

**ECOWAS REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF TRANS-
BORDER CRIMES IN NIGERIA**

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ADP12/13/H/2261

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS, FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO
UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF SCIENCE (M. SC.) DEGREE
IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

2016



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Degree: M. Sc. (International Relations)

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Supervisor

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father,

Alhaji Muhammad Ajao Giwa-Bello

And to my mother,

Hajia Habibah Anike Ajao, and to

My Wife, Amina

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praises and adorations are due to Allah, the Lord of heavens and earth and what is between them, for His guidance and protection.

Carrying out this study required assistance from a number of individuals. To begin with, I must extend my sincere thank and appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Mashood Omotosho, whose scholarly guidance, comments and encouragement help to improve the quality of this work. Indeed his roles towards the completion of this work are remarkable.

Also, I would like to appreciate Dr. Funso Adesola, Dr. (Mrs.) R. I. Ako- Nai, Dr. K. O. Olayode and Dr. Iwebunor Okwechime of the Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife. I also, thank Dr. A. O. Hassan of the Department of Public Administration and Dr. Saheed Amusa of the Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, for their concerns and encouragement. I am equally, grateful to Dr. Jamiu Olawotoki, the Head of Department of History and International Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo, for his moral support.

More so, I appreciate the moral and financial support of my mother, Hajia Habibah Anike Ajao. Mama, I cannot thank you enough for being supportive in the course of my education.

And to my wife Amina Olaronke and children, Ramla, Mar' Yam, Fatima and Khadija, I say thank you for your supportive roles and endurance. In the same vein I express my sincerely appreciation to my sister in-law Miss Iradah Olatubosun for her supportive roles.

I am also indebted to Engr. Bashir Bamiro, Brr. M. A. Sodipo, Dr. Abiodun Olayinka, Dr. Saheed Ashafa Messrs Ibrahim Akinniyi, AbdHameed Fasasi, Luqman Aderibigbe, AbdLateef Ismail, AbdRazaq Yahya, Misbahudeen Hassan, Mas'ud Sa'ad, Is-haq Yusuf,

Ibrahim Abdus-Salaam, AbdAzeez Adesoye, AbdHakeem Muhammad Awwal, Sirajudeen Shuaraau Miftahudeen Sanni, AbdAzeez Akala, Ola Raheem Lawrence Adenipekun, Abdullah Zubair, Mutiu Oladunjoye, Saliu Atunwa, AbdWakeel Ajao, Kamil Tijani, Ayuba Timothy, Femi Oguntuberu, Joshua Yange, Miss Yetude Olufeko, Esther Falade and Bisola Alabi.

I owe a special thank to my friend, Alh. AbdulMumin Sabith for his moral and financial support, AbdulMumin you are a friend indeed.

Finally, this acknowledgement will not be complete without mentioning the support of my siblings, Alhaji Shittu, Abdul Wasiu, Mrs. Fausat Owoyemi-Ajao, Ms. Taibah Ajao, Fatima, Kehinde, Taiwo, and Idowu. Sincerely you are remarkable and I hope to continue enjoying your cooperation at all time.



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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB: African Development Bank

CCTV: Close Circuit Television

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

EBID: ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development

ECA: Economic Commission for Africa

ECO BANK: The ECOWAS Bank Group

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

EFCCD: ECOWAS Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development

ETLS: ECOWAS Trade Liberalization scheme

EU: European Union

ERDF: ECOWAS Regional Investment Bank

FTA: Free Trade Area

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

NAPTIP: National Agency for Prohibition in Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters

NCS: Nigeria Customs Services

NDLEA: National Drug Law Enforcemt agency

NIS: Nigeria Immigration Service

SALWs: Small Arms and Light Weapons

UN: United Nations

UNCTAD: United Nations Conferences on Trade and Development

UNECA: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNDP: United Nations Development Programmes

UNHCR: United Nations Human Right Commission

UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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ABSTRACT

The study examined factors responsible for trans-border crimes in Nigeria; investigated the connection between ECOWAS regional integration and trans-border crimes in Nigeria; examined the implications of trans-border crimes for Nigeria's socio-economic development and ECOWAS regional integration agenda; and investigated the effective mechanisms for implementing ECOWAS integration agenda in West African sub-region. These were with a view to providing information on the nature and dynamics of Nigeria's security, particularly on how trans-border crimes constitute a challenge to ECOWAS regional integration agenda.

The study utilized primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through the conduct of in-depth interviews with officials and scholars from different government ministries, agencies and institutions. In-depth interviews were conducted with two experts on national security and West African regional integration from Lagos State University. Also, a desk official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a senior research fellow of Nigerian Institute of International Affairs were interviewed. These respondents were knowledgeable in Nigeria's external relations and ECOWAS regional integration agenda. Also interviewed was the Lagos Zonal Commander of National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters. In addition three officials of security agencies each from the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Nigeria Customs Service and the Nigeria Police were interviewed. Secondary data were sourced from books, journal articles, newspapers, the internet, and official publications by relevant national and international agencies such as ECOWAS; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNDOIC); Nigeria Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive method.

The findings showed that porous national borders, poverty, unemployment, weak state institutions and corrupt security agents were the major factors responsible for trans-border crimes in Nigeria. The findings also revealed that the increase in the incidence of trans-border crimes in Nigeria and in other member states constituted a major setback to the full actualization of ECOWAS integration process in the West African sub-region. It was also discovered that the upsurge in trans-border crimes in Nigeria and criminal networks in West Africa not only undermined Nigeria's internal security but also constituted challenges to ECOWAS regional integration process. The results revealed that the steady rise in the incidence of trans-border crimes in Nigeria had resulted in a reduction in government revenues and flows of foreign direct investments with serious consequences for socioeconomic development of the country. Finally, the results also showed that the criminal activities of trans-insurgent groups such as Boko Haram within and across Nigerian borders posed serious challenges to Nigeria's role as a regional balancer and mediator

The study concluded that the increasing incidence of trafficking in persons and arms and other trans-border crimes across the West African sub-region have considerably undermined Nigeria's internal security, thereby hindering effective implementation of ECOWAS integration programme.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The treaty establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was signed in Lagos, on May 28, 1975. The formation of ECOWAS signifies a higher level of multilateral economic integration in the West African sub-region (Okuntola, 2008). The implementation of regional co-operation agenda and the establishment of an economic union of West Africa are seen by the drafters of the treaty as a means of solving the myriad problems of underdevelopment of the sub-region and the broader Africa which include: poverty, poor living standards; weak and unstable economies (Nwoke, 2005).

ECOWAS as a regional economic integration organization emphasizes the fusion of the national markets and the co-ordination of economic policies of member states for larger sub-regional economic advancement through, among other things, the removal of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital (Okuntola, 2008). Article 27 of the community treaty states that:

Citizens of member states shall be regarded as community citizens and accordingly member states undertake to abolish all obstacles to their freedom of movement and residence within the community. Member states shall, by agreement with each other, exempt community citizens from holding visitors visas and residence permits and allow them to work and undertake commercial and industrial activities within their territories (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975: Article 27).

By the provision of the treaty the Community aims at creating a regional market of 16-member states for about 210 million consumers (Dokubo, 2009). Hence, the ECOWAS

objectives clearly show that the sub-region is determined to speed up socio-economic development of the region as reaction to its shortcomings in global economy. For the members of ECOWAS, the community provides a unique opportunity for them to unite and co-operate and build up their economic power in order to reduce their external dependence and develop the West African sub-region (Okuntola, 2008; Asante, 2000).

The fundamental objective of the organization therefore, is to facilitate co-operation and development in the area of economic activity, most importantly, in the areas of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce; monetary and financial questions, and socio-cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the ECOWAS citizens, increasing and maintaining economic stability in the region as well as, fostering closer relations among its member states, and in turn, contributing to the progress and development of the African continent (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975: Article 2). It is against this backdrop that the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Residence and Establishment was drafted in May 29, 1979 as a means of facilitating the achievement of the set objectives of the regional organization. Consequently, the first phase of the Protocol, the Protocol on free movement of persons, goods and services was ratified in 1980 and national committees were set-up in member states to monitor and ensure the implementation of the Protocol. It has however, been argued that the free movement protocol has been abused by some ECOWAS citizens to perpetrate nefarious acts within and across the West African sub-region.

While trans-border criminals operate across West African states, Nigeria could be said to be more vulnerable to the threat of trans-border crimes than other ECOWAS countries, largely due to its economic dominance and the porosity of its borders. Some opinion leaders

in Nigeria such as; the Second Republic Senate leader of the Nigerian Peoples' Party, Senator Obi Wali and the Fourth Republic Minister of Interior, Mr. Abba Moro, have weighed against the influx of ECOWAS expatriate particularly the irregular immigrants and labourers because these immigrants perpetuate illegal syndicate activities such as insurgency, human trafficking, prostitution and vagrancy (Onwuka, 1982; The Punch, September 12, 2011). Also, in reaction to the rising incidence of Boko Haram insurgency within and across Nigerian borders; the former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan on September 13, 2011 called for the re-assessment and reconstruction of the ECOWAS protocol (Nwanolue and Iwuoha, 2013).

The escalation of trans-border criminal activities in the country especially since the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in 2009 is disturbing; from the June 16, 2011 attack on Nigeria Police Headquarters, Abuja and other random acts of violence perpetrated against vulnerable civilians especially school children. Thus, the criminal activities of insurgents, arms smugglers and human traffickers and other related trans-border criminal activities within and across Nigerian borders signify uncertainty as well as increased insecurity not only for Nigeria but for the sub-region and the larger international community (Pothuraju, 2012).

Moreover, the activities of the trans-border criminal syndicates within and across the national borders obviously undermined good governance and Nigeria's internal security, with negative impact on ECOWAS regional integration arrangement. Hence, this study seeks to examine the nexus between trans-border crimes in Nigeria and the difficult process of regional integration in West Africa. The study will also shed light on the implications of trans-border crimes for Nigeria's socio-economic development and ECOWAS regional integration agenda.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The increasing incidence of trafficking in persons and arms; trans-insurgency and other related trans-border crimes across and within the West African sub-region have considerably undermined Nigeria's security and also hindered effective implementation of the ECOWAS

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