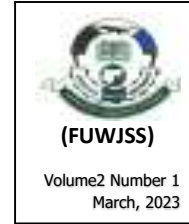


# **IMPLICATIONS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Nigeria faces severe security threats particularly link to the activities of illegal migrants. These have attracted attention from scholars, policy makers and security analysts. These threats to national security include activities of Boko Haram, as well as incidences of piracy and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. This paper discusses irregular migration and its implication on national security in Nigeria. The paper relied on relevant secondary sources of data collection. The securitization theory forms the theoretical framework wherein analyses in this paper occurred. The theory assumes that threats and vulnerabilities can arise in many different areas, military and non-military, but in order to count as security threats, such threats must meet strictly defined criteria that distinguish them from the normal happenings of mere politics. The study's findings recognized that irregular migrants in Nigeria do cause both national and human insecurity and the Federal Government seldom imposes ad hoc measures through which entry points are blocked and illegal immigrants are expelled from the country. The paper concludes that irregular migration persists in Nigeria because there is no political will to impose adequate security across Nigeria's international borders; and also, there is the lack of political will to effectively implement

the national security strategy. The paper recommends that the Federal Government should securitize the issue of irregular migration beyond the normal happenings of mere politics. Thus, border security threats should be treated as existential threats to both national and human security in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Illegal migrants, human security, borders, threats, political will

### **Introduction**

Global human mobility is a principal attribute of our world, although it manifests itself in different dynamics, from unauthorised migrants, human trafficking, climate change, poverty or violent conflicts (Estevens, 2019). Migration is as old as antiquity; migration flows have been in the rise over the last three decades. Since 9/11 and the subsequent Global War on Terrorism, migration has become a topical issue for security discourse, and it is undisputed fact how terrorism shapes public opinion on migration (Estevens, 2019). In spite of fact that cross-border migration is not a new phenomenon, it posed serious threats to national security. In other words, migration and migrants have a wide reputation of being perceived as having close tie to national security threats. Adamson (2006, p.167) contends that international security scholars and policymakers are finding it increasingly difficult to ignore the relationship between migration and security in a highly interconnected world defined by globalisation processes. He also argued that in the United States of America and other countries, migrants have all too often been viewed as national security threats during times of war or crisis because of the possibility that they may possess dual political loyalties or represent a fifth column in a conflict (Adamson, 2006, p.166-167).

The phenomenon of international terrorism has been attributed to trans-border migration. For instance, the events of September 11, 2001 international terrorists' attacks by nineteen hijackers from overseas to enter into United States to carry out attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon established a clear connection between cross-border mobility of people and international terrorism (Adamson, 2006). In the same vein, the bombings in Madrid on March 11, 2004, and in London on July 7, 2005, only reinforced already-existing fears regarding the links between migration and terrorism in Europe. Prior occurrence like the 1995 bombings of the Paris Metro System by Algeria's Armed Islamic Group and attacks in various Western European states in the 1990s by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, had already raised concerns regarding the linkage between migration and security (Adamson, 2006).

National security, territorial integrity and sovereignty are primarily considered as the major preoccupation of any nation. Independent nations therefore have clear cut frontiers; independent governments and also the

legal capacity to conduct international relations outside their own borders. Since one of the key features of a sovereign nation is having boundaries, thus, the implication here is that, the inability of an independent nation to secure its borders implies failure to protect its national security (Segun & Ufuoma, 2018). Measures imposed by state on cross-border migration are driven by the fact that countries risk being overwhelmed by large numbers of irregular migrants who embody threat to states and society. Policy measures enshrined by nation states are primarily designed to checkmate illegal influx of immigrants into the receiving country in spite unlike likelihood to dismantle illegal migration wholesale. Therefore, it is the primary responsibility of the states to protect its territorial integrity and also ensure the security and safety of individual and property within its territorial borders (Mahmoud & Augustine, 2022).

It is contended that border security is usually neglected in the security strategies of postcolonial states; therefore they are an arena for cross-border crime (Blum, 2014). Nigeria as an independent nation shares international land border with Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, totaling about 4745sq.km (Osimen, Anegbode, Akande, & Oyewole, 2017, p.17). Nigeria also shares maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe (Osimen, Anegbode, Akande & Oyewole, 2017, p.17). It is important to note that there is no statistical evidence to enable us to appreciate the extent to which illegal immigration is a cause of national security threats (Tabi & Ndum, 2020). The absence of statistical evidence should be viewed from the fact that most illegal immigrants operate underground beyond the casual notice of security officials. However, it is alluded that in Nigeria there are about four thousand and eighty (4,080) routes out of which only 91 are legally authorised and protected, this situation puts Nigeria in an unsecured situation (Tabi & Ndum, 2020, p.305). Due to a paucity of studies on African security and migration, the paper represents a fresh attempt to explore the interconnectivity between national security threats and irregular migration in Nigeria. This article provides in its analysis nexus between irregular migration and over all national security by surveying how cross-border migration flows affect national security. Therefore, the study is mostly referring to irregular migration flows that happen due to illegal influx via cross-border migration.

State-centric framework is not the only lens through which to view the relationship between migration and security. Cross-border migration is also closely intertwined with issues relating to human security. Meanwhile human security and national security paradigms need not necessarily be diametrically opposed, each does suggest a particular analytical lens through which one can assess the security impacts of cross-border migration. For the purpose of this article, the focus is restricted to the implication of cross-

border migration flows on national security in Nigeria, by extension the security of the citizens. The more effective way to securitise irregular migration is through a comprehensive approach of the illegal cross-border migration-security nexus combining both national security and human security. Hence, the fundamental purpose of state security is to protect its citizens facing vulnerability and insecurity. Therefore, the paper is an attempt to draw the implication of irregular migration on national security in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding, the paper is thematically divided into six sections, the first deals with introduction where relevant issues and the problematique were discussed. The other sections includes conceptual review; empirical review; theoretical framework; methodology; specific issues on the implication of irregular migration on national security in Nigeria as well the State response to national security imposed by irregular migration; and lastly conclusion and recommendations.

### **Irregular Migration, National Security and Human Security**

Terminologically, the concept of migration is problematic. The meaning of the term depends on the context and who is making the definition. However, King and Debono (2013) contends that, be it irregular, illegal, undocumented, unauthorised, clandestine, all these are adjectives applied to the words migration and migrants to imply that something is wrong and needs to be controlled or fixed (King & Debono 2013, p.3). In the same vein, irregular migration is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which can be referred to the way and manner an immigrant enters into a country, or motive behind the entry into a country, residential status there, nature and type of occupation. Thus, "Irregular migration is a complex and diverse concept that requires careful clarification" (Koser, 2005, p.6). Nevertheless, irregular migration is considered suitable within the context of this paper to be more preferable to other terms like asylums seekers, refugees, undocumented migrants, and unauthorised migrants etc. Therefore, irregular migration is used specifically in the context of this paper to denote illegal transborder migration from the state of origin to the receiving state. However, illegal carries a pejorative connotation and reveals an explicit criminalisation of the migrant's situation of either entry or residence, or both (King & Debono, 2013, p.3). The use of the term illegal can be criticised in at least three ways. First is its association with criminal behaviours. However, most irregular migrants are not criminals. Second, tagging someone as illegal can also be regarded as stripping them of their humanity. Thirdly, is the likelihood that defining individuals as illegal asylum seekers who find themselves in an irregular situation may further endanger their asylum claims (Koser, 2005).

In practice, the lines between various categories of border crossers and migrants are difficult to define. Nevertheless, it is useful to think conceptually about who crosses borders and why as a prelude to thinking about how these influences national security. Thus, border security is the control of cross-border movement of people with the main goal of reducing illegal flows and not (unduly) limiting legal flows (Adamson, 2006). Similarly, the term security simply refers to a condition of freedom from danger and threat. Threat is any form of interference with security in any of its spheres (economic, social, military, territorial, political, cultural) (Adetula, 2009, p.270). Threats to national security are ideally assessed in terms of the extent of risk they constitute to the pursuit of a country's national interests or any of its attributes - territory, population, government, and sovereignty (Adetula, 2009, p.270). Therefore, security can be seen as a condition of freedom from danger and risk of threat that transcends military threat to include other forms of threat (Adetula, 2015, p.14).

Traditionalists, adherents of the realist school of thought define security as a freedom from any objective military threat to the state survival in an anarchic international system (Sulovic, 2010, p.2). National security is a concept that can be used to explore the characteristics of the ideal state from a human perspective and make it happen by pragmatic governance (Paleri, 2008, p. 8.). Security means untroubled by danger and fear. It is a conditional state of mind that makes one feel secure. It is hidden within the ambit of life, and is the essence of existentialism and survival (Paleri, 2008, p.9). Scholars, such as Morgenthau conceived national security as the maintenance of the integrity of the national territory and its institutions (Morgenthau, 1960). Nwolise (2012) stated that national security is the deliberate and conscious efforts to guarantee internal peace, security and togetherness, as well as the ability to forestall invasion and subjection of people to a state of despondency by foreign elements.

There is often a tendency to problematise the phenomenon of irregular cross-border migration in terms of national security rather than human security. For instance, the tendency to problematise the phenomenon of insecurity in terms of national security rather than human security is grounded in the conventional wisdom that reduces "national security" to "state security as opposed to the collective welfare of the citizenry (Egwu, 2011, p.53). During the Cold War period, when safeguarding state territories was the dominant security policies, national security is hardly distinguished from their narrow interest defined in terms of how to access, control and project political power (Egwu, 2011).

On the other hand, human security has been one of the strongest alternative paradigms emerging in international relations. Human security combines security, development and human rights, changing the referent for

security from the state to the human (Estevens, 2019, p. 108). However, due to the absence of an empirical analytical framework, human security remains a somehow fuzzy concept that requires a greater understanding of what it is today in a very different global environment than the one existing by the end of twentieth century when the concept first came into limelight (Estevens, 2019). Human security challenges the dominant paradigm of national security existing since the Peace of Westphalia, but do not completely cast it overboard. Estevens (2019) argue that, “human security as national security, has a global, preventive and cooperative nature and it is complementary to national security. So far, the later tends to prevail when states deal with the migration-security nexus, especially during a crisis scenario (p.108).

With the phase out of Cold War, and subsequent increase in intra-state conflicts, Western societies’ fear of immigration, environmental issues and the rapid increase of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it has become inevitable to include new strategic factors associated with human security in the security agenda. Therefore, the awareness led to a shift in security, from its state centric-conception to people centred view based on the protection of individuals (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). The state ceased to be the only referent object of security, since human security is a people-centered. Nonetheless, human security did not replace national security, integrating new dimensions as the protection of human rights, economic development and individual security (UNDP, 1994).

In the same vein, the widening of the security concept was pushed by the Copenhagen School on critical security studies that emphasised the social dimensions of security and rejected the sovereign state as the primary referent for and agent of security (Buzan., Waever & de Wilde, 1998). The Copenhagen School with Barry Buzan at the vanguard, challenged the realist conception of security by widening and deepening security studies agenda, both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, the wideners believed that in reality the security concept has gone beyond the exclusive reserve of military onto political, economic, societal and environmental sectors. Vertically, the new security concept should also be geared toward referent objects-individuals, social groups, humanity as a whole other than the state (Sulovic, 2010).

### **Overview of Irregular Migration and National Security**

In political and media discourses, irregular migration is often described as constituting a threat to state sovereignty. Thus, states have the sovereign right to check the flow of aliens who cross their borders, however, failure to check the flow of irregular migrants threaten national sovereignty. That is to say stopping irregular migration is amount to reasserting full sovereignty

(Koser, 2005). In certain, more extreme discourses, irregular migration has also been perceived as a threat to state security (Koser, 2005, p.10). Yet, a view from economic perspective entails that, irregular migration is actually quite functional for many destination states. As a result of deregulation, liberalisation there is demand for various forms of unskilled and semi-skilled labour employed under precarious conditions. Therefore, irregular migrants provide a cheap source of labour and are often willing to work in sectors in which regular migrants and nationals are not (Koser, 2005).

However, the emergence of organised criminal networks around illegal migration can also pose a significant challenge to state authority and control (Adamson, 2006, p.178). For instance, in cross-border migration from Bangladesh into north-east India, it is claimed that among the illegal migrants, many militants are also present, who cross into India to carry out terrorist activities. Therefore, the influx of illegal migrants in a large number into the India's north-east region ensue a scenario of radicalism and network of fundamentalist campaigns. This in turn seriously affected both state security and human security in the north-east (Das, 2022). According to Das (2022, p.108), North-East India represents a complex arena of foreign involvement. He showed that there was outbreak of several ethnic insurgencies in the region where Pakistan, China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh have played a role in the region. The terrorist organisations operating in the region have formed linkages with both state and non-state actors in foreign countries. These linkages have provided valuable assistance, which include financial and organisational support, weapons, training and operational cooperation.

Moreso, Pakistan's ISI has been active in Bangladesh supporting militant movements in the North East. "Arms were primarily emerging from Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand while money was flowing in from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Das, 2022, p. 108). Moreover, remote and isolated border town of Moreh, in the north eastern region frontier, immediately adjacent to Myanmar has turned into a trafficking hotspot in the recent years. Previously, Moreh, situated in Manipur was a source of trafficking victims, a transit area from where women and under-aged girls from Manipur were trafficked to other provinces of India as well as to countries in Southeast Asia, to work in the sex trade. Also, in 2019 and thereafter men and woman from Nepal were being sent to Southeast Asia, West Asia and the Middle East via Moreh which is now a transit point for drug smuggling and human trafficking (Das, 2022, p. 109).

Coming down to Africa, illegal immigrants in Malawi engaged in cross-border crime like drug and goods trafficking, and the common drug trafficked is cannabis alleged to be grown in Nkhata Bay and Nkhota Kota (Nkhoma, 2020). Illegal immigrants seem to organise this in collaboration

with Malawians. Women and Children are often abducted using false agreements and once taken are exploited as sexual workers and children labour (Nkhoma, 2020). Organised crimes in the form of armed robbery and car hijacking are also committed by some illegal immigrants in Malawi. Armed robbers from neighbouring Tanzania and Zambia engaged in stealing vehicles and smuggled them to Zambia through Hewe and Jenda (Nkhoma, 2020). There have also been cases in which migrants have increased pressure on the region's social amenities, such as land, medical care and education. For instance, in Chipita, 60 illegal immigrants felled sick in August 2012 as result to long journey and hunger, and were all admitted at Chitipa hospital which lacked the capacity to accommodate them due to limited bed space for patients. This provoked public outcry from the people of Chitipa who felt it was unjustifiable for them to lack access to hospital beds due to the presence of illegal immigrants (Nkhoma, 2020).

### **Theoretical Framework: Securitisation Theory**

In order to provide analytical insight that established a nexus between illegal migration and security threats, the paper adopt securitisation theory developed within the framework of the Copenhagen School (CS) of Security Studies. The securitisation theory was developed by Buzan, Woever, & de Wilde (1998). The theory is based on the idea that in international relations something becomes an object of urgent policy not because it represents a danger, but because an influential actor proclaims it as a serious threat (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). The CS describes securitisation as the intersubjective and socially constructed process by which a threat to a particular referent object is acknowledged and considered worth protecting (Buzan, 1997). Thus, "the exact definition and criteria of securitisation is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects (Buzan., Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 23). The CS understanding of securitisation implies that anything that has been labeled or viewed as dangerous, inimical, threatening, alarming must be dealt with in an exceptional and urgent manner (Charrett, 2009; Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020). According to Buzan (1997, p.13-14), the CP constitutes a more radical view of security studies by exploring threats to referent objects, and the securitisation of these threats, that are nonmilitary as well as military. Threats and vulnerabilities can arise in many different areas, military and non-military, but in order to count as security issues they have meet strictly defined criteria that distinguish them from the normal run of the merely political. They have to be stage as existential threats to referent objects by a securitising actor who thereby generates endorsement for emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind. In other words, issues become securitised when leader begin to talk about them.



Security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics (Buzan., Waever & de Wilde, 1998, p. 23). Securitisation theory suggests that national security policy is not naturally given, but consciously designated by politicians and decision-makers. According to securitisation theory, political issues are constituted as extreme security issues to be dealt with urgently when they have been tagged as national emergency by securitising actor who has the social and institutional power to carry the problem beyond politics. Therefore, security issues are not simply out there but rather must be articulated as problems by securitising actors (Buzan, 1991).

The securitisation theory contended that, “what can be clearly observed is that, the state is less important in the new security agenda than in the old. It still remains central, but no longer dominates either as exclusive referent object or as the principal embodiment of threats in the way it did previously” (Buzan, 1997, p.11). For example a range of new referent objects for security and sources of threats is being set up above, below and alongside the state (Buzan, 1997, p.12). It is important to note that securitising actors are not limited to politicians. Security professionals like the police, intelligence services, customs, immigration services, border guards and the military all play an important role in defining the security landscape (Eroukmanoff, 2018, p.3).

However, other school of thoughts challenged the view of securitisation, for instance, the Welsh School which developed within the Emancipatory theory, which was first championed by K. Booth in the early 1990s, advocated a universal security system in which the individual, not the states and nations, plays a central role (Shapoval., Nastyuk., Bezpalo. & Khrystynchenko, 2018). The proponent of de-securitisation of the Paris School pioneered by Foucault and Bourdieu, questioned the view of the CS arguing that securitisation is not the result of a successful public act, but every day bureaucratic decisions, the use of technology and the Weberian practice of rationalisation (Shapoval et al, 2018, p. 46). However, despite the criticisms levelled against Securitisation Theory, the assumptions of theory serve as useful framework of analysis within the context of this paper. Therefore, the assumptions of the securitisation theory have coincided with increasing political rhetoric in Nigeria and the need to effectively manage the porosity of Nigerian border in order to checkmate influx of illegal migrants. Moreover, defining irregular immigration a threat to national security and human security for instance, shifts immigration from a low priority political concern to a high priority issue that requires action, such as border security.

### **Research Methodology**

The study in its analysis solely relied upon relevant secondary sources to draw the implication of irregular migration on national security in Nigeria. The data were collected through library research from scholarly articles, textbooks, journals, seminars and conference papers, government reports, media accounts, publications of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and internet sourced materials that are relevant to the study. Thematic content analysis was employed to analyse the data which involved reading through the data, identifying and classifying themes and explaining the meaning of these themes by connecting them with the aim of the study.

### **Implications of Irregular Migration on National Security in Nigeria**

For decades irregular migration has become threats to national security in Nigeria, especially movements across its borders. Illegal cross-border migration is believed to have adverse implication on Nigeria national security. According to Adetula, (2009),

violent crimes such as armed robbery, car theft and smuggling in northeastern border regions are allegedly linked with the presence of immigrants from neighbouring countries, especially Niger and Chad around the fringes of Lake Chad Basin and in cities like Jalingo, Jimeta-Yola, Gashua, Dikwa, Mubi, Gembu, Damaturu, Maiduguri etc. Local media are full of reports where assailants are said to speak languages unknown in Nigeria (p.282).

The porosity of Nigerian borders is one of the major reasons behind her security issues and also one of the factors responsible for illegal cross-border migration (Adepoju, 2009; Robert, 2014). According to Adetula (2009) “between 1975 and 1982, Nigeria had received an estimated two to three million undocumented migrants, mainly from Ghana, Togo and Benin” (p.270). Available data on cross-border crimes in West Africa such as human trafficking, drug trafficking and livestock poaching show that transnational social networks can have serious negative effects on national security. In Nigeria, political leaders and government officials including law enforcement officials have accused migrants from other West African countries for breaching various security laws (Adetula, 2015).

Illegal cross-border migration and frequent security threats have become issues synonymous with Nigerian borders, which have been characterised as porous and weak. Prolonged political discourses in Nigeria have been centred on repeated calls for a more effective and efficient border management paradigm, a paradigm that ensures borders to withstand cross-border security threats. However, such calls have fallen short of calling for the securitisation of the borders. The porosity nature of Nigerian borders has

rendered it susceptible to illegal migration which have become a threat to its national security. According to Adetula (2015),

clandestine, illegal or undocumented migration is rampant in West Africa and Nigeria is a major receptor of labour migrants. Nigeria's buoyant economy makes it attractive to many West African migrants especially from the less developed countries. Of course, there is also the problem of its porous borders. Virtually all the border entry points in Nigeria are used for drug trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in persons, and illicit arms transfer into the country. Media reports have implicated some migrants from neighbouring West African countries in civil disturbance, urban and rural violence, theft, armed robbery and general insecurity of lives and property. For example, all the land and sea borders in Nigeria were closed few days to the 2015 national elections to prevent influx of illegal migrants (p.9).

The "influx of illegal migrants into the country without proper records and documentation has contributed to the security challenges in Nigeria, as some of them have been alleged to engage in criminal activities such as armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, herder and farmer clashes, terrorism etc (Udeh & Nwkorobia, 2021, p.69). For instance, the north-eastern towns of Damaturu and Maiduguri is suffused with multiple secrete routes that links other neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Chad and Niger which further link to other countries like Libya, Mali, and Sudan. These secrete routes lack security presence and are primarily used for illegal exchange or purchase of arms and other businesses that are considered illegal (Tabi & Ndum, 2020).

Frequent media reports on insecurity of lives and property as well as all sort of crimes in Nigeria revealed even to people outside Nigeria the security threats facing Nigeria today. According to Adetula (2009) local media reports tend to blame this situation on immigrants from neighbouring countries. Therefore, the key areas in which illegal immigrants from West African countries allegedly threaten the security of Nigeria are economic disorder, criminal violence, and religious sectarianism (Adetula, 2009). Irregular migration is considered as a threat to national security in Nigerian security strategy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). By and large, the 2020 Nigerian National Security Strategy Development indicates that "the protection of the Nigerian people and territory, national defence, internal security, terrorism and counterterrorism, preventing and combating kidnapping, and armed banditry" (Laseinde, 2020, p.1). However, Nigeria's inadequately secured land and maritime frontiers have resulted in multiple illegal border crossings and irregular migration associated with transnational crimes, illegal movement of arms and terrorists (Estevens, 2019). For instance, security threats that stem from activities of illegal migrants are drug/human trafficking, terrorism, cattle rustling, attacks on farming

communities by transnational nomadic herdsmen from neighbouring countries (Mahmoud & Augustine, 2022).

The earliest threat to national security and human security in Nigeria as a result of illegal migration was in the 1980s. Aliens, predominantly from countries in the Sahel and Western Sahara, have been associated with religious insurrection in Nigeria (Adetula, 2015). “The notion that immigrants contribute to religious conflicts has gained ground especially in official circles. They received significant public attention in the 1980s with incidents of religious disturbance in Kano, Maiduguri and Kaduna. Unfortunately, the trend has continued to date with incredible intensity” (Adetula, 2015, p.11). The leader of the Islamic movement that started the Kano disturbances in December 1980 was an illegal immigrant named Muhammadu Marwa also known as Maitatsine from Cameroon. His adherents challenged the authority of the state and demanded absolute obedience to Marwa. The disturbances led to thousands of deaths, including Marwa. More than 1,000 persons were arrested, among which 224 migrants (Adetula, 2009).

According to Adetula (2009) “amidst the break of ethno-religious crises in parts of Northern Nigeria in October 2001, officials of the Immigration Department arrested some foreigners in Benue State capital with fake immigration documents. They were suspected of planning a religious crisis” (Adetula, 2009, p.282). Illegal flow of arms into Nigeria has contributed both to the increase in the number of violent conflicts in the country and also to their intensity. Nigeria accounts for about 70% of the illegal small arms in the West Africa sub-region. These arms are sourced from within West Africa and also from world supply of arms through the collaboration of Nigerians and foreigners (Adetula, 2015). The findings of the various Judicial Commission of Inquiry set up by the government to investigate the remote causes of religious insurrection indicate that there were pockets of external influence and the involvement of immigrants from neighbouring countries (Adetula, 2015). Prominent among cross-border security threats is the activities of Boko Haram which “obviously constitutes serious threat to human security, economic development, national security and political stability in Nigeria. The impact of the insurgency is being felt in all aspects of Nigeria's existence including its defence, security and external relations” (Adetula, 2015, p.13).

Arms smuggling also constitute another existential security threat. It is provided that, cross-border smuggling is the principal source of importation of illegal arms and ammunitions into Nigeria. For example, in August 26, 2009, 95 pump-action guns being smuggled into the country were discovered at the Idi-roko border, this might not unconnected with problem of weak border control, supervision, and liberalisation (Babatunde, 2009). It

is estimated that, according to Osimen et al, (2017) “over 70% of about 8 to 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa is in Nigeria. The degree of illegal procurement and use of SALWs in Nigeria is recorded by the sporadic capture of SALWs by security and border control agents, the frequency of deployment of these arms in conflict and crime areas, and the extent of human casualty and destruction of properties reported the consequences of its use in the country (Osimen et al, 2017).

For instance, the volume of arms relinquished during the disarmament and demobilisation (DD) phase of the Amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militants in 2009 gave an idea of the quantum of SALWs proliferation in the country. In the course of the Amnesty initiative over 15000 militants gave up their arms at the expiration of the DD phase of the Amnesty. Weapons collected during the disarmament process included 2760 assorted guns, 287445 ammunitions of different calibre, 18 gun-boats, 763 dynamite sticks, 1090 dynamite caps, and 3155 magazines (Osimen et al, 2017).

Another implication of irregular migration into Nigeria is armed banditry, mostly perpetuated by armed bandits from Benin, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger Republics, cars and goods are stolen and taken to these countries and vice versa. For instance, in 2002 former President Obasanjo’s daughter, Iyabo, escaped death from assassins who killed two teenage girls in her car along Benin border. An act perpetuated by syndicate leader Hammani Tidjani, which led to the closure of Nigerian borders by the government on August 9-15, 2003. It was not opened until the gang leader was repatriated to Nigeria for prosecution and subsequent imprisonment (Babatunde, 2009). Other cross-border related crimes that have many security complications for Nigerian national security include the activities of illegal migrants such as illegal lumbering and poaching, bunkering of petroleum products, piracy by illegal immigrants alongside the activities. They also embark upon expatriate hostage taking, kidnapping, terrorism, and armed robbery which has instilled fear of insecurity among the people (Babatunde, 2009). Furthermore, oil theft with the complicity of transnational actors threatens Nigeria's national security and economic interests. The volume of theft of Nigerian oil, both on land and on the sea, is estimated to be 100,000 barrels per day (during the first quarter of 2013) (Adetula, 2015, p.13).

The persistent cases of illegal cross-border migration, some of whom are suspected to be Fulani herdsmen migrating from neighbouring countries especially Chad constitute a serious threat to human security in Nigeria. Therefore, Benue state has been the most affected in Nigeria by the activities of these immigrant, as it has claimed many lives, and many properties have been destroyed. Local government Areas such as Agatu, Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi, Kwande, Katsina-Ala and Loggo. The violence perpetuated by the

Fulani herdsmen in Benue has claimed hundreds of lives since 2014 and recently about 73 people were killed (Segun, & Ufuoma, 2018). According to Segun & Ufuoma (2018) Fulani herdsmen have destroyed more than 80 communities and families, thereby making them refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Makurdi. In March 2016, over 500 individuals were killed when 10 communities in the Agatu Local Government Area were completely destroyed by the Fulani herdsmen.

Another area that remains an existential threat to national security and human security in Nigeria is Human Trafficking, mostly of children for the purpose of prostitution and exploitative labour, which is widespread issue in Nigeria. It is reported that, “foreign children trafficked to Nigeria come mainly from Benin and Togo (an estimated 96%, with 90% of that figure coming from Benin alone), Cote d’Ivoire and Niger. Children as young as five and six years trafficked from Benin have been found working in exploitive conditions in Nigeria mines in the Western part of the country” (Osimen et al, 2017, p.23). UNDOC (2006) contends that “trafficked girls are used for domestic services or street trading as well as commercial sexual exploitation while boys are generally forced to work on plantations or in commercial farming, construction, quarries and mines or engaged in petty crimes and drug trade” (as cited in Osimen et al, 2017, p.23). In addition to this is drug trafficking, the commonly trafficked drugs include heroine, cannabis, cocaine and synthetic drugs. The drugs find their ways into the country as a result of the porous borders and poor security in the airports. According official figures from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), 37% of Kano State’s population are drug abusers and the state also has the highest number of people arrested for illicit drug trafficking (Osimen et al, 2017).

Border management in way and manner that promotes national security should be one of the primary preoccupations of every state. However, Nigeria’s national security strategy is not given utmost priority in terms of implementation. The negligence of border security and poor border management in Nigeria has largely contributed to a prevalence of threats such as cross-border crimes by irregular migrants. When borders cease to function effectively, myriads number of security threats prevail, therefore the security of the state or its citizens will be endangered this is due to fact that borders constitute the most visible emblem of state sovereignty presence along its borders.

### **State Responses to National Security and Human Security Threats**

Border security and management is essential to a state aim at securing its population against what is consider threats to national security. The firs measure taken by the Nigerian in order to checkmate the influx of illegal

migrants into the country was in the 1980s. According to Adetula (2009) “the economic recession of the 1980s led to a decline in the overall demand for foreign labour in many of the migrant-receiving countries in West Africa. During this period, public opinion and government pronouncements became sensitive to the presence of undocumented migrants” (p.269). Thus, Nigeria, being one of the main receiving countries in West Africa, embarked on anti-immigration measures one of which intensification of check on the influx of immigrants, expulsion of illegal aliens and also border closures (Adetula 2009).

According to Afolayan 1988 the “Immigration Act of 1963 and the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree of 1972 were used to explain the expulsion of an estimated 1.3 million immigrants in 1983, including 700,000 Ghanaians” (as cited in Adetula 2009, p.269). It is further explained that, an insignificant number of aliens employed in the private sector possessed residence permits. However, the vast majority were in violation of section 8 (1) of the 1963 Immigration Act which prohibits private sector employment of non-Nigerians unless with the written consent of the director of immigration. Therefore, this was considered as flagrant abuse of Nigeria’s laws which can no longer be tolerated West Africa, 7 February 1983, as cited in Adetula 2009).

Another response to illegal migration into Nigeria was border closure imposed by the then former president Olusegun Obasanjo. And this was because of cross border crime in 2003 involving an international robbery network, whose gang leader, a Beninois national whose operations posed an existential threat to national security and threat to the customs and security operatives in Nigeria. The former President had to order the closure of the borders at least two times. It was only reopened after President of Benin Republic Mathieu Kerekou personally ordered the handing over of the gang leader Hamani Tijani to Nigerian authorities to face criminal charges (Adeola & Fayomi, 2012; Osimen et al, 2017). In another move by President Muhammadu Buhari aimed at checking the influx of irregular migrants into Nigeria, the President ordered the partial closure of all Nigerian land borders with her neighbours such as Benin Republic, Cameroun, Chad and Niger (Udeh & Nwokorobia, 2021). The land border closure which started on the 20th August, 2019 and lasted for sixteen months. This policy on border closure was as a result of the federal government’s growing concern over influx of illegal migrants into the country, trafficking in human beings (especially women and children) and drugs, proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and the need to strengthen internal security (Udeh & Nwokorobia, 2021, p.64).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The paper is an attempt to analyse the implication of irregular migration in Nigeria within the prevailing discourse of transnational security threats that emanate for irregular migration. The major observation of this paper is that influx of irregular migrants and its associated security threats constitute a serious security threat to both national and human security in Nigeria. It is also a fact that most immigrants originate from neighbouring countries of West Africa therefore remain an existential security threat to both national and human security in Nigeria. Besides, the illegality of their presence undermines the state sovereignty, most especially through the insurgent activities Boko Haram. Recognising the security threats irregular migrants cause to both national and human security, the government seldom imposed ad hoc measures through which entry points were blocked and illegal immigrants were expelled from the country. Therefore, the impacts of these efforts were limited by lack of political will to sustain the imposition, inadequate security personnel, the existence of porous borders, and a lack of political will to effectively implement National Security Strategy. The paper also observed that government in its efforts failed to securitised the issue of irregular migration in Nigeria, the government policy against irregular migrants does not goes beyond mere political rhetoric to actual securitisation of its national borders.

The paper recommends that as a matter of national priority, government should take securitization of national borders seriously. Government should also formulate effective policy on irregular border migration which requires the adoption of a balanced and holistic approach involving all law enforcement agencies that are responsible for border security. The government needs to stamp out corruption, as well as intensify the closure of the prevailing secrete routes in the country. Furthermore, a multinational approach to Transnational Security Threats is paramount in dealing with illegal immigration. Since the problem of immigration is transitional, concerted efforts have to be made at regional level and not just at national level. That is to say Nigeria most show commitment to working at both bilateral and multilateral levels, with other countries within the West African sub-region to address the menace of transnational security threats perpetuated by activities of irregular migrants.

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