

THE SECURITY CHALLENGES FACED BY CAMEROON AND NIGERIA IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CROSS-BORDER CRIMINALITIES 1962-2022

YUSUFU MOHAMADU WADA¹, NGOUFO SOGANG THEODORE ², NJUAFAC KENEDY FONJU³

¹PhD Student, Department of History and Archeology, Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences, University of Dschang

²Associate Professor of History, Department of History and Archeology, Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences, University of Dschang

³Associate Professor of History, Department of History and Archeology Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences, University of Dschang

***Corresponding Author:** YUSUFU MOHAMADU WADA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19259350>

Article History	Abstract
<p>Original Research Article</p> <p>Received: 20-01-2026</p> <p>Accepted: 11-03-2026</p> <p>Published: 27-03-2026</p> <p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: YUSUFU MOHAMADU WADA, NGOUFO SOGANG THEODORE, NJUAFAC KENEDY FONJU. (2026). THE SECURITY CHALLENGES FACED BY CAMEROON AND NIGERIA IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CROSS-BORDER CRIMINALITIES 1962-2022. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHS), Volume 2(3), 141-152.</p>	<p><i>The socio-economic and political environments of Cameroon and Nigeria is unstable since independence in 1960. The two sovereign states have witnessed a lot of political chaos directly or indirectly sponsored by cross border criminalities. For this reason, Nigeria and Cameroon have initiated security and diplomatic efforts such as cross border joint military force, the creations of Cross border vigilante groups and the temporal closure of the border routes to halt criminalities across the border. This Paper examines the difficulties encountered by the states of Cameroon and Nigeria between 1962 -2022 to combat cross border criminalities .In the field of research , we found out that the major problems are the vastness of Cameroon and Nigeria border, border neglects, Anglophones crisis, the weakness of federalism, political crisis in Nigeria such as the Biafra’s war of 1967-1970 ,Ethnic solidarity along the borderland , corruption, and low level of education in the borderlands communities of Cameroon and Nigeria that became an obstacle to border security efforts . Our methodology applicable here is both qualitative and the quantitative method, with the consultation of primary and secondary sources as our main sources of information. primary sources included oral interviews while secondary sources of material included textbooks, articles in journals, unpublished thesis, dissertations and material gotten from the internet. This research contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the problems to security efforts against the cross-border crimes. Also, the research is intending to guide humanity in the borderland against cross border criminalities.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Security Challenges, Cross Border, Criminalities, Humans Smugglings, Vigilante groups, Borderland.</p>

INTRODUCTION

With the exceptions of Western Sahara and Somaliland, whose political future became disputed till date, the entire continent of Africa became liberated from colonialism between 1910 to 1990. The wind of change began in South Africa in 1910 and ended in German South West Africa (Namibia) in 1990. However, the Europeans left but their political legacies (border lines) remained till date in Africa, posting a lot of security challenges to the newly sovereign states in Africa to handle. The borderlines became the root cause of problems affecting African states during the post – independence age. Although with limited cases in Africa North of the Equator, the entire South of the Equator (Sub-Saharan Africa) experienced cross border criminalities like

smugglings of contraband drugs, kidnapping, illegal migrations, cross border cattle theft across the Sahelian states (Niger, Mali, Sudan and Chad) with Cameroon and Nigeria not being an exception of the illicit activities of trans-border crimes. The distance origin of cross border criminalities between Cameroon and Nigeria can be traced from colonial days in that, the 30 years (12th July 1884 -18th February 1916) of Germans colonization of Cameroon was marked by frequents border changes between British Nigeria and the Germans Cameroon. For this reason, the people of Cameroon and Nigeria since independence were very similar in aspects like ethnicity, languages and residents, making it difficult to control the borderland

people that resulted to the frequent violation of the international border. However, the central theme of the study is on the security challenges as examined in the second part while the first part is centered on the conceptualizations of key event as examined below.

CHAPTER ONE: CLARIFICATIONS OF CONCEPTS

The paper has two basic concepts to clarify, that's the Conceptual (keywords) and the theoretical (theories) suitable to border criminalities as examined below

1.1. Conceptual clarifications

The key aspects of the paper are Security, Challenges, Cross Border, Criminalities, Managements, Kidnapping, Smugglings, illegal migration, Vigilante groups and borderland as examined below.

1.1.1. VIGILANTE GROUP

The word "vigilante" is of Spanish origin and means "watchman" or "guard" but its Latin root is *vigil*, which means "awake" or "observant". A vigilante therefore is an individual who assumes the responsibility of community safety and values on a voluntary base. Vigilante is an appellation given to community based self-appointed law enforcement groups in a number of instances where law officers and courts were non-existent, inefficient or corrupt and where municipal institutions were disorganized established authorities seemed unable to cope with the lawlessness and disorder in the community the act of taking the law into one's hands is also known as vigilantism.¹ In the History of Cameroon and Nigeria criminalities, many vigilante groups are formed by the communities to take law in their hand where security forces failed example of some renounced Vigilante group were the Civilians' Joint Task force in Borno,² the Fulani Vigilante group in Nwa Sub Division, North west Region of Cameroon formed by Ardo Idi in 2019 and the Bakassi Boys in southern Nigeria between 1998 to 2006.³

1.1.2. CROSS BORDER CRIMINALITY

According to the Blackstone dictionary of law, crime is the violation of public rights and duties of the whole community. It can also be defining as 'an action or omission stated and punishable by law and imputable to its author'.

¹R. Abraham, . *Vigilant Citizen: Vigilante and the State* (1st ed.). Cambridge, Polity Press. 1998. p .13.

² Amnesty International Vigilantism in South and South-East Nigeria. Retrieved November 20, 2018, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/014/2002/en/> Karmen, A. (1996). "Vigilantism" *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice*, 2002.

³ Interview with Ardo Idi, a Cameroonian Fulani chief and a Vigilante group founder in sabongari, North west region, age 57, conducted on the 6th of march 2026.

It should be noted that what is considered as crime varies from society to society. (statutory and case law) committed without defense or excuse and penalized by the state as a felony or misdemeanor. It can on the other hand be consider an act committed in violation of a public law forbidding or commanding. Crime is the willful and pleasurable disregard for standard norms for inordinate gains. Linked to frontier, cross border crimes are crimes that have actual or potential effects across national borders and crimes which are intra state but which offend fundamental values of the international community. They go ahead to say that such crimes are caused in one country but their consequences significantly affect another country and transit countries may also be involved. ⁴

Cross border crimes include a number of illegal and notorious activities carried out by individuals and groups across national and international borders either for financial or economic benefits and also socio-political or religious considerations. On the other hand, cross border crime is conduct which jeopardizes the legally protected interest in more than one national jurisdiction and which is criminalized in at least one of the states/jurisdiction concerned. In summary he says cross border crimes are acts which violate the laws of more than one country. Following the various definitions herein, we define cross border crimes, as any willful and pleasurable acts committed in defiance of established international, regional and country laws along a country's periphery with often repercussions on neighboring countries and internal country communities as a whole.⁵

1.1.3. HUMAN SMUGGLING

Human smuggling is defined as the procurement in order to obtain, directly or indirectly a financial or other material benefit of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or permanent. The practice was illegal in Cameroon and as a member of the UN signed the UN convention against transnational organized crime in 13 December 2000 and ratified it on 6 February 2006. According to this convention Cameroon engaged itself to fight against human trafficking and people smuggling. In many creeks along the coastal areas in Cameroon human smuggling was a common practice.

⁴ AUKWAYI, K JOSEPH and ANAM E BASSEY, "Cross border crimes and security challenges in Nigeria", *international journal of scientific research in humanities, legal studies and international relations*, vol. 4, no.1, 2019 articles in journals. p 22.

⁵ Tamfu Scot Wepngong, Ngam Confidence Chia, Otye Elom Paul Ulriche. Security Implications of Border Crimes along the Cameroon-Nigeria Western Border 1990-2020. *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science Volume 13 ~ Issue 3 2025*, p.185.

According to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) the entire sub region was affected by the syndrome of human trafficking whereby all countries were, sources, transit and/or destination countries. Humans were smuggled notoriously from or through Cameroon to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Nigeria. The main reason was the search of greener pastures and better economic opportunities. Many of such smugglers had well-established networks of intermediaries in Cameroon who recruited and smuggled vulnerable young women through neighboring countries to destinations in the Middle East.⁶

In recent time, Libya has been a transit zone where smuggled humans from West and Central Africa are sold to the Arabs as domestic's slaves while others are exported to Middle East to labor for the Arabs in Nations Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Apart of that, Nigeria, Ghana and Togo have scammed many Cameroonians youth through a fake visa travels abroad and these victims are kidnapped during which ransoms are extorted.⁷

1.1.4. BORDERLAND

Another key element worthy enough to define is borderland, the word borderland isn't the line bearing pillars separating two sovereign states, continents, regions or provinces. its rather the community, clan, village or any form of human settlement that's geographically closer to the border with often a unique characteristic. For instance, upper Silesia resting between Poland and Germany is very good example of borderland. in the Adamawa region of Cameroon, Bujuumkura, Lelewal ,Lugga-Kumbi, Mayor Fowru are example of a Borderland communities .⁸ The borderland communities do have characteristics such as governments neglects, high rate of unemployment', high rate of illiteracy, low level of patriotism and high rate of criminalities like drugs trafficking. Most of the people in the borderland are not aware of their Nationality because Nationals symbols like flags and the forces of law and order rarely reach their communities. Cross border criminality like illegal migration is rampant in Cameroon and Nigerians borderland because borderland communities are inter-related by commerce and language.⁹

1.1.5. SECURITY CHALLENGES

⁶ "Interpol Annual Report 2019", *Interpol*, 2020. www.interpol.org accessed 23 January 2024

⁷ I, BELLO . An Analysis of Cross Border Crimes: Evidence of Nigeria and Cameroon. Baze University. Abuja, Nigeria. 2022. P.23.

⁸ Encyclpedia.com. available online at <https://www.encyclopedia.com> consulted on the 8th of March 20206.

Security challenges are complex evolving problems related to cyber-attacks human's errors and resource gaps – that hinder an organization or individual ability to protects systems, network or data. On the other hand, it can be a natural obstacle like a river, mountain, lakes, valleys, and unbearable climatic conditions that sit as an obstacle to security efforts to facilitate security either against criminalities, aggressor or terrorism. For instance, the biggest battle in mankind History known as "Oppression Barbarossa" that was Hitler Extermination campaigns annihilate Russia failed due to climatic conditions. Political manipulations, ethnic solidarity and poor coordination's within security agents are all obstacles to security efforts.¹⁰

1.1.6. CRIMINALITIES

Criminalities refers to the behavior or act that violate laws and regulations punishable by state authority. The acts of criminalities vary on individuals, society or community and the extent at which it's recognized as a crime by law. the acts of criminalities include theft, violence, corruptions, cybercrime and organized crimes such a Kidnapping, Gangsters in campus. The act of criminalities is at time caused by poverty, addictions, drugs consumption, Vengeance, illiteracy, weak government policies cultural practices like some Fulani's rituals (not all) of sacrificing a herd man to spread his blood round the range believed to multiply their cattle.¹¹ In the context of cross -border criminalities, these acts often involved arms smugglings, fuel smuggling, drugs smuggling, cross – border robbery and raping committed across the border. Also, weak international organization or the failure of international organizations to handle political crisis also encouraged trans-continental criminalities like drugs cartels in Mexico and Pablo Escobar Cartel from Colombia that supplied major Europeans and Americans cocaine market.

1.2. THEORETICAL CLARIFICATION

Theories are principles or norms that explain how the international systems work. In relations to Cross border criminality, theories like Realism and Transnational crime theory are applicable.

1.2.1. Transnational crime theory

The theory explains that organized crimes groups operates across National borders exploiting the flaws or weaknesses

⁹ Collins Dictionary available online at <https://www.collinsdictionary.com>. consulted on the 8th of March 2026.

¹⁰ Allan Todd,. Europe and the World 1919 -1989. Cambridge University press. 2001. P. 89.

¹¹ An interview conducted with Musa Gaiya a Cameroonian Grazer in Wum , North west region ,age 46 on the 6th of March 2026.

of the governments and the international system influence by global interconnectedness for illicit gain. The proponents of this theory are Louise Shelley of USA and Phil William of Britain. The Authors highlight how transnational crimes like trafficking and smugglings thrive across the border due to weak security efforts. linked to our paper, Cameroon –Nigeria border in the North west and the Adamawa region is in a greater extent even abandoned by the forces of law and order which enabled criminal's networks like kidnapping and humans trafficking in Sabongari border route linking Bang border village of Nigeria state of Taraba.¹²

1.2.2.The Theory of Realism.

Realism is another theory applicable in this paper in that, according to the proponents of this theory like Hans Morgenthau a German-American political scientist and Kenneth Waltz an Americans scholar argued that states are the main actors in international Relations not international organizations. ¹³ link to the concepts of cross border criminalities across the North west and the Adamawa, the states of Cameroon and Nigeria has taken security and diplomatic measures since 1962 such as the deployments of military to protects and fights border criminalities, the creations of people vigilante groups to collaborate with security forces and the creation of Cameroon –Nigeria mixed commission established in November 2002 aimed at settling trans-border crimes and disputes between the two states. ¹⁴

CHAPTER TWO: THE LIMITATIONS TO SECURITY EFFORTS FACED BY NIGERIA AND CAMEROON TO COMBAT CROSS BORDER CRIMINALITIES IN THE NORTH WEST AND ADAMAWA BETWEEN 1962-2022.

Since independence 1960, Nigeria and Cameroon trans-border security efforts had witnessed a lot of security constraints some of which is examined below.

2.1. Successive military takeover in Nigeria between 1960s to 1990s.

Nigeria borders and hinterland have been unstable since independence due to frequents military takeover that suspended constitutions and disbanding foreign polices

with imitate and distance neighbors. Between 1960s to 1990s, 7 different successive military coup D' etat took place in Nigeria that complicated all aspects of border managements in that, Nigerians borders with her immediate neighbors were managed by different ministries with difference policies that are not related to each other. for instance, before the advent of the National Boundary Commission in 1987, there was a lack of a predictable, stable, and relatively articulate border policy with Nigeria's neighbors. Different ministries and organizations managed the borders of neighboring countries. ¹⁵

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) controlled the Nigeria-Chad border, the borders with Benin by the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, boundaries with Niger by the Ministry of National Planning, and the most sensitive border with Cameroon was placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁶ Putting the Cameroon-Nigeria border under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demonstrated the sensitivity of the two countries' border relations. Hence, the undemocratic nature of the military regimes and the unstable political climate in Nigeria was enough pointer to the constant chasm with Cameroon. Besides, the individual personalities of the Federal presidents also precluded a peaceful, stable and articulate border policy¹⁷

The military regimes of Murtala Muhammed, Olusegun Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Badamosi Babagida and Sani Abacha were all threats to National security as these military Junta abandoned diplomatic efforts. The repudiation of the Maroua Accord of 1975 immediately after the fall of Yakubu Gowon infuriated Cameroon. The hardening of Nigeria's borders with Cameroon was conventional during military rule. Next, the intense domestic pressure on Abacha in the 1990s to transition to a democratic dispensation made him heighten the border tension with Cameroon as a safety

¹²Transnational Crime theory extracted online at <https://feavable.me...> Consulted on the 10th of March 2026.

¹³ D, JACK,. Realism and International Relations. Cambridge University Press.2000. P 16.

¹⁴ E,GOODIN ROBERT , The Oxford Handbook of International Relations. Oxford University Press. 2010. P.67.

¹⁵ V, UKOR, K,GEORGE K,and M BAYODE.: Cross Border criminalities and insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis of international Borders in Cross River state. Journal of

Central and Eastern Europeans Africans studies. February 2026. PP 45-48.

¹⁶ JOHN, I., MOHAMMED, A., Pinto, A., Nkanta, Gun Violence in Nigeria: A Focus on Ethno Religious Conflict in Kano. Journal of PHazenuPublic Health Policy., 2013.p. 56.

¹⁷Cross border criminality: a threat to Nigeria security. Available online at rsublicawjournal.com.ng. Consulted on the 14th February 2026.

valve to the internal deadlock.¹⁸ Abacha authorized the occupation of the Peninsula by Nigerian forces in December 1993 to buy internal popularity since his regime was not popular.¹⁹

2.2. The Nigerian civil war of 1967-70

The Nigerian civil war led to the suspension of the memorandum of understanding that formerly guaranteed the freedom of the passage of goods and services across the border of Cameroon – Nigeria. New measures were taken in this situation such as the welcoming of Nigerians refugees that were lodged in Cameroon by the Cameroonians governments. The movements were done thorough interrogations across the border by Cameroonians authorities during which they were sent directly to the regional headquarters where the provincial chiefs of intelligence investigate their documents registrations and immigrations status before directed to specific grouping centers created in Bamenda and Buea. The civil war was an obstacle to security efforts against cross border criminalities in several ways,²⁰

Firstly, the States of Cameroon and Nigeria from 1967 had the Biafran rebels as urgent enemies than fighting against border criminalities, this is because Amadu Ahidjo feared the success of the Biafran in defining their independence will inspire the people of west Cameroon to demand for similar treatment .secondly , The government of Cameroon was under pressure from France its own very former colonial master and post independent allied asking Cameroon to provide maritime access to the Biafran rebels through the Bakassi peninsular .²¹The governments of Cameroon despite external pressure didn't betray its own very the federal government of Nigeria and played the role of a maritime blockade against the Biafran rebels in support of the federal forces of Nigeria that were permitted to ships weapons through Cameroon territorial water . lastly, the Biafran war increased the influx of Nigerians refugee to the Cameroonians border in search of peace and stability making it very difficult for the Cameroonians border forces

¹⁸The Maroua declaration –Printing Delimitations treaties InfoBase. Available online at <https://www.un.org.consulted> on the 15th February 2026.

¹⁹ The Maroua Declaration on the 1st June 1975. Delimitation treaties InfoBase accessed on 13/03/2002.

²⁰ ELECHI AMADI., *Sunset in Biafra: A civil Diary*. Heinemann educational Books; Published in 1973. P.59.

²¹O, V, SUNDAY OKEKE AND O, RICHARD. "Cross border crimes in West African sub region: Implications for Nigeria's security and external relations", *Global Journal of Human-social sciences: political science*, vol. 14, no.3, 2014sociétés" *Revista Universitara de sociologie*.no 3, 2023. p 97.

to trace nor distinguish a refugee from across border criminal involved in smugglings.²²

2.3. Ethnic similarities in Cameroon and Nigeria Borderland

Another cross-border security threats are the ethnic similarities that existed between the people living in Cameroon and Nigeria borderland. These group of people are more concern with the historical and the cultural ties that connect them than respect of international frontier and law separating them. for instance, in Fotokol formerly known as Patakol, only the Elbeit River separated the same people and families from Gambarou . For this reason, any conflict in Gambarou inside Nigeria related to culture, land and religion is ethnically transported to Fotokol inside Cameroon without taking into consideration that it's in another country. The Boko Haram insurgency in Gambarou was exported to Fotokol in Cameroon.²³

In the south of the Benue river, several group of people were separated between Cameroon and Nigeria. some of these groups were the Yere, the Wom, the Laka, the Chamba and the Dirim . Toward the south, we find the Bantus people whose origins are pure Cameroonians, they constitutes the Tiev , the Icheve ,the Evants and the Batu including the Jakunoides.²⁴ Others groups of people are the Jukun, the Kentu , Yidiv, Tigon,Eregba ,the Mbembe ,the Zupa ,Boritsu,the Zibu and the Mboum . For example, in the Faro Division, the main border people include the Beta ,Samba ,Konia ,the Fulari ,the Vere , The Hausa and the Koutines at the extreme south of the Adamawa plateau . Also, in the Donga Mantung Division, we have the Mambilla living both in Nigeria and Cameroon, others ethnic group are the Kaka minority, the Fulani and the Wimbun that disperse in the cross border of the Mambilla plateau of Cameroon and Nigeria. ²⁵

In Donga- Mantung, North West region of Cameroon, we have a cross – border ethnic groups such as the Fulani that are found both in Nigeria state of Adamawa and Adamawa

²²Nigeria Civil war , Summary , Causes , Death Toll and facts .available online at <https://www.britannica.com.consulted> on the 15th February 2026.

²³ In August,2014, Boko Haram attacked and occupied the Town of Gambaru in Bornu State of Nigeria. All the inhabitants escaped to nearby Elbeit River for their safety. Even the Nigerians forces of law escaped to Gambaru transporting the conflict to Fotokol.

²⁴ N,O., NGWANA . *Cameroon border policies and sustainable Development of the borderlands of the former West Cameroon 1961-2017: A Historical investigation* (PhD Dissertation, The University of Maroua, Cameroon. 2019. p , 109.

²⁵ N, AZIEH , *Nigerians Vicinity and Cameroon's Defense and security Challenges from 1967 to 2018* (A PhD Dissertation, University of Maroua, Cameroon. 2018. P.78.

in Cameroon . In Nigeria, the Fulani occupies places from Leme ,3 corners Bang ,Yerimaru ,Gembu ,Mbamnga and Hainare , similarly in Cameroon border settlement ,we can identify the Fulani in places like Sabonagri ,Songkolong ,Atta ,Kimi, Shie , Ndu, Ngu ,Nwanti , likop down as well as Bonso and Ntaba . The people shared a common culture, languages and economic activities like cattle grazing with their Nigerians relatives this influenced frequent border movements. ²⁶

Linguistically, the Fulani speaks the Fulfulde language of Senegambia in west Africa while others speaks the Bantu and the semi- Bantu languages. With the exception of Fulani , these people originated from Cameroon. The Mambilla, kaka and the Mboum migrated from the French zone, while the Bansa and the Kambu are from the British zone of Cameroon precisely from the Bamenda province (before 2008) and settled in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria. till date, the Nkambou can be seen in Cameroon in places like mbem ,Nwa , Ntumbaw , Sabongari ,Sop, Ntaba , Ndu, Jaliri and Nkambe including bordercommunities like Ntong ,Mfe and lus . While in Nigeria, Antere, Inkini, Kusuku, Ndumnyaji, Sakaka, Warkaka, Wah, Nguroje, Masumsum, Yerimaru, Mformi, Ntamnya, Dorfi,Gembu and Maisamari where the people migrated to these areas influenced by the Jihads and the climatic conditions .²⁷

The Kambou and the Mbanso are another related inter-border ethnics groups in Cameroon. The Kambu in Cameroon are located in places like Ndu, Ntumbo, Sabongari and Nakmbe while the Bansa migrated to places like Mbiame, Kumbo and Jakiri . In Nigeria, these people are found in places like Nguroje ,Tamnya , Gembu and Ndorfi , Commercially ,they are the early Kolanuts traders in Mambilla plateau , they imported Kolanuts from Cameroon by means of donkeys that was sold in Nigeria . sometimes these people frequently migrated across their borders for constant contact with their Keins and Keith's either directly or indirectly.²⁸

The southern border of Cameroon-Nigeria also has borderland people belonging to the Benue Congo family. These people lived largely in the Newly created Isangele

sub-Division on the 29th of June 1977. The people speaks languages such as Effikk, Ekoi and the Ibibio in the Isangele Sub-Division and the Nigerians villages of Annolo and Oron . we also find cross border communities like the Korup occupying the east of Mundemba in Cameroon and the East of Kwa river and the town of Okoyon in the Kalabar river. ²⁹The Ejagham are equally a cross border community found in this section of the border of Cameroon and Nigeria. In Nigeria, the Ejagham are found in Ikom while in Cameroon, they lived in Manyu Division. The Ejhagham therefore lives on both sides of Cameroon and Nigeria border from Agbokem on the cross river to Mount Oban and Calabar.³⁰

Others inter- border Ethnic groups are the Boki found in the Cameroon side at Manyu and at Ikol at Obudu on the Nigerians side. Other Ethnic group include the Bimbia, the Isuwu and the Bakweri, the Assumbo and the Ekot-Ngbe . in the Ako Division, we have the Mbembe ,the Kukete and the Boki.³¹

The ethnic similarities between the borderland people is a security challenged at the border because it inspired a lot of cross border movements without any respect on international frontier. The people shared a common language, culture, History and religion in many occasion. Add to this, the people at the border town of Beka has almost double Nationality of Cameroon and Nigeria. For this reason, they frequently moved across the border when the situation is favorable and used their different nationalities depending when the situations is favorable. Linguistically, the official language used in the extreme North border of Cameroon and Nigeria around Fotokol is Hausa as the lingua Franca almost spoke by all the borderland people. In the Southern border, Pidgin English is the lingua Franca while Fulfulde is the dominant language used in the Mambilla plateau border routes in the North west region of Cameroon. The linguistic similarities make it difficult to regulate frequent movements across the border of Cameroon and Nigeria that increased the rate of border criminalities³²

²⁶ M, S, NDEH, Talking Across National border: ICT and Black market economy along the Cameroon- Nigerian border at Ekok-IKOM since 1961. Available at International Journal of International Relations Media and Mass communications studies Vol. 2 N^o .3 published by European Center for Research Training and development August. 2019.p.67.

²⁷ The Kanuri People-Wikipedia, Available online at en – Wikipedia.org. consulted on the 15th of february 2026.

²⁸ MUHAMMED LAMINU., “Kanuri Proverbs: Metaphoric conceptualizations of a Cultural discourse “. Journal of Africans cultural studies. septemer. 2003.

²⁹ Interview with Juli Mallam

³⁰Manyu:The border of Cameroon located in the westernmost part ... Available online at <https://en.wikipedia.org.consulted> on the 15th of Febuary2026.

³¹Manyu:The border of Cameroon located in the westernmost part ... Available online at <https://en.wikipedia.org.consulted> on the 15th of Febuary2026.

³²Nsemba Edward Lenshie, Christian Ezeibe and Collins Ugwu., Ethnic group across Nigeria-Cameroon territories: Contested

2.4. The Vastness of the border encouraged smugglings.

Cameroon border with Nigeria is the longest of all Cameroon borders with its own immediate neighbors in Africa. The border covered a surface land of 1,975 kilometers (1,227 miles) from Lake Chad in the North to the Atlantic Ocean (Gulf of Guinea) in the south.³³ Nigeria and Cameroon shares land and the Maritime border, the land borders through the Adamawa and the North west regions exists with a lot of difficulty in identifying the border line. In most cases, the borders are separated by very short pillars built by cements since colonial days that are neglected by the governments of Cameroon and Nigeria. The border routes in the Mambilla plateau linking Hainare in Nigeria to Nsongkolong in Cameroon have no defined border pillars and fix checkpoints. From here, borderlanders leisurely smuggled contraband drugs and fuel to Cameroon border market in Adamawa. Also, the Cameroonians border security are miles away from the borderlands. This is because it hardly exists any settlements directly linking the Cameroon – Nigeria borders inside Cameroon territory. For instance, in Sabongari border routes, the closest border village is Likop that is kilometers away from the border making it directly difficult for the Cameroonians forces of law and order to sit at the border entries to control smuggling.³⁴

Cameroon and Nigeria borders are in many occasions very fragile in nature. The fragile borders are where government agencies such as the Customs cannot or are unable to operate fully owing to the insecurity created by the presence of armed non-state actors. Customs surveillance or patrols have been limited at some of these frontiers where there is high risk of insecurity occasioned by the presence of the armed groups. At the Otu Customs Control Post at the Ekok border, customs surveillance or patrols have been limited or abandoned because of the security threats posed by the secessionists. It is true that customs services can always demand for the services of the military to carry out joint controls in some of the fragile areas.³⁵ Most often than not, customs officers may be against such a joint control because they fear that they will be seen as excessively repressive forces, a priority target of

autochry and contentious ethnics identities in Mambilla plateau, Nigeria. published online on 21st July 2021. P.67.

³³ The Wikipedia of Cameroon –Nigeria border extracted online at <https://en.Wikipedia.Org>. Consulted on the 9th of March 2026

³⁴ PETER BAXTER., Biafran, The Nigerians Civil War 1967-1970. A Military History; Helion and Company. 2017. P.45.

³⁵ Interview with JULI Mallam, a Cameroonian Vigilante member Mbiri, Adamawa, age 35, conducted on the 2nd of March 2026.

³⁶ A, GEORGE. . “Cameroon-Nigeria Relations 1884-1961: A Study in Political, Economic and Social Interactions between

secessionists and Boko Haram. Secondly, the invitation of the military by the customs may entail financial expenses. However, the deployments of the military by the government in fragile areas, coupled with the creation of vigilante groups have gone a long way to identify some hideouts of the terrorists and secessionists.³⁶

Some of the illegal cross-points are found in the forest where illegal traders use footpaths to cross from one end to another. Furthermore, some of the surrounding villages such as Akwen, Nsanakang, Nsanaragati, Agborkem and Otu do not have legal or official routes for the importation of goods from Nigeria, but today they served as illegal points where some of the traders with the complicity of the villager’s carry out illicit trade. The porosity of the border is further intensified by the fraudulent attitude of some customs agents who intentionally give a blind eye to smuggling. Customs patrol or surveillance is limited in some of these villages because some of the villages are devastated³⁷

2.5. Poverty and Vigilante groups in the borderland politics 2013 -2022.

The word borderland isn’t the border line itself, it refers to the community inhabiting closer to the frontier of two sovereign states. For instance, Sabongari in Donga Mantung and Songkolong in the Adamawa region are examples of borderland. The borderland communities face socio-economic and political neglects from the governments due to locations geographically. For this reason, the communities and the borderland people do have limited patriotic feelings in finding themselves isolated. The economy of the borderland is dominated by farming cultivating food and cash crops like rice, corn, Cassava, Potatoes, plantains and paper for export to Nigeria. Survival in the borderland is over 80% relied on Nigerian imports than Cameroon-made goods. For this reason, most of the borderland people hardly give time to the law and order from the state of Cameroon. The security efforts against the border crimes in several occasions do disrupt the people’s local economic activities plunging the borderland

Two Neighboring States.” Doctoral Dissertation: University of Calabar. 1984. P ;134.

³⁷N, O, NGWANA., Cameroon border policies and sustainable Development of the borderlands of the former West Cameroon 1961-2017: A Historical investigation (PhD Dissertation, The University of Maroua, Cameroon. 2019. p. 299.

communities to hardship posing security threats in the borderland.³⁸

In many cases, political instability in the borderland are handled by the local vigilantes such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) popularly known as "YANG GORA" or Borno youth Empowerments scheme (BOYES) formed in 2013 in Borno states of Nigeria precisely in Maiduguri to protect the community against Boko Haram.³⁹ The Boko Haram activities has devastated the interlinked Lake Chad regional economy. Trade in cash crops is banned or severely depressed (often intentionally by the military to prevent Boko Haram from taxing it); many traders have fled, fighting has destroyed much of the physical and social infrastructure, and agricultural production is extremely low. Massive displacement has triggered a humanitarian disaster, especially in Borno state. All this makes it harder to address vigilantes' demands.⁴⁰

Some vigilantes joined not only for protection or short-term material benefits, but also for the rights and prospects they felt membership opened for future state⁴¹ rewards. Many have post-war jobs, scholarship or demobilization money in mind. Some civilians Joint Task Force (CJTF) members mention the Niger Delta Presidential Amnesty Program, under which insurgents were pardoned, put on the government payroll and given vocational training or education: "These rebels get something, so what should we get, we who have fought for the state?" Some vigilantes view their service explicitly as an advance against an expected reward. Through cooperation with the security services, particularly in Nigeria, vigilantes have become de facto apprentices, a classic path to a job, including a state job, in West African societies.⁴²

It's undisputed fact that Nigeria is the giant of Africa but only in term of economy and population not development and political influence. as third world countries, Cameroon and Nigeria are competing in the positions of under developed countries in Africa with Cameroon position fluctuating between 16th to 19th while Nigeria between 24th

to 28th on the list of Africa developed countries according to the past 5 years' statistics revealed by Humans developments index (HDI). The borderland people are facing a lot of unemployment due to government neglects characterized with limited educations and facilities. the economics awkwardness' of the borderland.⁴³

Vigilante leaders have sometimes been quite outspoken about their expectations from and frustration with the state, and some political leaders have begun to respond. The BOYES program was one such response. The Borno State Vigilantism and Youth Empowerment Agency Law voted in May 2015 was another, and in April 2016, Borno state Governor Shettima announced a program to create 20,000 jobs for CJTF members.⁴⁴ In Borno, the army and DSS have absorbed 280 vigilantes into their ranks, but the actual demobilization programs are only at the planning stage, which makes sense given the persisting security risks.⁴⁵ One of the tricky aspects in handling claims is their administration. There are several instances where previous rewards and incentives, for instance inclusion in the BOYES program, have created strong tensions and competition among vigilantes, with accusations of nepotism and favoritism. Denouncing how some leaders have gotten rich, secured homes in government housing projects or "privatis" cars, some vigilantes insist they have left the movement, refuse to register and will not become involved in an eventual demobilization program. The handling of vigilantes is even more important at a moment when states are pondering programs to encourage Boko Haram members to "exit".⁸⁰ Several vigilantes expressed displeasure about these, some asserting bluntly that death should be the only way out. This attitude is fed by vigilantes' security concerns and memories of Boko Haram violence, but also by their sense of entitlement.⁴⁶

The decentralized system of government practiced by the federal Republic of Nigeria was embodied with a lot of political mafia that affected the border structure with Cameroon. local governorate turned vigilante groups to political groups assigned to execute with political missions

³⁸ An interview conducted with Saleh Ongeh Mustapa, a Cameroonian trans-border trader and teacher, Sabongari, Donga Mantung, Nwa sub Division, age 36, on the 13th of February, 2026.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Interview with JULI Mallam, a Cameroonian Vigilante member Mbiri, Adamawa, age 35, conducted on the 2nd of March 2026.

⁴¹ N, ROTH, ROSE. 'Concepts on how to Help Prevent or Solve Conflicts in Africa: The Case of Cameroon-Nigeria Border Conflict.' Gottingen: Master's Thesis, Georg August Universidad. 2004.p.89.

⁴² Crisis Group interviews, academic and CJTF, Maiduguri, 14 January 2017; vigilantes and state officials, Maroua, Mokolo, and Mora, October 2016

⁴³ A, JEAN. PAUL Trade, exchange rates, and growth in sub-Saharan Africa. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press. 2006.p 114.

⁴⁴ Abraham, Ray. *Vigilant Citizen: Vigilante and the State* (1st ed.). Cambridge, Polity Press. 1998. P. 56.

⁴⁵ S., ISSA., Les Coupeurs De Route. Histoire Du grande Bandisme rural et Transfrontalier dans le Bassin du Lac Tchad, Paris Karthala. 2010, p.45.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, CJTF, Maiduguri, January 2017; "Boko Haram: les monsters de Maiduguri", *Le Monde*, 23 June 2014.

in favour of the wealthy candidates. For this reason, vigilante groups turned to be ethnics and political movements serving a political purpose that attracted a lot of ethnic's violence along the Cameroon – Nigeria borders around Maiduguri. ⁴⁷Vigilantism's downside and risks are well-known in Nigeria, where groups such as the Bakassi Boys and the Odua People's Congress have turned into major political forces in other regions. The first risk, politicization of vigilantes, notably around elections, is particularly acute in Nigeria, because votes for governors, who control opaque budgets funded by enormous oil revenues, can be extremely competitive and violent. Gangs of thugs hired to attack opponents' supporters and to provide security are common.⁴⁸

The Borno ex-governor Ali Modu Sheriff relied on a vigilante group for his 2003 campaign. Some analysts argue that soon after his victory, he let most go and that some later turned to Boko Haram in disappointment. An internal source reported that when the civilian joint Task Force (CJTF) formed in Borno to fight against Boko Haram and border criminalities, a number of ECOMOG thugs still backing Sheriff joined, but CJTF leaders prevented them from rising in the ranks, fearing they were political proxies. Whether this is an indication of the CJTF's neutrality or their own politicization is open to interpretation. Some observers suspect current Borno Governor Shettima's Boyes program is partially political clientelism, an attempt to turn the vigilantes into a political network using counter-insurgency funding. At least one episode suggests the vigilantes' political potential.⁴⁹

In 2013, CJTF burned the house of the Borno state chairman of the All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP), alleging he supported Boko Haram, but some suspect this had to do with an internal ANPP feud.⁵⁰

During the 2015 election campaign, many CJTF were seen at rallies of the All Progressives Congress (APC),

⁴⁷ HAMIDOU, *La route et le développement de l'insécurité rurale dans le département de la Vina facteurs, acteurs et implications socio-économiques de 1974-2018*, Mémoire de Master en Histoire, Université de Ngoundere. 2018. P.67.

⁴⁸Governors also get a "security vote" from the federal government, an undisclosed, unaccounted monthly transfer of money they can use as they want, ostensibly for public safety. Obiamaka Egbo, Ifeoma Nwankoby, Josophat Onwumere and Chibuike Uche, "Security votes in Nigeria: Disguising stealing from the public purse", *African Affairs*, vol. 111, no. 445 2012, p. 597

⁴⁹ Nigeria Civil war , Summary , Causes , Death Toll and facts .available online at

Shettima's current party. It is not clear how much control he has over the CJTF, but throughout the Lake Chad region politicians on all sides are keen on, cultivating relations with these groups. Vigilantism has potential to feed ethnic or ethno-religious cleavages, because its focus is the defense of a specific local community. In the Cameroon locality of Amchidé, for instance, the initial *comité de vigilance* was controlled by Christians and harassed Muslims. ⁵¹It was eventually dissolved by the authorities and replaced by a mixed *comité*. Vigilantism is often also in an ambivalent relationship with the established orders of chieftdom and patriarchy, particularly in rural areas. It can cut both ways, sometimes revalidating "decentralized despotism", a two-tier state system whereby peripheral areas, usually rural, are governed on the cheap, through delegation to chiefs with dubious claims to legitimacy and fitness to rule. At other times, it can give some autonomy to the young men (and occasionally women) who are the muscle of the vigilante forces.⁵²

Also, during the federal system of government in Cameroon (1961-1972), the state of west Cameroon (former Southern Cameroon) saw French Cameroon (former east Cameroon) more of a threat to west Cameroon than Nigeria with whom they have lived for over 40 years from 1916-196. For this reason, West Cameroon border with Nigeria was largely neglected putting encouraging criminalities such the Igbo incursion to west Cameroon The reason for this was fueled by the fact that the state of West Cameroon shared same government structure and culture with the people of Nigeria.⁵³ The government of Augustine Ngom Njua in West Cameroon (1965-1968) was more friendly to the federal regime of Nigeria fearing Ahidjo vision of Unitarism in Cameroon. For this reason, west Cameroon borders were exposed to Nigerians infiltrators and

<https://www.britannica.com.consulted> on the 15th February 2026

⁵⁰R, F, MANYI ANJOH, NGAFI YUSHAHU: Sheyvigilantism and The Fight Against Boko Haram in The Far North Region of Cameroon, 2014-2018. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2020.p64.

⁵¹ Awoniyi, S. A Discourse on Religious Conflict and Tolerance in Multi-Faith Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 2013. p. 56.

⁵³ O, NGWANA. (Cameroon border policies and sustainable Development of the borderlands of the former West Cameroon 1961-2017: A Historical investigation (PhD Dissertation, The University of Maroua, Cameroon. 2019,

smugglers within this period making frontier security very difficult.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

In all, the states of Cameroon and Nigeria are facing significance security challenges in combating border criminalities especially in the North west and Adamawa regions between 1962 to 2022. This paper provides valuable historical context exposing the problems affecting security efforts at the border such as corruption, porous border, ethnic solidarity in the borderland, socio-economic and political disparities and the differences in regional, poverty in the borderland, Military coup in Nigeria , The Biafran war of 1967-70 and the Anglophones crisis have enabled transnational crimes like kidnapping, smugglings, illegal migrations, Cattle smugglings , Robbery , humans

trafficking and fuel smuggling largely from Nigerians states of Taraba to Cameroon that exposed the flaws of security measures . To address these issues, both countries must increase border security checkpoints, promote regional equality, provides employments and basic requirements to the borderland people to stop criminalities, reduce customs duties imposed especially on Trans-border bike riders importing fuel to discourage smugglings. Also, its necessary to educate the borderland people especially stubborn Nigerians fishermen in the south that patrol in Cameroon territorial water and refused and refused to salutes the Cameron flag. To sum up, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the cross border security challenges with the aid of primary and secondary sources as examined above.

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3.	Sale Mustapha	M	41	Cameroonian, North west region	Trans-border palm Oil business		+237679155622
4.	Ardo Idi	M	56	Cameroonian, North west region	Fulani Chief	3 rd March,2026, Sabongari	+237652982676.
5.	Lauren James	M	41	Nigerian, Taraba State	Police	6 th March 2026, Bang	-----
6.	Biri Sule	M	34	Cameroonian	Trans-border bike Rider	10 th March 2026. Sabongari , North west	+237679868771
7.	Juli Mallam	M	35	Cameroonian, Adamawa	Vigilante head	2 nd of March, 2026.	+237671912055

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