

## **Border Communities, Ungoverned Spaces and Nigeria's National Security**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The effectiveness of a country's national security is determined to a large extent by the level of protection at its borders, as well as its capacity to enforce border security for its own territorial wellbeing, sovereign integrity, internal socio-economic progress and development. Both border protection and security cannot be defined without factoring in border communities which remain strategic factors influencing the potency or not of the former. In its hypothesis, this paper posits that border communities are ungoverned spaces which impact national security, and therein lies the crux of the paper's objectives. Adopting an array of relevant secondary data, the theory of border communities as largely ungoverned spaces impacting Nigeria's national security is conceptualised and reviewed, and an analysis conducted. Based on these clarifications, reviews and subsequent analysis, recommendations addressing the core issue of lack of governance, state authority and development are proffered as viable options in addressing the plight of these fringe communities' vis a vis the enormous threat or risk they pose the nation's national security.*

**KEYWORDS:** border community, ungoverned spaces, border security, national security

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria's national security is faced with challenges which vary in cause, effect and implications. While some of these security challenges are internally driven others are externally influenced; the immediate consequence of both, however, is the threat and damage to lives, property, national stability as well as the socio-economic development and potential of the nation, (Eselebor & Okunade, 2020). National security goes beyond a nation's sovereign protection against external military attack, conflict or insurgency, to also include protection from specific challenges that impact the nation's energy, food, environmental and cyber securities, respectively, (Pham, 2007).

Existing right within the physical limits of a state's territorial jurisdiction, border communities are perceived as communities situated on the edge of formal states. Globally, border communities have a long history of state marginalisation, (Lee & North, 2016). Poor management of border communities has exacerbated security risk at these regions - posing enormous danger to national and international peace. The escalating rise in the criminal activities of violent non-state actors such as terrorist groups; human, drug and arms/weapons smugglers, etc, can be tied to the

vulnerability of these communities, (UNDP, 2016). Sustainable human capital and national resource development, is also impacted by these realities.

Border communities within the context of the Sahel and Lake Chad basin region countries, are mostly perceived as areas or spaces of limited state presence hence presenting easily accessible entry points through which external security challenges are facilitated by non-state actors. The vast stretch of this region , especially its bush parts, forest areas and large border expanse, highlights the peculiar risk facing the nation including vulnerability to external threat. Despite the added economic and cultural value of these communities and their strategic importance in ensuring national security, they have been left vulnerable overtime by successive governments who underestimate their strategic importance within the security and socio-economic value chain. The evident lack of adequate and formal state presence in these areas and the accompanying checks and control, impedes government regulation and enforcement at these spaces, resulting in a preponderance of border communities across the nation's international borders that are vulnerable to criminal manipulation, exploitation, subjugation and control. Central to the vulnerability of border communities is their political, physical and social distance away from the centre, (Raleigh & Dowd, 2013).

Though the appropriateness of 'ungoverned spaces' as a qualifying concept for describing vulnerable geographical areas devoid of state presence and control is still being contested, its use as a term still dominates regional and global security discussions, as well as border security strategy proposals and policy framework designs for several nations. Nigeria's National Security Strategy 2019, specifically recognises ungoverned spaces as areas around the nation's external boundaries, border communities, internal game reserves and forests which provide opportunities and a conducive environment for criminal networks to fester and actively promote crime including terrorism, (NSS, 2019). Ungoverned spaces, according to NSS 2019, "constitute critical fragility in Nigeria's national security and are antithetical to the nation's security system". Rabasa (2007) and Menkhaus (2007), agree in defining an ungoverned space as an area of abdicated governance, where the government abandons its control and as a result leaves the area or space relatively lawless.

Nigeria, mostly bordered by the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin countries such as Chad, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, have over the years witnessed daring cross-border attacks perpetrated by violent non-state actors such as criminal cattle herders, armed bandits, religious extremists and terrorists. These attacks frequently emanate from border areas or spaces without formal state authority and presence, hence lacking in government reach, enforcement capabilities and control, (IOM, 2017). The lack of state authority and control in these spaces pose a significant security risk. Drug and human trafficking, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, money laundering, illegal cross-border migration and smuggling of illicit-contraband goods are criminal activities that also fester as a direct result, (Mitchell, 2010).

Accordingly, the gap in border community development, control and regulation is symbolised by increasing incidents of banditry, kidnapping, militancy and communal conflicts, the effects which

are now experienced inwards far beyond the borders within urban and rural communities, (Taylor, 2016). Terrorism, today, has been adjudged the most fundamental cause of insecurity in Nigeria, so also in Chad, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, and this is so because the ungoverned spaces which demarcate these countries as borders and border communities exhibit vulnerability hence exploited by trans-border criminals and terrorists, (Bernard & Daful, 2021).

This paper, situates border communities as risk-prone ungoverned spaces through which armed and criminal non-state actors infiltrate and attempt to compromise the country's national security. Securing these border communities is an imperative if national security is to be effectively enforced in the face of the nation's growing security challenges.

Averting or mitigating these challenges, falls under the purview of the nation's combined security architecture comprising respective segments of the armed forces including military, para-military and intelligence agencies. This security architecture, however, falls directly under the nation's overarching political leadership as symbolised by the executive and legislature, who can strengthen and revitalise these vulnerable border communities through targeted and deliberate laws and policies.

A new strategic approach is needed and must be deployed to secure the enhanced development of border communities, guiding them away from the ungoverned space tag while at the same time improving national security in all its ramifications. As such, increasing the physical regulatory presence, development and authority of state in these border communities must be complemented with improved interactions and communication with local populations within the border community, improving inter-community trust and harmony, hence inadvertently empowering and guarding them against external influence and infiltration by organised criminal and terrorist groups, (IOM, 2017). Importantly, the place of the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) in the development and security of border communities must be reviewed and reinvigorated to enable it live up to expectation as spelt out in its establishing act. That border communities are today alluded to as ungoverned spaces raises red flags as it pertains to the potency and capacity of the BCDA to deliver on its mandate.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The conceptual clarification of border communities, ungoverned spaces and national security, as key theoretical concepts and variables is key and in tandem with the objectives of this paper.

Border communities can be defined as sub-national areas whose social and economic life is significantly affected by their proximity to an external boundary, (Usman & Yusuf, 2021). Newman (2011), defines border communities as areas with close proximity to an international boundary and by virtue of which are predominantly disadvantaged because of their distance from state control, authority and development. Newman, further submits that border communities are 'transition zones or hybrid spaces', with no clear cut or legally spelt out authority, affiliation and loyalty. Baud & Van Schendel (1997), define border communities simply as physical spaces existing along the border; they further submit that border communities and the border mutually define each other, suffice to say that the existence of the border constitutes the border communities,

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(Baud & Van Schendel, 1997). Expanding further, Asiwaju (1993) explains that border communities are of three different kinds, namely - minimal, zero and maximal border communities. The minimal border communities are those in which the people on both sides of the border have no ethnic or cultural affiliation between each other. The zero border communities imply a landscape with inhabitants completely opposed to each other, both religiously and ideologically, and who are often in conflict. The maximal border communities are normally characterised by an expansive landscape comprising inhabitants who maintain a high amount of cooperation and contact with each other. Asiwaju (1993), further submits that border communities are unique by virtue of their distinct proximity to international boundaries and as such can be split into two or more separate jurisdictional spheres.

Derived from the 'failed state' theory, itself fueled by the foundational philosophies of Thomas Hobbes' social contract theory, the appropriateness of 'ungoverned spaces' as a term is still contested on the belief that no space is completely left ungoverned at any time, rather each has one form of authority or the other which is exercised by either state or non-state actors, both directly and remotely, (Taylor, 2016). Some experts have also come to perceive the concept of 'ungoverned spaces' as an unhelpful, poorly qualifying and catch-all term that does not accurately capture the variations that exist between and within nation-states, especially since each state and area within it must be seen for its own peculiar attributes or characteristics, (Keister, 2014).

While it is conceded in majority of reviewed literature that the term 'ungoverned space', is widely held to mean an area which exists in the absence of state socio-economic presence, enforced security, legitimate political and social institutions, as well as accompanying control and regulatory structures, (Adesina, 2019), certain aspects of literature also posit that the concept is based on a faulty and illusory assumption that only nation-states can govern and no other forms of governance must exist, (Anichie et al, 2021). They further posit that such spaces or areas are always governed in one form or the other albeit poorly or criminally governed. Others adjudge ungoverned spaces to be areas or large portions of land where the state cannot exercise full authority and sovereignty, and as a result of sectarian resistance and confrontation by groups which have taken up arms majorly against the state, (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). As a contested area of discourse, the concept of 'ungoverned space' evidently, continues to resonate in and around global debates especially on issues of national, regional and international security, (Lenshie, 2018).

This state-centric approach or perception to governance, or lack of, may have inadvertently impeded alternative solutions to problems, issues and challenges faced by the state such as security, (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). The exclusion of tribal, sectarian or clan-based groups existing as border communities, and the alternative governance they can potentially provide within these spaces/areas, has elicited feelings of indifference from them, a gap which has been exploited by criminal groups to further exacerbate porosity at the borders. This security gap also implies a direct or indirect collaboration of these border communities with criminal groups for self-sustaining financial, resource, economic and political gains to the community. Criminal non-state actors as such, perceive border communities as vulnerable spaces without a presence or semblance

of legal state authority, enforcement and governance, hence a safe haven for their destabilising activities, (Menkhaus, 2010).

Various scholars, however, submit that the concept of a 'space' that is ungoverned is not strictly limited to large stretches of border or territorial land only, but can be broadened, inferred or interpreted to also include cyberspace, airspace, maritime and outer-space which are without state supervisory presence, regulatory authority and control, (Menkhaus, 2010; Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010; Keister, 2014; Lenshie, 2018; Anichie et al, 2021). Either way, 'ungoverned spaces' – be they land, littoral or outer-space - are majorly considered as key risks or threats to national security considering the inherent lack of a formal and legitimate governance control and authority.

For the purposes of this paper, the term 'ungoverned spaces' is used in relation to land territory i.e., land spaces or areas lacking in state presence, authority and control such as border communities. These communities are characterised typically by the lack of an enabling government presence, inadequate infrastructures, lack of basic socio-economic facilities, and most importantly - lack of a formal state security enforcement presence, and the consequent proliferation of arms and weapons, violent crimes and terrorism, (Taylor, 2016). These 'ungoverned spaces' are known to nurture, entertain and sustain social practices that defy state authority, regulation and control. Ungoverned spaces are therefore seen or perceived in most instances, as a failure of capacity by a sovereign state to exercise effective control over a geographic area within the state or at the fringes of its borders/boundaries, which has major implications for national security, (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010).

Security is defined as the freedom of citizens to engage in their day-to-day activities peacefully and safely without obstruction, intimidation or harassment; it implies an overarching protection of individuals, groups as well as their properties, businesses and investments, (Ogunleye, et al. 2011). Security involves the knowledge of the root cause or source of challenges, risk or threat facing a society, (Walt, 1991). Achumba et al. (2013), defines security as a deliberate process at actively working to engender safety and protection of citizens from criminal activities; and a peaceful pursuit of socio-economic growth and citizenship pro-activity.

National Security encompasses personal, community, economic, food and political security, respectively, (Adenbaken & Raimi, 2012). More specifically, Nte (2011), defines national security as, "the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from internal and external threats". In more practical terms, national security includes deliberate processes and mechanisms put in place to secure the individual against war, poverty, disease, loss of income and other health hazard, (Nte, 2011), they further submit that national security is critical in engaging a process for national preservation and equilibrium in the economic, social, political and environment spheres of a sovereign state, especially with regards to its stability. Imobighe (2013), defines national security as broader measures taken to secure a country's national borders from all forms of threats. Nigeria's National Security Strategy (NSS, 2019), which underscores the belief that security is the cornerstone of progress and development in a free society, defines national security as the guarantor of citizens well-being and state stability. Going further, the NSS defines national security

as a deliberate design at ensuring the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interests, wellbeing of the people, as well as the preservation, protection and enhancement of the country's institutions.

The strategic place of border communities as a 'tool' of influence on national security cannot be overemphasised considering the potential platform it presents in enabling terrorism, smuggling, trafficking and other cross-border crimes. Border communities play a critical role in the strength or weakness of a nation's border protection capacity. Border protection cannot be ruled out in containing potential threats to a country's territorial integrity or sovereignty, since, "border is the first line of defence against terrorism and last line of a nation's territorial integrity", (Spencer, 2007). A protected border draws strength from a secure border community, it projects strength which in itself is a measure of a nation's national security, (Eselebor & Okunade, 2020).

### **BORDER COMMUNITIES AS 'UNGOVERNED SPACES' IMPACTING NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

Nigeria's extensive land and maritime borders continue to be a major source of concern as they are largely porous and inadequately manned, which has aided irregular migrations, human trafficking and other transnational organized crimes of various kinds, (NSS, 2019:11). The reviewed and updated National Security Strategy (2019), submits that, "ungoverned spaces around Nigeria's international boundaries, forests and game reserves provide opportunities for criminal networks to fester and generally promote crime", NSS (2019:32). As such, terrorists and armed bandits amongst several other categories of criminals, exploit these vacuum – operating freely from forests situated on the fringes of border communities, (Onwuzuruigbo, 2020). Typical examples to point to in this regard include the Sambisa Forest which spans several border states in the North East region of Nigeria; Rigachikun Forest in Kaduna State; Kankara Forest in Katsina State and Gundumi Forest in Zamfara State – all of which comprise border communities as well as attack launch pads for armed bandits and terrorists, (Nwezeh, 2021).

Experts have argued in agreement with the position that vulnerable and 'government abandoned' border communities are actively complicit in facilitating or providing a conducive atmosphere for trans-border crime, (Whelan, 2006; Menkhaus, 2010; Mitchel, 2010; Anichie, et al, 2021; Onwuzuruigbo, 2020). Furthermore, the place of border communities as ungoverned spaces of very limited state authority, presence and control, can be viewed from the perspective of Piombo (2007), who submits that the term ungoverned space is intended to refer to a physical territory or non-physical policy space, which exists without the presence of an effective state regulatory authority and control. Hazen (2010), submits that vulnerable border communities can be defined as ungoverned spaces considering their lack of state presence, enabling infrastructure, as well as vulnerability and first-hand exposure to non-state actors who exploit them to facilitate trans-border crime and terrorism at the expense of national security. On his part, Mohammed (2022), submits that, "most border states and communities around the country have minimal government presence, while in some, governance is non-existent, making such communities easy prey for criminal elements who use them as vassals or fortresses to keep citizens in perpetual fear and anxiety".

Mohammed, further posits that, “almost all conflicts in the country – banditry, kidnap for ransom, and other forms of terrorism – are inordinately carried out on the fringes of border communities whose territories had been in limbo and ungoverned for decades” – (Mohammed, 2022). As such, it can be argued that literature, despite established gaps, leans in favour of qualifying border communities as ungoverned spaces which negatively impact Nigeria’s national security. Accordingly, and for a fact, national security is impacted in the absence of secure border communities.

National security amongst other critical factors, encapsulates a nation’s territorial and sovereign integrity, which in itself is defined largely by the security of border regions and communities, (Walt, 1991). The failure to appreciate specific peculiarities surrounding the existence of border communities has led government policy makers and security services to underestimate the danger they pose, hence inadvertently leaving them ungoverned, (Patrick, 2007). For instance, there is a tendency for governments to view forested areas along the borders as peripheral spaces of no major significance, inhabited by a few or inconsequential numbers of people hence being of little political importance, economic value and government priority, (Harwell, 2010). Such ambivalence on the part of government, has meant border communities and their immediate inhabitants are exposed to territorial encroachment and sometimes violent incursions by antagonistic foreign elements. These elements on full consolidation, bring to bear non-state administrative and regulatory controls, and enforcement regimes that are contradictory – albeit criminal. These lacunae or gaps create an enabling environment that facilitates criminal breach or compromises such as illegal immigration, human trafficking, trans-border smuggling etc - all of which contribute in worsening national security, (Omilusi, 2015).

In his paper which sought to establish a nexus between irregular migration and insecurity along what he termed – ‘ungoverned border spaces in West Africa’, Menkhaus (2010), submitted that these spaces which sometimes comprise fringe communities, are the remotest, peripheral and marginal areas of the state, bordered by different intra-regional and extra-regional countries and which exist with little or no state presence. Menkhaus (2010), by the aforementioned position, acknowledged the place of border communities as ungoverned spaces.

A gap in literature is indicative in the fact that not many recent studies on border communities have actually tried to draw a nexus attributing them as ungoverned spaces impacting national security, rather a preponderant majority of past work tends to focus on border porosity, irregular migration, trans-border crimes and their immediate impact on border security.

The Economic Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS) protocol on free movement of persons and goods among member states, though designed for the ultimate development of the region, has been undermined particularly by criminals who facilitate the infiltration of illegal goods and persons, smuggling of arms and ammunition, and easy cross border access for terrorists and armed bandits, (Akinyemi, 2013). The implication of this, is safe passage for people without identities as the protocol has been abused and interpreted to mean entry without valid documentation is legitimate. Opanike and Aduloju (2015), submit that the perceived ambiguity of

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the protocol has not helped the security landscape of the ECOWAS subregion as it is poorly implemented hence raising more security concerns over and above the boost in regional trade and economic development that was intended. Temisan (2015), therefore posits that the poor mechanism put in place by ECOWAS to check illegal movement of persons and goods has resulted in serious border insecurity in Nigeria and West Africa, with their respective border communities presenting a viable platform for state and regional destabilization, (Nosiri and Ohazurike, 2016). Nigeria's National Security Strategy – a strategic plan for the actualization of its security policy as well as its road map for the synchronized use of all elements of national power in promotion and protection of its national interests and objectives, leans in favour of a harnessed border community that is carried along by the state in all developmental, infrastructural and socio-economic ramifications, (NSS, 2019). Accordingly, the National Security of a sovereign state to a large extent is anchored on the security and integrity of its borders – which are made or marred by defining critical components such as border communities, (Eselebor & Okunade, 2020). Border communities, can therefore be qualified as ungoverned spaces which, “constitute critical fragility in Nigeria's national security and are antithetical to the nation's security system”, (NSS, 2019:32).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method adopted in facilitating this paper was determined by its core aim and objective which is establishing a nexus between border communities as ungoverned spaces impacting Nigeria's national security. In validating this hypothesis, the concept of border communities as ungoverned spaces had to be extensively clarified and reviewed considering the conflicting discourse among the vast array of literature as to what actually constitutes an ungoverned space, and if border communities qualify to be described as such. Accordingly, relevant secondary data were adopted in clarifying the respective concepts of ‘border communities’, ‘ungoverned spaces’ and ‘national security’ and their inter-relationship. Desk literature review was also carried out on relevant and select secondary data (see references), which sought to create a nexus between vulnerable border communities as ungoverned spaces impacting national security; and therein lies the crux of the paper's aims and objectives. Furthermore, subsequent analysis and discussions were made, and recommendations proffered - all these drawn from key points and inferences made from the paper's background/justification, conceptual clarifications and literature review.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The welfare, security and development of border communities, ordinarily, should occupy a strategic place in a state's national security strategy or outlook. With the enormous risk posed by these communities if left vulnerable and ungoverned, efforts backed by policy and law must be put in place if border security and protection in its entirety is to be achieved for the extended benefit of national security. As Mohammed (2022), posits, “Nigeria's porous borders and numerous ungoverned spaces has dire consequences some of which he links to potential existential threats both in terms of sovereignty and security”. Free and unrestricted movement of bandits and livestock rustlers through Nigeria's northern borders; the Boko-Haram/Islamic State driven refugee influx through its eastern borders; and the smuggling of commodities, goods and vehicles



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through the south western borders, all point to border communities that have been inadvertently compromised to enable such criminal and illicit cross-border activities. This reality brings into question the role of the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA), its efficiency and impact so far, and its actual capacity for ensuring developed and sustainable border communities. The very little mention or reference to the BCDA in the body of literature vis a vis border communities' development, protection and national security, further questions its due recognition as well as its empowerment and competency in effectively discharging this critical duty to border communities across the length and breadth of the country. Established by the Border Communities Development Agency Act of 2003, the BCDA as a corporate body is responsible for the integration and development of border communities in Nigeria, and shall oversee the execution of community development policies, projects and programmes in border communities. Hence, under appropriate conditions or circumstances, the BCDA is meant to serve as an integral platform that would synergise all security and development efforts at protecting and enhancing border communities. This however seems not be the case presently, and therein exists another gap established by this paper.

For a nation or entity to aspire to the status of unimpeachable sovereignty and territorial integrity, its national security must not be in question neither should it be compromised. Delineated and defined borders and border communities with significant government presence, authority and power is therefore imperative in yielding a form of legitimate governance that helps secure national security from the border inwards to the larger society. Furthermore, reforms aimed at decentralisation to achieve a strengthened local governance system that would incorporate local/border communities in rural and wider government decision making processes, is critical as it empowers these communities to cater for themselves, ensure self-sustainability as well as partner the state in enforcing border community policing and protection. These reform process should comprise the introduction of enabling laws that empower inhabitants of local/border communities to responsibly lead themselves, prioritise and address their basic and fundamental needs especially security. This should serve to effectively complement formal state security interventions from the Federal Government – which according to NSS (2019) is expected to, 'dominate and protect these ungoverned spaces along the nation's international boundaries through effective presence of governance'. The Federal Government as further proposed by NSS (2019), can also improve border community security and consequently, national security by, 'influencing the development of licit and viable local economies through the facilitation of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs)'. The BCDA has a duty to partner the Small and Medium Enterprises Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in this regard, as such will greatly improve the capacity for self-sustenance, revenue generation, and abstinence from crime and its enticements by the local/border communities. Public and Private Sector Partnerships (PPP) can also be put in place to help facilitate the penetration of basic infrastructural facilities and structures for the benefit of border communities. The NSS (2019) justifiably, espouses that socio-economic development at these fringe communities has a role to play in ensuring national security.

The strengthened presence of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) within and at the fringes of the border communities, in conjunction with other statutory border protection and security agencies

such as the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) will help in consolidating law and order. Additionally, close monitoring by forest guards, of the nation's forests and national games reserve, which is usually of close proximity to these border communities, is important.

Though acknowledging it may sound befuddling, Mohammed (2022), again, proposes granting a full autonomy to local governments as an elixir to the incessant security challenge and threat to national security. Mohammed (2022), argues that the "horrendous activities of armed bandits are carried out on ungoverned spaces which suffer neglect from successive governments". He posits that if local governments and traditional institutions had their roles defined as well as allowed some autonomous power to govern, the security challenge brought by these ungoverned border communities would be at minimal. Mohammed hinges his proposition on the notion that the local government is the only tier of government with direct bearing on local communities, businesses and traditional institutions, hence possessing the micro-management capacity to effectively impact. However, several field experts are of the opinion and thereby argue that with the increasing sophistication of trans-border crime, daring terrorism, kidnap for ransom, armed banditry and its varying complex nature, a hard approach from the centre is more plausible and a realistic deterrent, hence should remain the primary focus while laudable initiatives like local governance reforms and rural community efforts can come in as complementary, (NSS, 2014; NSS, 2019).

It is imperative to note that with the indiscriminate movement of persons across the West African sub-region, the demography of inhabitants of these border communities becomes more suspect and in question. The true citizenship of these persons and their allegiance to the country in whose border they are situated, cannot be fully guaranteed hence the risk and more propensity for them to allow crime or perpetrate same against the state. The often lack of allegiance to country which is easily obtainable in ungoverned spaces, pose a threat to national security.

In his conclusion, which this paper aligns with, Mohammed (2022), submits that, 'a remarkable panacea to curbing the lingering security challenge, is taking effective control of border territories, spaces and communities'. Government presence, he asserts, 'must be visible not necessarily in terms of infrastructure alone, but also in terms of establishing an enhanced and elaborate feedback model or system which comprises a tripartite synergy between community/religious leaders, as well as security and traditional leaders.

Recommendations are therefore put forward in full consideration of inferences and deductions made in prior chapters.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- I.The Federal Government through the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) should review, update and implement all fundamental aspects of the National Security Strategy (NSS 2019), that specifically address all insecurity issues emanating from ungoverned spaces along Nigeria's borders.

- II. Considering their mandates, implementation by ONSA of 'I' above to be driven in active synergy and partnership with the Federal Ministry of Defence, Federal Ministry of Interior, Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA).
- III. Federal Government of Nigeria should push for an upward review of Act establishing the BCDA, to empower, equip and make it more responsive to the complex and increasing challenges facing border communities along Nigeria's borders.
- IV. Federal Government should push for identification, definition, delineation and census of all border communities existing along Nigeria's borders.
- V. Federal Government should push for local governance autonomy by devolving more powers to local governments especially those situated along the borders, hence empowering them with improved capacity and in collaboration with the BCDA, to manage threats and risk faced by the border communities they oversee.
- VI. Federal Ministry of Defence, Federal Ministry of Interior, Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) to increase presence of personnel, requisite equipment, infrastructure, patrol and surveillance technology across border communities hence taking effective control of border territories, spaces and communities.
- VII. Federal Government through the BCDA to set up a tripartite synergy and feedback model that would consistently engage community/religious, security and traditional leaders as stakeholders in Nigeria's border and national security.
- VIII. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs to partner its ECOWAS counterparts in reviewing and updating the Protocol on Free Movement to put in place mechanisms that would help enforce a more accountable movement of goods and persons across the sub-region's borders and border communities.
- IX. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the BCDA should facilitate public and private sector partnerships (PPP) to help bring about an enhanced penetration of basic infrastructural facilities, structures and opportunities for the benefit of the border communities.
- X. The BCDA to partner the Small and Medium Enterprises Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in creating opportunities for setting up small and medium enterprises within and along border communities, hence improving their capacity for self-sustenance, revenue generation as well as abstinence from crime and criminals.
- XI. The Federal Government through the Ministry of Defence, should increase personnel and round the clock drone-technology driven surveillance of forests and game reserves situated at close proximity to the borders, border regions and border communities, preventing them from becoming safe havens for bandits, terrorists, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The paper set out to validate its proposed hypothesis attributing border communities as vulnerable ungoverned spaces which are ultimately impacting national security. The paper noted the continuing disagreement and discourse in the body of knowledge or literature over what constitutes an ungoverned space. The paper equally noted and justifiably aligned with a majority in literature

who attribute ungoverned spaces as vulnerable areas of high risk and without government regulatory presence, authority and control. The paper found border communities to be mostly vulnerable spaces without government presence, which have been compromised by criminals to the detriment of national security.

In making a case for an increased focus on transforming these communities with regards to regulatory control, development and security enforcement, this paper proffers ten (10) recommendations designed to impact at the heart of the challenge. This paper establishes that though clarifications, reviews, analysis and discussions, are foundational and important, is not sufficient enough in plugging the observed gaps, rather, practical and results driven recommendations are germane if solutions to this challenge is to be achieved.

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