

## **CROSS-BORDER CRIMES AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY: AN OVERVIEW OF JIBIA INTERNATIONAL BORDER IN KATSINA STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*Jibia border is a major entry point for goods and people into Nigeria from Niger Republic. In recent years, the border has become increasingly lawless, with rise in smuggling, drug trafficking, and other criminal activities. This study aims to examine the nature and extent of border crimes committed at Jibia border, and to identify the factors that contribute to these crimes. The study used a purely qualitative approach, utilizing data from in-depth interviews with key informants. The in-depth interviews explored the causes of border crimes and the motivations of criminals, the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies, and the strategies that can be used to reduce border crimes. The study found out that cross-border crimes are a major problem at Jibia border, and that these crimes have a significant negative impact on the local community and Nigeria's national security at large. The study also identified a number of implications of cross-border crimes at Jibia International Border in Katsina State on Nigeria's national security which include proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), terrorism, insurgency and violent extremist activities, human/drug trafficking, distorted economy and a host of others. The findings of this study are expected to inform the development of policies and interventions to reduce border crime at Jibia border. The study is also expected to raise awareness of the problem of border crime and its impact on surrounding communities*

**Keywords:** Jibia, border, border crimes, national security.

### **Introduction**

The end of the Cold War saw the emergence of new phenomena in the international community – featuring among the list of such evolving issues is the phenomenon of trans-border crime with its dimensions and threat to global peace and security. The dimensions and momentum of trans-border crimes has increased with the emergence of globalization (Simon, 2011). Today, states have realized they cannot exist in isolation and are now increasingly interdependent. This current global trend of interdependence between and among states has encouraged the opening of borders among them. Countries with varying degrees of development in socio-economic, political and cultural spheres are merged

together in one form of regional arrangement or the other and this has further helped in facilitating the activities of transnational criminal activities (Opanike, 2015).

West Africa has become notorious for instability and armed conflict and is increasingly known for transnational criminal networks. Free movement across borders creates security threats in the sub-region. Smugglers, traffickers, terrorists and armed robbers traverse the sub-regional borders without major challenge (Addo, 2006). Historically, transnational crime is not new to Nigeria. The Nigerian transnational criminal organizations according to Williams can be traced to the early eighties when many college and secondary educated Nigerian graduates turned to crime with such success that in short time, they became second only to the Chinese in trafficking heroin into the US.

Nigeria's borders have been described as porous allowing all sorts of trans-border criminal activities such as arms smuggling. This is in spite of the efforts of cross border security agencies like the Nigeria Police, Customs Service, Immigration Services and the DSS, etc., in manning the officially designated border routes. Arms smuggling activities constitute threat to global and national security as they affect the political cum socio-economic development of the country and tarnish its image as a corporate and independent entity with the attendant effects of ethnic militias, youth restiveness, terrorism and other related trans-border crimes. The synergy and collaborative efforts by the government, the security personnel and the border-communities remain questionable due to the persistence of these crimes. Border communities being the domain and hosting the border largely functions as entry, transit-resting point and exit for smuggled arms. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of these border communities rather than play vital roles in the co-operative alertness and monitoring of processes within their border areas, in most cases, aid and abate smuggling of various kinds.

In Nigeria, the Jibia International Border Katsina State has faced its share of criminal activities. For instance, Omoniyi (2004) stated that due to the location of the town along the Nigeria-Niger border, a smuggling trade exists within the settlement. Illegal cross-border trade is carried out by settlers and transient populations using knowledge of the local population to create alternative routes within the border (Omoniyi, 2004). Among the goods smuggled in are rice, palm oil, spaghetti, macaroni, used vehicles and tyres, while the items smuggled out include cement, petroleum products, woods and furniture, groundnut oil, beans, yam, sugar, corn. There exist at least six illegal entry points in the area (Tunde, 2011). The frontier post is also used by human traffickers to carry young girls and boys from the Republic of Niger into Nigeria. Sometimes, the underage children are leased by their parents to work in some Northern states like Katsina, Kano, Kaduna for a stipulated time frame (Terkula, 2016).

### **Problem Statement and Questions**

Cross-border crimes represent a critical threat to national security, undermining the stability and sovereignty of nations worldwide. In Nigeria, the Jibia International Border in Katsina State has emerged as a significant hotspot for such illicit activities. This porous border facilitates the trafficking of arms, drugs, and humans, as well as the smuggling of goods,

exacerbating the already precarious security situation in the region. Despite efforts by the Nigerian government to secure its borders, the persistence of these crimes continues to undermine economic development, disrupt social order, and compromise national security. The impacts of these cross-border crimes at the Jibia International Border extend beyond immediate security threats, leading to long-term consequences for Nigeria's national security. This study seeks to investigate the dynamics of cross-border crimes at the Jibia International Border and their implications for Nigeria's national security by examining the root causes of these crimes.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The main variables in this study, which are border, cross-border crimes and national security are conceptually clarified within the context of relevant literature.

#### **Concept of Border**

According to Adejumobi (2015), border is seen as a demarcation found within international divides, covering political entities and affiliates, with legal jurisdiction of states autonomy and sovereignty and a geographical divide that forms the juridical zone between one state and another. Afolayan (2000), added that border is the line of divides that marks the limit of a country land, legal and sovereign coverage from another. Within this delimited boundary, nations exercise authority and influence, as to what goes in and what comes out of the state. He further noted that it is within that a country can restrict, accept and ban items, materials and equipment from gaining entry into her territory or otherwise (Afolayan, 2000).

Asiwaju (1984) captured that border is a precincts zone of a state, with significance and authority, restricted unwanted movement of illegal, human and materials including smugglers and their smuggled items. They are characterized by dual dimensional associations between the host nation and her neighbouring state. In other words, borders include the geographical areas round nation's territorial demarcations between another. Thus, in the same line of thought, Spencer (2007) notes that borders play delicate role in the stability of any nation in terms of peace and conflicts, as the arms used during the period of conflict, violence and crisis are usually smuggled into a target country through her borders. For the author, border is a boundary or dividing line that separates geographical areas, political entities or jurisdictions such as countries, states or regions.

#### **Concept of Cross-Border Crimes**

Cross-border crimes are crimes that have actual or potential effect across national borders and crimes which are intra-State but which offend fundamental values of the international community (Boister, 2003). In recent times the term "cross-border, transnational or trans-border" is commonly used by the law enforcement agencies and academic communities. According to Concise English Dictionary (2014), transnational means extending or operating across the borders or boundaries. The word "transnational crime" describes crimes that are not only international (that is, crimes that cross borders between countries), but crimes that

by their nature involve cross-border transference as an essential part of the criminal activity. Cross-border crimes also include crimes that take place in one country, but their consequences significantly affect another country and transit countries may also be involved. Examples of cross border crimes include: human trafficking, smuggling/trafficking of goods (such as arms trafficking and drug trafficking and illegal animal and plant products and other goods prohibited on environmental grounds (e.g. banned ozone depleting substances), sex slavery, terrorism offences, torture and apartheid.

According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC (2005), transnational crime by definition involves people in more than one country maintaining a system of operation and communication that is effective enough to perform criminal transactions, sometimes repeatedly. The fragility of states in West Africa, coupled with the weakness of state institutions mandated to combat the crime has contributed to the upsurge of TOC menace in recent times. The complicity, inactive or passive attitude, of state officials in the region and outside, cannot be ruled out.

Asiwaju (1998) saw cross border crimes as a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators and repercussions go beyond territorial borders. Cross border crime suggests in simple terms the movement of persons, goods and services across sovereign national jurisdiction in a manner devoid of acceptable norms and standards. At the local level, the sophistry of organized groups can be described as rudimentary. However, with international linkages, the operational base of organized crime in Nigeria has widened beyond immediate frontiers which is a source of great concern to the government (Ngboawaji, 2011). Cross-border crimes refer to illegal activities that involve the movement of goods, services, funds, or individuals across international borders in violation of national laws and regulations (Beare, 2006). These crimes encompass various forms such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering, and environmental crimes (Finckenauer, 2005; Natarajan, 2016).

### **Concept of National Security**

National security remains a highly contested concept because scholars have approached it from various disciplinary perspectives. Anything that can pose a threat to one's existence or that harms or make life un-pleasurable can be classified as insecurity. The word security originates from the Latin word "*Se-curus*", "*Se*" means without and "*Curus*" means uneasiness. This implies that security originally refers to liberation from uneasiness, or a peaceful situation without any risks or threats. Thus, security has a wider meaning including 'to feel safe' and to 'to be protected'. Security is a prerequisite for long-term economic, social, and political progress (Bhimnath, 2017).

According to Watson (2008), the concept national security was developed and used by the United States of America after World War II, with emphasis on military might, but now encompasses a broad range of facets such as economic security, political security, energy security, and environmental. No nation can achieve sustainable development in an environment characterized by conflicts such as terrorism, trans-border crimes, insurgency,

and violent extremism amongst others. Security is indispensable in ensuring sustainable socio-economic development.

As observed by Romm (1993), national security encompasses the protection of the nation's territorial integrity, the protection of national borders, maintenance of economic relations with the outside world, the preservation of the country's nature, institution, governance and above all, equitable distribution of the scarce resources, provision of employment, provision of infrastructure and justice, etc., that will create enabling environment for peace. National security according to Omotola (2006:32) is "the freedom from danger or absence of threats to the multidimensional elements that may affect the nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and national interests, as much as promote and boost the well-being of its people". Similarly, Onuoha (2008) posits that national security is "the capacity of a state to promote the pursuit and realization of the fundamental needs and vital interests of man and society and also to protect them from threats which may be economic, social, environmental, political, military or epidemiologic in nature".

### **Nexus between Cross-Border Crimes and National Security**

Cross-border crimes pose significant threats to national security, affecting a country's stability, sovereignty, and development in multiple ways. These crimes undermine a nation's control over its territory, especially through activities such as smuggling and trafficking. The illegal movement of goods, arms, drugs, and humans across borders challenges state authority and governance, creating zones of lawlessness. Terrorist groups and insurgents exploit porous borders to evade capture, recruit, and resupply, directly threatening national security. Economically, cross-border crimes lead to substantial financial losses through tax evasion, money laundering, and capital flight, which reduce government revenue and hinder economic development. Smuggling and counterfeit goods disrupt legitimate trade, affecting local businesses and economies, leading to instability and job losses. Socially, human trafficking for forced labour or sexual exploitation violates human rights and contributes to social instability. Drug trafficking results in higher addiction rates, crime, and public health crises, burdening health systems and law enforcement. Political and institutional corruption is another consequence of cross-border crimes. These crimes often involve the corruption of public officials, undermining the rule of law and public trust in governmental institutions. Weak institutions become even more vulnerable, compromising their ability to enforce laws and maintain order. Internationally, cross-border crimes strain diplomatic relations between neighboring countries, necessitating effective cooperation to manage shared security threats. Regional instability in one country can spill over into neighboring areas, creating broader security challenges.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study is based on the Structural Functionalism theory. The major proponents of Structural functionalism include Talcott Parson, Gabriel Almond and Bingham G. Powell. Almond and Powell (1966) introduced Structural Functionalist approach in comparing political systems. They argue that to understand a political system, it is necessary to understand not only its institutions (or structures), but also the respective functions of the institutions. Structural Functionalism holds the view that in a political system, there are institutions or structures that perform specific functions and that when such institutions fail to perform their functions, the political system will be drastically affected and dysfunctional leading to upheavals which sometimes creates feeling of insecurity in the country.

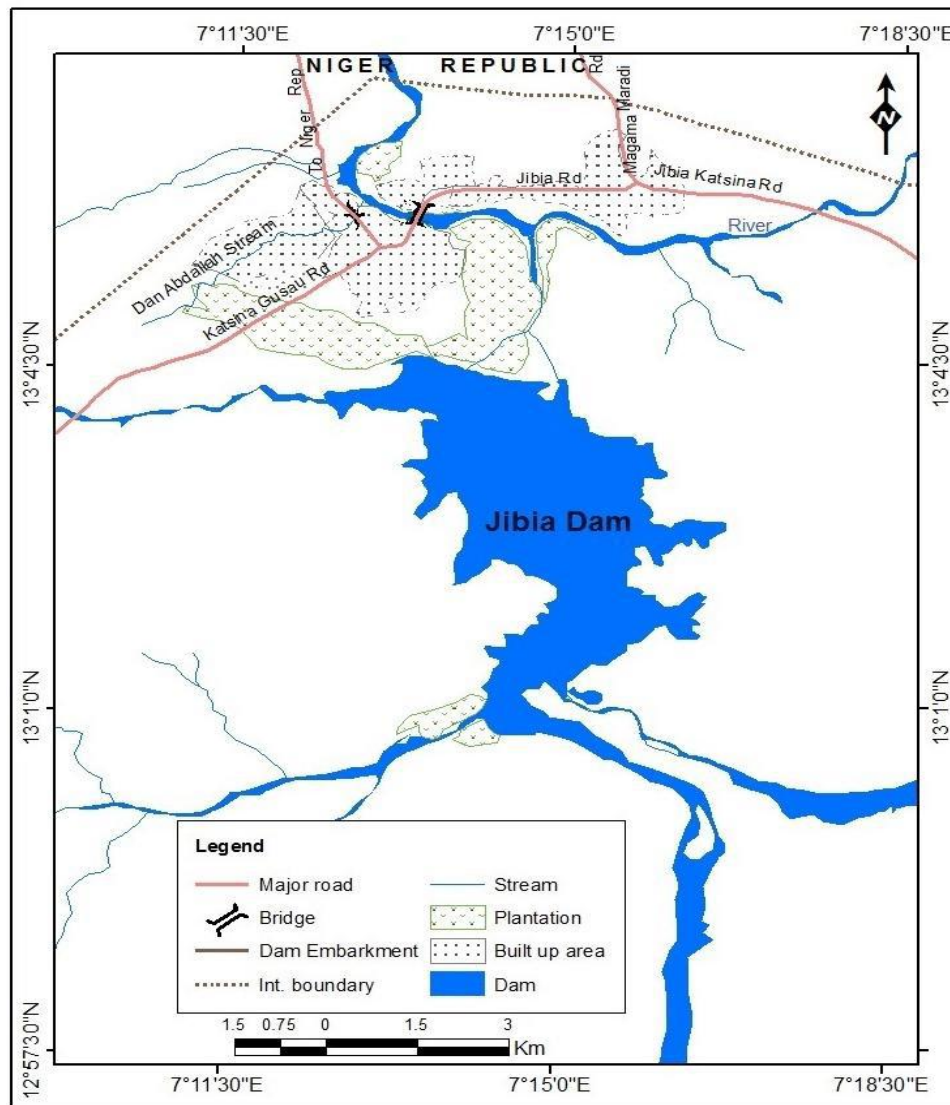
In the context of cross-border crimes at the Jibia International Border, the structural functionalist perspective highlights how various societal structures and functions are interconnected and how their dysfunctions can lead to broader security challenges. The interconnectedness of institutions such as law enforcement, the judiciary, customs, and immigration are crucial to understanding the issue. The failure of these institutions to effectively collaborate and function can increase vulnerability to cross-border crimes, with weak enforcement mechanisms and corrupt practices disrupting the balance and effectiveness of border security operations. It also posits that social institutions contribute to maintaining social order and stability. Cross-border crimes at Jibia disrupt this order by fostering an environment of lawlessness and insecurity, affecting not only the immediate border region but also having ripple effects on national security, economic development, and social cohesion. According to the theory, social phenomena is either functional or dysfunctional. While legitimate cross-border trade promotes economic growth and cultural exchange, illegal activities like smuggling and trafficking are dysfunctional, undermining social norms and laws, leading to disorder and threatening national security.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine cross-border crimes and their impact on Nigeria's national security, focusing specifically on the Jibia International Border. This method facilitates in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights, allowing for rich, detailed data collection and analysis. The case study method is utilized to examine the Jibia International Border, a critical point of entry and exit between Nigeria and Niger. This border area is selected due to its strategic importance and history of cross-border criminal activities, including smuggling, human trafficking, and arms proliferation. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including border security officials, local law enforcement agents, community leaders, and residents, who were purposively selected for the interviews

### **Study Area**

The Jibia international border is located in the Jibia Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. It is a major trade route between Nigeria and Niger, and is also used by people who are migrating between the two countries. The border is located on the Sokoto-Niger Highway, about 48 kilometers northwest of Katsina, the capital of Katsina State. The border was closed in August 2019 as part of a security crackdown by the Nigerian government, but it was reopened in April 2023. The Jibia border is a relatively lawless area, and is often used by smugglers and criminals. In 2005, the border post was burnt down by a mob of smugglers. The Jibia border is also a major transit point for refugees fleeing violence in Niger. In 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were over 20,000 refugees from Niger living in Jibia. The Jibia border is a strategic location, and its security is important to both Nigeria and Niger. The Nigerian government has taken steps to improve security at the border, but smuggling and crime still remain a problem



Map of Jibia Town as the Study Area.

Source:- National Aeronautic and Space Administration Spot Image 2018

## Discussion and

### Analysis of Findings

#### Causes of Cross-Border Crimes at Jibia International Border

From the primary data generated from the Key Informant Interviews, the causes of cross-border crimes at the Jibia International Border could be classified by the researcher into the following factors: geographical, socio-economic, and political. It is believed that fully understanding these causes is essential for crafting effective strategies to combat these crimes and bolster Nigeria's national security. These factors include:

- a. **Geographical Factors:** The stretch of the land on the Jibia border, difficult to move around in, consequently exposes its porosity and makes it very impossible to police. It has no natural barriers, and the length of the border is so long that there exists variety of entry points that can be used for illegal activities. The same goes for the



remote and rugged terrain along the border communities, such as Magama, Gurbin Baure, and Farun Bala, where surveillance and patrolling are very difficult to be affected by security forces, thereby opening avenues for criminals to exploit such areas for smuggling and trafficking.

- b. **Economic Factors:** The large proportion of poverty in the communities around Jibia International Border compels the residents to engage in illegal activities for survival. Smuggling and trafficking, in most cases, end up being more rewarding than any legal economic activity. Economic disparities between Nigeria and the neighboring countries could be facilitating smuggling. Huge price differences on a myriad of goods and commodities between countries encourage illegal trade. One respondent reported the differences in prices between Nigeria and Niger, on frequently smuggled commodities, to be as high as 100 percent on items such as fuel, rice, pasta, pharmaceuticals, and drinks.
- c. **Political and Governance Factors:** Inadequate resources, lack of training, and poor equipment lower the effectiveness of the police at the Jibia International Border. On the other hand, criminal activities thrive, as any action is taken with very minimal risk of getting caught. There have been instances of connivance between security personnel charged with manning the Jibia International Border and smugglers. This has led to shoot-outs between security personnel, particularly customs officers, and smugglers, which is common in the Kofar Guga area of Katsina Metropolis. Insufficient harmonization among various security organs and, in particular, between Nigerian and Nigerien security forces, at times can adversely affect efficient border management and crime prevention at the Jibia International Border. Moreover, institutional and infrastructural factors—like the insufficiency of infrastructure and scant legal frameworks—might not be efficient for effective border control and surveillance, and gaps and weaknesses in legal frameworks about border security and criminal justice may cripple the prosecution and deterrence of cross-border crime.
- d. **Socio-Cultural Factors:** Social and cultural variables also have a bearing: reinforced family and ethnic ties across borders are conducive to the planning of illicit activities; no or low level of education and awareness concerning the legal and security implications of cross-border crimes also leads to involvement in related activities by local communities.

### **Implications of Cross Border Crimes at Jibia International Border on Nigeria's National Security**

The negative dimension that cross-border crimes have assumed across the Jibia International Border has far-reaching and disastrous implications on national security, influencing so many aspects concerning stability, governance, and socio-economic development in Nigeria. These include:

- a. **Territorial Integrity:** These crimes directly impugn or threaten Nigeria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The porosity of the Jibia International border attests to the easy movement of arms, drugs, and insurgents that undermines state control and fosters insecurity. This contributes to the creation of zones of lawlessness, which often are easily exploited by criminal minds and terrorist groups in ratcheting up violence and instability within the country. During his search, the researcher found multiple reports of bandit sleeper agents' infiltration through the Jibia International Border, perpetuating further massacres in parts of Northwest Nigeria.
- b. **Economic Implications:** Cross-border crimes at the Jibia International Border for the better part of three decades have occasioned significant financial losses to the Federal and Katsina State government, and the private sector. Smuggling and illicit trade divert economic benefits which would have accrued through formal economic channels, leading to major revenue leakage for the government in the form of uncollected taxes and duties, and establishes an uneven playing field for legitimate business owners. This undermines public finances, therefore limiting federal and Katsina State government investment in essential services and development projects. Besides, this influx of counterfeits and smuggled goods disrupts local markets, hurting legitimate businesses and plummeting the consumer confidence in local markets. A respondent, who is a local businessman that operates out of the Katsina Central Market, stated that their businesses suffer because people prefer to purchase smuggled goods, which are often cheaper than locally manufactured products.
- c. **Political Implications:** Politically, the persistent presence of cross-border crimes at Jibia International Border undermines public trust in government (federal and state) and security agencies. Corruption and inefficiency within these institutions, especially those saddled with the responsibility of border management at the Jibia International Border (Nigeria Customs Service, Nigeria Police Force, NSCDC etc) erode their legitimacy and effectiveness, creating a perception of impunity and fostering cynicism among citizens.
- d. **Socio-Cultural Implications:** Not only are cross-border crimes rampant at the Jobia border, spurring insecurity and fuelling fears among the local communities, but human and drug trafficking is also contributing to several facets of social decay by increasing crime rates and health crises like drug addiction and disease transmission. In terms of social conditions, this has created an environment where communities are either turned into accomplices or fall victim to criminal activities that destabilize the region further. A respondent reported that due to the smuggling activities at the Jibia International Border, a town known as Magama-Hirji has become a hotspot for criminal elements that ply that route.
- e. **Regional Security Implications:** The insecurity at the Jobia International Border has broader implications for Nigeria's relations with her neighbour along that geographical location, Niger Republic. It has been a great strain on the diplomatic ties

between the two nations and has complicated efforts that could have cemented regional cooperation and integration. Unchecked cross-border crimes have raised mutual distrust with retaliatory measures to the point where free movements of persons, goods, and services face a snag, and thus killing regional economic development.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has tried to examine the causes and impacts of cross border crimes at the Jibia International Border, and thus calls for a more comprehensive approach to the solution of problems encountered by Jibia border communities due to transnational criminal activities. These, therefore, will include

- a. the improvement of border security through modern surveillance methods, patrol frequency, and community policing.
- b. The capacity of law enforcement must also be strengthened as much as anti-corruption efforts.
- c. It would require economic development and jobs stimulated through investment in locally based business ventures and stimulating entrepreneurship programs.
- d. In addition to education campaigns and sensitization, efficient border management has to be combined with better legal frameworks and more international cooperation.
- e. Infrastructural development, regional stability efforts, and strengthened health and social services will further support these communities and, accordingly, reduce their dependence on illicit activities, therefore improving overall security and well-being

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