

MIGRATION WITHIN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES AND ITS IMPACT ON NIGERIA NATIONAL SECURITY, 2015-2025.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined migration within Economic Community of West African States and its impact on Nigeria National Security 2012-2025. The motivation for this study is as a result of frequent attacks, devastating effects and destruction of lives and property, Kidnapping for ransom, Banditry, insurgency and terrorist acts across Nigeria on daily basis in North East, North West, North Central, South East, South West and South-South geo-political zones of Nigeria that have resulted in thousands of deaths, massive destruction of property, violent conflicts between farmers and herders, Internally Displaced Persons, kidnapping of school children, teachers and travellers along most Nigeria high ways, demanding of ransoms by the bandits and kidnappers for the release of the kidnapped victims, closure of schools, suicide bombings in mosques and churches, psychological trauma on Nigeria citizens and treat to the Nigerian national security. The problem of this study stem from the fact the governments of various ECOWAS member states have put in anti-illegal migration laws, deportation of undocumented illegal aliens and ECOWAS Protocols on free movement of people so as to mitigate illegal migrations within West Africa but the problem of national security still remains especially within Nigeria. The main objective of this study is to examine migration within ECOWAS and its impact on Nigeria national security. This study adopts a secondary qualitative methodology, utilizing existing literature and content analysis to examine the evolving trends and impact of migration within ECOWAS on Nigeria national security. The findings revealed that while some security initiatives have shown promise, they often fail short of due to inadequate resources, poor intelligence, and systematic corruption within the Law Enforcement and Security Agencies. Consequently, the paper recommends that a robust strengthening of national security and a good national economic development reforms in line with international standard that will mitigate the weaknesses in Nigeria's security apparatus.

Keywords: Migration and National Security.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, people have always been involved in migration or movement from one point to another in search of greener pastures, relocation, asylum, exile and as refugees. This has been a major feature in the history of Africa and the entire globe. (Akanji, 2022). Migration is inevitable from the history of man, families, villages and nation-state. Migration can therefore, be traced back to the existence of man, most especially when man desired to go in search of food during various seasons of famine. Also, another reason for migrating from one place to another in those days was people's desire to separate themselves from the crowd as well as to seek for independence. As earlier revealed, virtually all individuals and nation states have one or two traces of migration history (internal and international) mostly influenced by two factors, which are the "Pull" and "Push" factors (Akanji, 2012)..

Migration can be internal or across national boundaries. Internal migration explains the movement of individuals within same geographical territory which in this case can be from rural to urban or from a particular urban location to another. While, migration has to do with the crossing of borders or international boundaries such as Cameroon to Nigeria, described as South- South

migration, Nigeria to United States of America may be described as South-North migration (International Organization Migration, 2024).

The evolution of migration is not only unique to Nigeria; it reflects a global trend where illegal forms of undocumented migrants have taken the place of the documented migrants. Across the globe, countries are grappling with an upsurge of migration and desperate journey with rise in organized crime, insurgency, terrorism, human trafficking, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and politically motivated violence, all of which pose significant challenges to good governance, national security, economic growth and development (Liang, 2022). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the global crime committed as a result of illegal migrants annually ranges from human trafficking, drug peddling, illegal transfer of Small Arms and Light Weapons and terrorism from one country to another with developing countries bearing the brunt of these crimes as a result of their inability to combat such nefarious activities by the migrants that are illegal (UNODC, 2021).

Odoemene, (2014) argued that migration of undocumented aliens into Nigeria has significantly shaped the country's national security and socio-political and economic trajectory resulting into complex challenges for public safety and good governance.

Ojo & Ojowale (2018) noted that before the massive migration into Nigeria from West Africa neighboring countries, the crimes in Nigeria was merely in form of less severe forms such as armed robbery, petty stealing of theft, however, in recent decades, the influx of migrants into Nigeria has resulted into crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, banditry, terrorism, human trafficking, Boko Haram Insurgency, cybercrime and politically motivated crime (Ogege, 2015). The consequences of the activities of these migrants especially the illegal once has had a devastating effects on cooperative existence of Nigeria, national security, inability of Nigeria to maintain law and order, protection of lives and property of citizens of Nigeria that is the priority of the government, and promotion of sustainable growth and development. This study examined the migration within ECOWAS and its impact on Nigeria national security 2015-2025.

Methodology

This study adopted a secondary qualitative research design that analysed the complex dynamics of migration within ECOWAS sub-region and its impact on Nigeria national security 2015-2025. As a non-empirical study it relies on existing literature, including scholarly articles, books, ECOWAS Annually Reports, government reports, institutional publications, E-learning, Internet, media content that assisted in the development of arguments and insights. The justification for the adoption of the secondary qualitative research design is that this methodology is grounded in context analysis, whereby qualitative data from secondary sources were systematically reviewed and interpreted to identify patterns, themes, and theoretical underpinnings relevant to Nigeria security.

Conceptual Clarifications

Migration

According to the conventional wisdom, migration, and international migration in particular, is a major problem in today's world. This perspective holds that migration is primarily a product of economic and political crises that push people to leave their homelands, usually involuntarily. With emphasis on push factors as the primary cause of migration, this interpretation points to the problems of social and economic dislocation at the place of destination. Migrants tend to crowd into cities, where they become an underclass exploited by unscrupulous employers and landlords. In addition to creating social problems, migrants are alleged to lower wage standards and take jobs from domestic workers. According to this critical viewpoint, migration does not even produce positive outcomes in the place of origin because it is selective of the able and talented youth. In most cases, the "brain drain" may even worsen the prospects for socioeconomic development in the sending areas (Adepoju (2005).

The rhetoric about migration problem is often escalated to the crisis level with claims about uncontrolled borders and silent invasions, especially if the migration is surreptitious and border controls are avoided. These views are routinely expressed by many American political leaders and policy makers as well as by some political voices in Europe and Asia. Migration researchers typically question many of the premises of this critical perspective. The starting point is a consideration of "pull" factors as well as "push" forces. According to economic theory, migration is a normal response to the mismatch between the spatial distribution of people and opportunities (Alao et al,2012). The presumption is that free mobility of labour has a similar logic to the argument for free trade. Free trade is considered to maximize economic opportunities and wealth in the long run, although the benefits are often unevenly distributed in the short term. There is not a clear consensus among migration researchers on the benefits and costs of international migration, nor is there unanimity on policy prescriptions, for example, whether the United States should have a more liberal or restrictive immigration policy. The one common thread in the field is a commitment to the empirical evaluation of the potential effects of migration, including the micro-effects on migrants and the macro-effects on communities of destination and origin. It is expected that there will be considerable variation in the effects of migration at different times and places and for different groups (Ali, 2013).

National Security

National Security is conceptualized as the protection of a nation-states citizens institutions, national interests, and external threats(Adebakin & Raimi, 2012). In other words, it assumed that the security of a nation is more concerned with protecting its way of life, its social and economic institution being and preserving internal harmony. In military terms, it implies defense against territorial aggression from which ever direction it may be land, sea, air and now even from space. Security relates to all aspects of nationalism and internationalism.

The parameter of defining security is more varied and has to take into account such issues as human rights, economics, the environment, drug traffic, epidemics, crime, or social injustice, besides traditional concern with security from external military threats. In addressing such a pertinent problem one is faced with a vital issue of the protection of the values of which people or groups of people and the nature and magnitude of those values that are threatened. As a result, some attention has been devoted to conceptual issues as such. Identifying the common elements in various conception of security is useful in at least three ways: First, it facilitates asking the most basic question of social science 'Of what is this an instance?'. Second, it promotes rational policy analysis by facilitating comparison of one type of security policy with another. And third, it facilitates scholarly communication by establishing common ground between those with disparate views.

In Nigeria the Nigeria context, national security entails the ability of the state to safeguard its citizens form security threats arising from internal and external aggressions. The study posits that the rise of terrorism such as (Boko Haram insurgency), banditry, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, cybercrime and human rights violations pose a serious challenge to human security such as economic security, food security, health security, the protection of basic human rights and Nigeria national security.

Theoretical Review

This study adopted Push - Pull theory as analysis of migration.

Push-Pull Theory

The push and pull theory of migration was first coined by Ernst Ravenstein, a German scholar, in the 19th century. He used census data from Wales and England to come out with his "Law of Migration" in 1889. Ravenstein concluded that migration is prompted by a "push-pull" process. That is, disparaging situations in one place such as oppressive laws, heavy taxation, violence, human right abuse, war etc., push people out to favorable living conditions, while such external locations "pull" them out from undesirable locations. (Tobbler, 2024). Ravenstein's law states that

the primary cause for immigration is better external economic opportunities. According to him, the volume of migration decreases as distance increases, and immigration occurs in stages instead of one long move. The Push-Pull Theory is relevant in the understanding of migrant influx into Nigeria especially from ECOWAS neighboring countries and its implication on Nigeria's Security especially when dealing with the push factor. Ravenstein is of the opinion that there are some factors that push or impel migrants out of their uncomfortable zones. These migrants most often cross national borders due to wars or civil crisis and persecution, and end up as refugees or asylum seekers while others remain within their territorial border and become Internally Displaced Persons (Bolaji, 2024). The 1964 Geneva Convention relating to the status of these categories of migrants obligated signatories to this Convention of which Nigeria is one, to welcome and grant them stay in their territory. The push factors for immigrants into Nigeria from neighbouring countries following frequent crisis in the region has led to sporadic spread of terrorism in the country. According to International Organization for Migrant Report (2009), Nigeria witnesses daily influx of illegal migrants from West Africa and Central Africa. The report also notes that there is evidence of emergence of Al-Qaeda elements in Nigeria and Niger. Chad and Niger are often pointed to as sources of fundamentalists to northern Nigeria. Illegal movements often thrive as fallout of major crisis in other states and could precipitate refugee inflows. According to Napoleon (2013), "ECOWAS countries have faced some of the most daunting security challenges than any region in Africa has had, especially from civil wars. Civil wars such as those which occurred in Cote D'Ivoire, in 2010, Liberia in 1989, Sierra Leon in 1991 etc., have far exerted much violence in the region. This crisis led to high level of migration in the region of which Nigeria became the final destination of many. Milner, (2009) opined that mere presence of refugees on the territory of another state may indirectly undermine national security by creating tension or competition for resources between displaced people and the local host population (Milner, 2009 cited in Napoleon, 2013). Edward Moigore (2006), also affirms that refugee militarization has always become a common phenomenon as rebels increasingly find it easy and expedient to use refugees to pursue their armed insurgencies (Ogbonna & Ehigiamusoe, 2013).

Factors Contributing to migration within ECOWAS and its Impact on Nigeria National Security

(a) Weak ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons within ECOWAS

Bulk of literatures exists both on migration and security. However, very few have considered linking the two in a coherent manner (Guild & Selma, 2011, Klein, 2012, cited in Olatunji 2013). In spite of this, migration issues lies at migrants who aim at settling in environment inhabited by people whose values, morals and culture may vary significantly from theirs. The view that migration is a security problem in Nigeria is not a contestable argument. The way in which migration is seen has changed over the years. Following the attacks in the United State in September 11, 2001, migration has increasingly come to be seen as a security problem (Ogege, 2013)).

Wikipedia defines migration policy as "any policy of a state that deals with the transit of people across its borders into the country, but especially those that intends to work and stay in the country. Immigration policy can range from allowing no migrant at all, to allowing most types of migration such as free immigration". The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement was established in 1979 with the aim to facilitate free movement of people, goods and services within the region without visa, which means that ECOWAS citizens who possess valid travelling documents and international Health Certificate can travel the entire region without restriction. In spite of the good intentions of this protocol, it has vast negative consequences on states (Oladare, 2015). This challenge is inherent in areas of illegal migration and cross-border criminalities which increased insecurity and undermined Nigerian national security. The protocol on the free movement of persons in ECOWAS and ethno-linguistic ties between the countries stimulates smuggling and illegal migrants (David, 2015). This problem could not be avoided because of the absence of

ECOWAS institutions and proper machineries to manage community borders and member states as well as instrument or manpower to regulate immigrants in receiving countries.

(b) Inadequate ECOWAS Instituted Mechanism for Checking Migrants

ECOWAS does not have adequate instituted mechanism for checking the entering of illegal migrants, people who carry out nefarious activities have exploited the opportunity to their advantage laundering money, trafficking in human, drugs, illegal arms etc. Thus the privileges of the protocol have been abused. The protocol rather than serving the purpose of integration, is contributing to the insecurity prevalent in the region". That is to say that the policy has led to the frequent terrorism in the region experienced by almost all member states most especially in Nigeria due to the borderless principles adopted by states to ensure integration in the region. Receiving states has been abused by drug pushers, terrorists and other criminal activities carried-out by immigrants that enter into these countries. It also compounded issues of porous border and acts of terrorism in Nigeria considering that terrorists have been able to exploit the protocol to their advantage. This borderless principle that resulted from the protocol eventually left member state's borders in a porous, uncontrollable and un-policed-able conditions by national governments and has facilitated illegal migrants along bush paths (Adepoju, 2015). In agreement (Opanike & Adepoju, 2015), affirms that the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, goods and services has aided traffickers to "exploit loopholes in state capacity in monitoring cross-border trade in the region and relaxation of national borders intended to enhance regional integration, to perpetuate their nefarious activities".

(c) Porous Borders and Arms Proliferation.

Odey, (2022) observed that the geographical landscape of Nigeria, characterized by its porous borders, significantly facilitates smuggling of arms, drugs, and other contraband goods into Nigeria. This situation has contributed to nefarious activities in multiplying violence across Nigeria resulting to threat to the Nigeria national security. According to the office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC, 2021) more than 70% of small arms and light weapons are trafficked into Nigeria. As a result of this influx of these arms and ammunitions it fuels insurgency, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, ethnic disputes or inter- tribal and religious conflicts thereby threatening national security. The inability of the Nigeria government to effectively manage its porous and expanded borders has increased the networks of criminal elements networks in operations that has resulted in making it impossible for the Security and Law Enforcement Agencies to operate effectively in Nigeria thereby threatening national security (Ministry of Interior, FGN, 2017).

(d) Increase in Nigeria Population

The effect of ECOWAS immigration policy on Nigeria's Security can therefore be said that it has helped in the increase of Nigerian population through the influx of migrants from neighbouring states because of unregulated borders. This immigrants as vulnerable as they are in search for jobs are easy targets for terrorist groups for recruitment. Some of this migrants or foreigners are machineries to aid the proliferation of insurgency in the country. Over population is undesirable for the present economic crisis faced by the state. Additional population can deny Nigerians of the available scarce resources thereby sparking another form of terrorist group in the country. The policy has also led to unregulated movement of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the hands terrorist groups thereby using it to destabilize the nation. Weapons are traded by foreign terrorists to Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the country for money in exchange through the porous borders of the Nigerian state thereby leaving the state at risk of being terrorized by terrorists.

(e) Political Instability

In West Africa the government of each ECOWAS member states political system is unstable as a result migrants nefarious activities such as insurgents and religious fundamentalists activities that are resulting to national security treats for instance in Nigeria the migration of Boko Haram members from Chad, Niger, Cameroun and Mali into Nigeria has resulted into insurgency, kidnapping for ransom and banditry thereby threatening national security.

(f) Loss of Lives, Property and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The human toll on areas of loss of lives, property and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) cannot be overemphasized. Since the emergence of the terrorists groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic States of West Africa (ISWA), Al-Qaida, and other terrorist groups there has been loss of lives, property and Internally Displaced Persons due to these criminal activities such as bombing, arson, religious riots, farmers – herders conflicts that has sent many people to untimely graves with the resultant consequences of loss of property and Internally Displaced Persons and Internally Displaced Persons camps all over Nigeria that have resulted in agitation by some ethnic groups for secession thereby threatening Nigeria's national security.

(g) Weakening of Fragile State Institutions

The endemic nature of the migrant's activities seriously weakens the Nigeria's state institutions such as Nigeria Immigration Service, The Nigeria Police, The Custom and Excise to work effectively in areas of maintenance of law and order and protect its citizens. The complexity on the part of the Law Enforcement and Security Agencies calls for questioning as some corrupt officials collect bribes thereby not checking undocumented migrants who pose treats to Nigeria national security (Martin & Widgren, 2002).

State Responses and Challenges

In the year 2014 some months before the Buhari administration, CERPAC (Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Alien Card) was reintroduced, with a view to improving on the shortcomings of the former CERPAC. The new CERPAC (Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Alien Card) came with an enhanced machine readable features that help the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) to solve and detect a reasonable amount of security challenges as well as frauds (Williams, 2015). There was also an introduction of the Readable Electronic Passport also known as Electronic Passenger Automated Registration System (E-PARS) to replace the old Machine Readable Passport (MRP) which was more of manual procedures (Akinsuyi, 2005, Williams, 2015 and NIS, 2017). This is also counted as an achievement as this made the Nigerian state recognized as the first nation in Africa and among the first 40 (forty) countries to have adopted this system in the world. This was to be helpful in tackling trans-border crimes and illegal/undocumented international migration, most especially identity theft, fraud among other illegal acts and intentions since the e-passport contains biometric details of the individuals (Williams, 2015; Kennisgewing, 2016)

Due to this administration's effort to fight immigration crime, the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) opened more Residence Permit Production Centers. Also, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette (2017), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) introduced a new immigration regulation that compliments the 2015 Immigration Act which was introduced to meet up the standard of the new International Migration activities in the globe. The act replaces the outdated 1963 Immigration Act. This new act lays emphasis on regulating border crimes especially terrorist activities. This immigration regulation was established to meet up with the demands and trends that come with the present-day international migration activities (International Organization of Migration, 2014).

However, due to the challenges of porous nature of the Nigerian borders, the Nigerian state has experienced such a high influx migrants with little or no skills mostly undocumented from

neighboring countries in the region and also the emigration of sophisticated experts and skills out of the Nigerian state to their favorite destinations due to the felt "Push" factors. It has also been revealed that majority of the Fulani herdsmen and the Boko Haram terrorist groups are not Nigerians (Bolaji, 2014)). This raises the question on how they got into the nation-state so easily and unnoticed by the Nigerian Immigration Service. This uncontrolled influx of migrants has resulted to serious challenges to the political, security, planning, crime control, environmental management and socio cultural and economic development in the nation state to mention a few (Ashiru, 2026).

Regan (2009), in his research on Challenges of Nigeria's Borders and Frontier Security 1960-2014, highlighted the challenges in the Nigeria's international borderlines and its implications for national security at the cross-borderlines. This is because the layers of frontier and cross-border activities of Nigeria and her neighbours since independence in 1960 has been bedeviled by controversies and worrisome security challenges that sparked diplomatic rows and near-war experiences. The greatest challenge facing Nigeria today is international terrorism that is aided by religious extremism, porosity of borderline and cross-border security challenges and crime. Indeed, the existence of porous borders and cross-border and frontier activities in Nigeria has aided crimes and security challenges across Nigerian borders for long without any specific solutions (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the growing treat of migration within ECOWAS and its impact on Nigeria national security there is need for well robust comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. The contemporary Nigeria is bedeviled with the challenges of terrorism, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, political instability, cybercrime, undemocratic practices, bribery and corruption all these challenges threatens the Nigeria national security. Migrants especially the illegal once undermines national security by carrying out terrorist activities, cybercrimes, money laundering, human trafficking, drug peddling illegal flow of arms and economic stagnation. In conclusion it is imperative that any effort to restore Nigeria national security, it should take into cognizance the underlying issues that contribute to migrant activity and ensure a robust response to mitigate the impact of migration on Nigeria national security. The following recommendations brings out strategic actions that the Nigerian government should put into cognizance to address migration and its impact on Nigeria national security:

1. **Strengthening Border Control:** Nigerian government should improve tremendously on border security so as to curb the influx of illegal migrants, arms, drugs, and other illicit flow of goods into Nigeria. The government of Nigeria should enhance surveillance at all main border points by increasing more Immigration officers well trained, Customs and civilian personnel in conjunction with neighbouring countries to remove cross-border illegal migrants.
2. **ECOWAS Migration Policy:** The positive effect of the ECOWAS migration policy on Nigeria's security should be enhanced by both the Nigeria government and ECOWAS.
3. **Protection of Nigerian International Borders:** The role of Nigeria government in the protection of national boundaries should be improved positively.
4. **Provision of Modern Equipment:** Most of the challenges facing the implementation of the migration policy in Nigeria such as adequate modern equipment, trained personnel and avoidance of bribery and corruption on part of security personnel should be addressed very well.
5. **Good Decision Making By Policy Makers:** The decision-making machinery in Nigeria's national security and foreign policy issues should have a political will, unity of purpose and clear sense of direction on border issues being violated by Nigeria's neighbouring countries.
6. **ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of People:** The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has embarked on different integration schemes to

foster cooperation and development among member states; the most important among all is the Free Movement Protocol.

7. Strengthening Law Enforcement Agencies: The need to reform the Police, Immigration, Custom and other Law Enforcement Agencies is important in combating illegal migrants. This includes motivation through funding, better training, elimination of bribery and corruption, introduction of modern equipment that can facilitate tracking of the illegal migrants, smugglers and terrorist movements across the borders is essential within the Law Enforcement and Security Agencies.

8. Addressing Socioeconomic Inequality:

ECOWAS member states should address socioeconomic inequality in their respective states so as to address poverty Alleviation, unemployment/ job creation, justice and providing equal educational opportunity for the its citizens that should reduce migration from some of the West African states and can curb insecurity not only in Nigeria but across West African states.

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