

CONFLICT MONITORING AND SECURITY RISK ASSESSMENT OF SEME BORDER OF NIGERIA AND REPUBLIC OF BENIN

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ABSTRACT

Conflict Monitoring is a crucial exercise in peace building. It is often designed to detect early warning signs of potential intra/interpersonal, intra/inter-organisational and other forms of conflict. Monitoring and Evaluation should be a major component of any development process. However, in many countries of the Sahel region this crucial component of development is neglected in their border regions. The issue is not a dearth of national policy/ies on Monitoring and Evaluation but that of the political will of governments to enforce the implementation of such policies. The extrapolation of evaluation policies into constructive actions germane to development often suffers governmental neglect. This paper presents the report of the strategies deployed in conflict monitoring and risk evaluation of the Seme Border of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin, with a view to enhancing full understanding of the risks inherent in security operations at the border, designing a pro-active agenda in the areas of profiling, targeting and selecting as preventive diplomacy against further degeneration of activities in the area and resultant threat to the security of both countries.

Key words: Conflict monitoring, Risk assessment, Profiling, targeting, Preventive diplomacy.

INTRODUCTION

The belief in the peace building and development world is that a well monitored relationship or process can beat the potentials of violent conflict. In organisations and government agencies conflict monitoring is captured under risk assessment in which an evaluation of the performance of the agency is conducted to detect the threats and other factors that may be enhancing or inhibiting its performance. Early warning signs should provoke appropriate preventive mechanisms and this in turn, would portend a congenial atmosphere for development.

The vulnerability of African borders particularly the Sahel Region with its attendant consequences of violent conflicts and border crimes has attracted global attention, which spurred many international organisations into creating awareness, through trainings workshops and seminars in order to arrest the spate of this dangerous trend.

In Nigeria, the excuses for this porosity have largely been hinged upon dearth of trained personnel to man the borders effectively. All the security agencies deployed to manage Nigerian borders share this gross inadequacy of personnel experience and also

inadequate funding which culminate in poorly equipped workforce. Apart from administrative inadequacies like ethnically skewed promotion and lack of functional health facilities, the workforce is generally subjected to dehumanising work environment, frustration, anger, hopelessness, hatred, illusion, occupational risks and hazards, depression due to poor welfare packages. The resultant impact of this is low productivity and in some extreme cases death of the low rank officers- those often found in the field. As reported by THISDAY Newspaper of 28th July, 2017, 41 personnel of NDLEA died in a single year i.e. between 2016 and 2017. With a workforce of 5001, it means 0.77% personnel were lost in a year. Meanwhile there is no assurance of their replacement based on the economic recession currently placed on the Nigerian economy. According to THISDAY:

This gory situation shows that between 2016 and middle of 2017, most junior officers have died. Nine narcotic agents topped the list representing 23.68%, followed by officers who are Deputy Superintendent of narcotic with 18.42% or seven, officers on Chief Narcotic Agents (CNA) ranks with 13.16% or five, Assistant Superintendent of Narcotics (ASN) II with 10.53% or four, Superintendent of Narcotics (SN) with 7.89% or four, Senior Narcotic Agent (SNA) with 5.26% or two, Narcotic Assistant (NASS) with 5.26% or three, Chief Superintendent of Narcotic (CSN) with 13.16% or five and finally Assistant Chief of Narcotic (CAN) 2.63% or two.

The situation can only slightly differ either in the negative or positive way with other security agencies charged with the responsibility of manning Nigerian borders.

This paper focuses on Seme border of Nigeria and Republic of Benin given the vari-

ous international brushes the two countries have encountered based on trans-border crimes which seem intractable by the two countries. The border seems to be the most active trade route between the West African countries and Nigeria and at the same time the most virulent source of crime import and export. At this juncture this paper would take a brief look at the relationship between the two countries.

Nigeria-Benin Republic Economic and Diplomatic Interactions

The Nigeria-Dahomey (Benin) boundary was arbitrarily taken to lie along longitude 2° east...and it was intended to be temporary. Its function was simply to prevent the territory falling under the control of another European country (Afolayan, 2011).

Historically, two Nigerian-based empires had ruled over practically the territory of ancient Dahomey for about 1,000 years. They are the Oyo Empire for the most part of the south up to the central peripheries and the Borgu Empire in the central region. The Oyo Empire had ruled in the southern and central parts of the entity now known as Benin Republic since about 11th Century till about 1889 when the French effectively took over.

The People's Republic of Benin is a smaller country compared to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, not only in area, but also as shown by their population sizes of 4.5 million and over 100 million respectively. Benin's population is concentrated along the coast. Benin, therefore, has a very limited domestic market; the country is noted more for being a transit corridor for imported goods and local farm exports. It serves the land-locked Francophone countries in its vicinity and its eastern neighbour, Nigeria. It also served as a warehouse state for Nigeria, especially in the 1970s when the country experienced periods

of port congestion, and during the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, Benin has pursued an economic infiltrations policy towards Nigeria, as a way of surviving economically. Its foreign policy has invariably been to safeguard its autonomy by cushioning it from the inevitable consequences of any economic malaise in Nigeria.

The sharp depreciation of the naira since 1986 and the growing attractiveness of the CFA franc for Nigerian traders are major factors that help to explain the regional dynamics of the two countries and the high level of official and undocumented trade between them. When the exchange rate of the naira plummeted between 1986 and 1992, Benin immediately became an intermediary for re-exporting three main products - rice, wheat flour and second-hand cars - from Europe into Nigeria. As a result, trade boomed in the port of Cotonou between 1990 and 1993. Also, the devaluation of the official rate of the naira encouraged the importation of farm inputs from Nigeria. Benin also serves as the main intermediary for other West African Francophone countries seeking to buy low-cost Nigerian manufactured goods. It benefits from its relative closeness to Nigeria and remains a major financial market where Nigerians can acquire the CFA franc they need for foreign trade.

Consequently, trade flourishes along the Lagos-Badagry- Cotonou corridor and along the Sango-Otta-Idiroko axis on the western boundary of Nigeria. The trade involves the movement and sale of imported finished goods. The similar cultural characteristics of the people on either side of this international boundary facilitate cross-border trading.

The ethno-political relations of the two countries cannot be ignored as there exists historical clannish ties between many Beninios and Nigerian citizens particularly those in the South-Western part of Nigeria known as Yoruba. Indeed, it is common knowledge that an average Beninois speaks Yoruba fluently. Obisakin captured this succinctly in his remarks:

Recently, the Beninese President had publicly declared that 65 per cent of his people are of Nigerian origin. One can safely say that indeed almost 70 per cent of them are Nigeria-related. If the current population of Benin is 10m, this may mean that ethnic Nigerians in Benin are about 6.5 million. Human resources are largely the most crucial factor in socio-economic activities in the economies of the developing countries. This should say much about the geo-strategic relations of the two countries: Nigeria and Benin.

The difficulty in maintaining an effective security along Nigerian/Benin border posts cannot be divorced from the existing social relations between the citizens of the two countries. Many Nigerians have their kith and kin resident in the republic of Benin and vice versa. The artificial geographical boundary has not successfully broken the cultural ties between them and this fact has inhibited control over migration and socio-economic interactions between the peoples of the two countries. The vast borderline between the two countries has also posed a challenge to security maintenance in the area. Obisakin is alarmed:

How do you police 778 kilometers of creek, forest, rivers, lakes, savannah? Will you fence them? Obviously, from what I wrote above there are certain areas that need careful socio

-historical and other well researched considerations to tell where the French colonial masters of Benin and the British ones for Nigeria demarcated as boundaries between these two peoples who were one before the 1885 artificial boundaries drawn in Berlin. The relationship between Nigeria and Benin Republic could have passed for cordial but for the occasional hiccups that erupt basically on socio-economic platforms which Nigeria considers to be inimical to its growth and threatening to its sovereignty. Ate & Akinterinwa (2012) succinctly captured it in the following statement:

The security relations between Nigeria and Benin have always centred on two issue areas - boundary and military relations. The two overlaps. Boundary relations are important in the first place because of the imprecision which marked the delimitation exercise . . . This setting, is further compounded by the activities of smugglers and the actions of overzealous functionaries who attempt to enforce legislation beyond their areas of jurisdiction . . . Besides boundary relations, political instability especially in Benin Republic has been important for their security relationship.

In 2003, Nigeria had to resort to counter-measures to force its position on Benin's violations of the UN principles of friendly relations among states. Nigeria closed its western borders against Benin Republic to press home its demand that that the Beninois government did something decisive about the spate of smuggling and other trans-border crimes in its territory. According to IRIN news (2003):

For years cars stolen in Nigeria have turned up on sale in Benin and large quantities of cheap Nigerian petrol have been smuggled

across the border. At the same time, human trafficking has become rife in both directions. Nigerians seeking clandestine entry to Europe often leave via Benin, while West African children, recruited to work for low wages on plantations in Central Africa are dispatched in the opposite direction.

This development arose from the failure of the Republic of Benin to exercise control on the security lapses in its territory which had overlapping consequences on the neighbouring Nigerian state. As was observed (IRIN News, 2003), there had been several unavailing entreaties by Nigeria that Republic of Benin had to redress its security lapses particularly on the grounds of trans-border crimes: "In the past many complaints were made to the Beninois authorities, but failed to elicit the appropriate and satisfactory response," the Nigerian foreign ministry said. "The decision to close our border with Benin Republic was therefore taken in Nigeria's overriding national interest."

The international relationship with these two sister countries can therefore be likened to the proverbial 'cat and mouse' as far as border relations are concerned.

Having established the above, this paper proceeds to defining the relevant terms to the assessment carried out on the Seme border between Nigeria and the republic of Benin- a procedure closely linked to peace-building and preventive diplomacy- an early warning conflict monitoring exercise.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

Conflict Monitoring

This is a regular and systematic observation, collection and collation of information relevant to conflict formation in order to design a pro-active action against its escalation. It is

an action taken by people concerned with a conflict to be kept informed of the dynamics of the conflict. It is about keeping track of events in a tense situation and giving an objective report on it to a response channel or a central authority. It forms the crux of the Early Warning System (EWS) that is being performed by trained/specialised personnel who are part of a chain of communication hub e.g. Civil Society Early Warning Monitors for ECOWAS/WANEP "ECOWARN" System. Adams (2012) considers Early Warning as a concept that has both the global and inter-disciplinary usage because of its high quotient for preventive diplomacy. To him, it is used in a wide variety of fields of study to mean the provision of first-hand information on a potentially volatile action with the aim of instituting mechanisms to reduce its intensity or possibly eliminate its potency for violent eruptions.

Governance as a system of development is inherently a conflict issue, therefore conflict monitoring applies to all the aspects of governance as they relate to the ruler/ruled relationship. As 'Conflict-sensitive Monitoring' engenders a detailed understanding of the context, the intervention and the interaction between the two, it therefore creates a platform for the understanding of underlying elements of conflicts such as the actors, the profile, causes and dynamics of the conflict which it introduces into the traditional evaluation systems and processes (WANEP 2005).

An effective Monitoring and Evaluation System has two intrinsic components: ability to examine dispassionately, the correlation between the objectives, input and the output of a given project and the capacity of relevant agency or government to re-

spond timely to the findings and recommendations of the evaluators-an action contingent on the political will mustered by government on its implementation.

Basic Intelligence Coverage

This has been described as the fundamental intelligence concerning the general situation, resources, capabilities, and vulnerabilities of foreign countries or areas which may be used as reference material in the planning of operations at any level and in evaluating subsequent information relating to the same subject (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/basic+intelligence>).

Risk

Risk is the perceived threat inherent in or associated with specific operations. It is a combination of threat and vulnerability of the person/s of system/s under evaluation (Umaru, 2013). While threat is perceived to be an external event capable of causing harm to ideas, tasks or/and their implementation, vulnerability is described as the internal weaknesses that might strengthen the impact of threat. A vulnerable border territory is a threat to the socio-economic existence of the two countries and therefore a situation deserving monitoring.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is the systematic analysis of risk, involving an evaluation of the risks, determination of the level of impact, risk dynamism with a view to designing means of tackling the threat. Risk Assessment is a Conflict Monitoring tool used in this presentation as a process monitoring organ for activities at Seme Border.

Border

A border is a designated crossing point, where formal control is exercised on entry

and exit of persons and goods. It is also described as 'a spatial boundary that defines sovereignty, citizenship, language, culture or religion' (Pokoo, 2013). It is a boundary between political sovereign states. The most visible function of a border is to act as a *barrier* and an instrument to be applied for controlling illegal immigration human trafficking drugs and weapons and for collecting duties on legal goods (Babatunde, 2013).

Border Management

Border Management is all the strategies employed to enhance safe delivery of services at the border. It is about applying official rules, regulations, techniques and procedures to regulate activities and traffic within specific border zones. It involves the deployment of services of designated personnel of relevant security agencies like the Custom Services, Immigration Services, The Nigeria Police, NDLEA, DSS and Quarantine.

Border Security

Border Security is the measure of control exercised within border areas, which limits the movement of people, animals, plants and goods that enter and exit the country.

Profiling

Is an investigative tool that seeks to explore and provide understanding of the criminal environment in order to be able to control it more effectively.

Targeting

is a method of zeroing in on a few likely subjects of enquiry for investigation. These subjects are picked based on their conformity to created profile. The number of subjects of target is usually few.

Selection: This is usually the last stage of the exercise where the main culprit or the

risk is finally determined. Interestingly in military intelligence this is the point at which arrests are made. In Conflict Monitoring it is the point at which the likely trigger of a conflict is determined and identified to pave way for strategies of preventive diplomacy.

THE ASSESSMENT

Aim and Objectives:

The general aim of the project was to conduct a risk assessment of Seme Border. The following specific objectives therefore applied to: define border management and other related concepts; identify all stakeholders and their roles in cross-border crimes; investigate activities which constitute threat at Seme Border; prioritise areas of threat and vulnerability at the border; develop strategies for selecting persons, luggage and vehicles profiled as targets at the border;

METHODOLOGY

(a) Risk Assessment Strategies

The risk assessment strategies employed include:

- Definition of the processes
- Determination of the impact
- Determination of possible causes
- Determination of consequence of risk
- Determination of likelihood of risk
- Determination of risk rating

(b) Stakeholders Interviewed:

The stakeholders included:

The Customs, Immigration, The Nigeria Police (Bomb Disposal unit, CIB and Border Patrol units), SSS, NDLEA, Clearing Agents, Traditional Rulers, Importers, SON, Civil Society Organisations, Transport Unions, Youth leaders in Border Communities, Market Women Association in border communities, Plant and Animal Quarantine, NAPTIP, Press, Port Health, National Association of

Car dealers.

Basic Intelligence Coverage conducted at Seme border revealed that there are about 35 illegal routes around the border area. This is an indication of the porosity of the border, which in turn precipitates certain border risks.

FINDINGS

The findings of the security risk assessment are grouped as follows:

(a) Identified Risks.

- i. Smuggling of vegetable oil, and rice, S
- ii. Smuggling of Small Arms and Light Weapons,
- iii. Smuggling of vehicles,
- iv. Route for Human Trafficking,
- v. Route for Money-Laundering,
- iv. Trans-border crime e.g armed robber
- vi Piracy on the Seme sea
- vii. Drug trafficking.

The supports often required from the above -listed stakeholders are:

i) Security Agencies:

Synergy among border security operatives would facilitate intelligence gathering and sharing among the security personnel at the Seme Border and collaboration for action among the security personnel.

ii) Community Leaders and other Interest Groups.

Cooperation with traditional rulers at Seme Border communities would generate reliable information from members of the communities and collaboration with them to find solution to border crimes.

Vulnerabilities-

Border posts are inadequate to handle the influx of people entering and exiting at Seme Border: this is as result porosity and too many illegal routes which make vehicular patrol difficult in such areas. And any un-manned/unguarded border provides escape routes for smugglers.

Border communities collude with smugglers: Unpatriotic attitude on the part of individuals/groups residing at border communities who often times shield smugglers for their selfish gain.

Inadequate capacity of officers/modern equipment: in Seme Border the security agents are inadequate and there is insufficient modern equipment to replace the obsolete ones at the border post.

Border bureaucracy/rivalry/self-glory amongst the security agents inhibits speedy service.

Policy Changes often affect Policymaking and implementation: different government with its own policy affects border operations and procedures.

Social insecurity: absence of social insurance for the security agencies who lose their lives while discharging their official duties.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Threats

Proliferation of SALW

Increase incidence of trans-border violent crimes

Economic Sabotage / loss of revenue

Passage of persons of security interest

Proliferation Hard Drugs

Violation of human dignity through trafficking and smuggling

High impact likely to occur)

- (i) Small Arms and Light Weapons
- (ii) Drug trafficking
- (iii) Money Laundry
- (iv) Trans-Border Crime (e.g illegal Oil
- (v) Bunkering, Armed Robbery)
- (vi) Food items
- (vii) Human Smuggling

High impact unlikely to occur

- (i) Human Kidnapping

Low impact likely to occur

Vehicles

Low impact unlikely to occur

- (i) Sea piracy

Priority List:

1. Drug Trafficking
2. Small Arms and Light Weapons
3. Money Laundry
4. Trans-Border Crimes (e.g. Oil Bunkering, Armed Robbery)
5. Human Smuggling
6. Food items
7. Vehicles
8. Sea piracy

Suggested Risk Handling Strategies:

High Impact/ Likely to occur.

- Form Joint Border Operation
- Place them on red alert

Low Impact/ Likely to occur.

- Alert all security agencies
- Mount Surveillance.

High Impact/ unlikely to occur:

- Put security personnel on alert

Low Impact unlikely to occur:

- Put security personnel at alert.

AN EXAMPLE OF CRIME TARGETING PLAN: DRUG Trafficking

Target Crime: Drug Trafficking

Timing: within 10pm-5am

Location of crime: West African Countries through Seme Border

Scene of crime: Seme Border,

Means: Concealment in Vehicles compartment, spare tyres, Body Package, Concealment through poultry product.

The victims of crime and type of harm caused: Victims of Drug Trafficking include, youths, destitutes, political thugs, area boys, religious extremists, armed robbers, smugglers, and commercial drivers. Drug trafficking aids crime, health hazards, and impacts negatively on the nation's economy and its image .

Indicators for Selection:

Vehicles, Luggages and Persons are the main indicators for selection.

PERSON:

Intelligence report on the person
Age group between 18 -30 years
Response to question
Body Language
Emotional display
Observation
Monitoring

LUGGAGES:

Manual Checking of Luggage

VEHICLES:

- Intelligence report of the vehicle
- Origin of the vehicle
- Age of the driver
- Destination of the vehicle
- Body Language of the driver
- Travel/Vehicle Documents

Peaceful interaction between countries will encourage mutual interest for common good. Countries in the Sahel region should consider themselves as brothers thereby engendering Joint Border Patrol and Inter-Border Security meetings necessary for reducing all forms illegal activities at the border.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The result of the assessment is quite revealing as most of the cross-border activities of security personnel were revealed, the enormity of border porosity was captured and the strategic implements for security risk assessment were fully deployed for effective evaluation. This report would therefore be of immense value to future researchers in the area of security risk assessment and also a handful tool in the hands of evaluators and security personnel.

Governments, of different countries should ensure all the borders are secured through fencing. The implication is that, walls will effect the barriers which men are currently being created by human personnel. The dearth of personnel to man international boundaries is one of the major causes of border porosity. The idea of territorial fencing is definitely a cost intensive project but it will definitely go a long way in curbing the menace of territorial incursion and trans-border crimes.

In view of the global threats and insecurity in the Sahel region, it is imperative for the entire region to ensure strict compliance with existing rules governing border management to forestall Drug Trafficking, Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling.

Institution of a joint conference training centre would encourage experience sharing and common standard practice among the security personnel of the two countries. Experience sharing would boost their technical and field performances.

Countries in the Sahel region should invest heavily on provision of modern technology mounted at all borders area that will detect all form illegal importation of SALW. Early detection of illegal attempt on importation would prevent conflicts arising from proliferation of arms. Less funds would need be allocated to arms and ammunition purchase to combat these ills if governments' attention is diverted to conflict prevention through peacebuilding. The funds needed for conflict prevention is far less than that needed for conflict management, peace-keeping and conflict transformation.

Establishing trans-border security management committee would create a cohesive engagement between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin with a view to combatting the various identified trans-border crimes.

Border security should be an exercise in collective responsibility; all citizens must work together to sanitize procedures at the Nigerian Borders to reduce if not eliminate border crimes.

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