, addressing the root causes of criminality, such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality, through sustainable development initiatives is crucial to breaking the cycle of violence and instability. By implementing these measures, Nigeria can significantly mitigate the impact of arms smuggling on criminality in the North West and North Central regions.

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