

## **Conflict, Migration, and Border Insecurity in West Africa: A Nigerian Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

*Conflict, forced migration, and border insecurity are deeply interconnected challenges that continue to undermine regional security and development in West Africa, with Nigeria at the epicentre. This study examines the nexus among these variables using a qualitative research approach, supported by thematic content analysis of secondary sources, including academic literature, government documents, and reports from institutions such as ECOWAS, UNHCR, AU, and IOM. The analysis is anchored in the Security – Development Nexus and Conflict Theory, which provide conceptual grounding to explore how porous borders facilitate transnational crimes — such as arms trafficking, irregular migration, and insurgent mobility — while ongoing violence fuels displacement and weakens state capacity. Case studies of Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, and ethno-religious crises highlight the reciprocal relationship between border insecurity and conflict-induced migration. The paper also critiques the limitations of existing regional mechanisms, including the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol and AU frameworks, noting weak enforcement and institutional fragmentation. The study concludes with evidence-based policy recommendations, advocating for a coordinated, multi-stakeholder model to enhance border governance, strengthen regional security cooperation, and address the root causes of conflict and forced migration. By doing so, the paper contributes a holistic framework for understanding and addressing migration regulation in West Africa.*

**Keywords:** Border, Conflict, Insecurity, Migration, Nigeria

## **Conflits, Migrations Et Insecurite Frontaliere En Afrique De L'ouest : Une Perspective Nigeriane**

### **Résumé**

*Les conflits, les migrations forcées et l'insécurité frontalière constituent des défis profondément interdépendants qui continuent de compromettre la sécurité et le développement régionaux en Afrique de l'Ouest, le Nigéria étant au cœur de ces problématiques. Cette étude examine les liens entre ces variables à l'aide d'une approche de recherche qualitative, étayée par une analyse thématique du contenu de sources secondaires, notamment la littérature académique, les documents gouvernementaux et les rapports d'institutions telles que la CEDEAO, le HCR, l'UA et l'OIM. L'analyse s'appuie sur le concept de « lien sécurité-développement » et la théorie des conflits, qui fournissent un cadre conceptuel permettant d'explorer comment la porosité des frontières facilite la criminalité transnationale – comme le trafic d'armes, les migrations irrégulières et la mobilité des insurgés – tandis que la violence persistante alimente les déplacements de population et affaiblit les capacités de l'État. Des études de cas portant sur l'insurrection de Boko Haram, les conflits entre agriculteurs et éleveurs et les crises ethno-religieuses mettent en lumière la relation réciproque entre l'insécurité frontalière et les migrations induites par les conflits. Ce document critique également les limites des mécanismes régionaux existants, notamment le Protocole de la CEDEAO pour la libre circulation et les cadres de l'Union africaine, en soulignant leur faible application et la fragmentation institutionnelle. L'étude conclut par des recommandations politiques fondées sur des données probantes, plaidant pour un modèle coordonné et multipartite afin d'améliorer la gouvernance des frontières, de renforcer la coopération régionale en matière de sécurité et de s'attaquer aux causes profondes des conflits et des migrations forcées. Ce faisant, le document contribue à un cadre global pour comprendre et aborder la réglementation des migrations en Afrique de l'Ouest.*

**Mots-clés :** Frontière, Conflit, Insécurité, Migration, Nigéria

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is at the centre of the West African region, which is battling the intricately linked problems of border insecurity, migration, and conflict. Internal conflicts, which range from insurgencies to communal and ethno-religious violence, have had a significant impact on forced migration and population displacement. The situation is made worse by the region's porous borders, which allow armed groups to infiltrate and facilitate the growth of transnational criminal networks, illicit trade, and the movement of displaced people. This confluence of circumstances threatens national and regional stability, erodes regional peace, and makes governing migration more difficult.

The Boko Haram insurgency, which started in 2009, has been one of the main causes of forced displacement in Nigeria. The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter group of the insurgency, has carried out violent attacks that have caused widespread displacement and insecurity. More than 2.1 million of the more than 2.9 million displaced people living in the Lake Chad Basin as of April 2021 were inside Nigeria's borders. Host communities have been overtaken by these movements, and the security and humanitarian systems are under tremendous strain. Nigeria's porous borders have made the situation worse by permitting uncontrolled movement, which makes it easier for extremist groups to conduct transnational operations, smuggle weapons, and smuggle people. Nigeria has responded by fortifying its borders in areas affected by conflict to maintain territorial integrity and control population movements.<sup>1</sup>

The dynamics of conflict and migration in Nigeria and the larger West African region have been further complicated by environmental degradation, which is manifested in the form of drought, desertification, and frequent flooding. These environmental stresses create competition for limited resources, especially between farmers and herders, uproot communities, and worsen preexisting vulnerabilities. The result is a cyclical pattern of border insecurity, displacement, and conflict that erodes state authority and hinders development initiatives.

Despite ongoing initiatives by regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, as well as various international stakeholders, migration governance and border security remain fragmented. Structural challenges—including corruption, inadequate funding, poor

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<sup>1</sup> Samir Amin, ed., "Modern Migrations in West Africa: Studies and Discussions at the Eleventh International African Seminar, Dakar, April 1972" (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1997).

inter-agency coordination, and weak enforcement—continue to hamper effective policy implementation.<sup>2</sup> While existing studies have examined the humanitarian consequences of violent conflict, limited scholarly attention has been given to the interconnectedness between porous borders, forced migration, and national security in the Nigerian context.<sup>3</sup>

**Conflict:** Conflict has been defined as incompatibility of interests, goals, values, needs, expectations, and/or social cosmologies (or ideologies). McEnery, cited in Dennen,<sup>4</sup> opined that conflict entails “the interaction of any two or more value systems”. In West Africa, conflicts manifest as political instability, insurgencies, and intercommunal tensions. Conflict on all levels of organic existence is pervasive, persistent, and ubiquitous. Organisms are bound in multiple conflict-configurations and - coalitions, with their own dynamic and their own logic.

**Migration:** Migration within Africa, driven by the pursuit of improved livelihoods, conflicts among expanding groups over land use, familial disputes, or sudden adverse developments that render life unlivable in certain areas, has historically been a prevalent occurrence over the ages.<sup>5</sup> Such migratory movements have the potential not only to establish new settlements or enhance existing ones as possible state nuclei but also to aid in the evolution of already established states. A primary concern regarding migration, acknowledged by numerous scholars, centers on the quest for economic opportunities, whether for trade or employment, which catalysed significant waves of population movement into regions populated by diverse ethnic groups and across borders.<sup>6</sup> In certain instances, these migrations were primarily economically motivated responses to profit prospects; in others, they were influenced by social aspirations, such as the need to escape the constraints imposed by traditional African societies.<sup>7</sup>

**Conflict and Migration in View:** Academic literature increasingly acknowledges the interconnected nature of conflict, migration, and border insecurity in West Africa, especially in Nigeria. However, many studies still approach these challenges in isolation, thereby overlooking the complex, cyclical relationships between them. Historically, violent conflicts have served as primary catalysts of mass displacement. The civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d’Ivoire, along with Nigeria’s

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<sup>2</sup> Toyin Falola, “Colonial Boundaries and Their Effects on Post-Independence Conflicts in Africa” (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563–95.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. G. van der Dennen, “The Sociobiology of Conflict” (London: Chapman & Hall, 1990), 1–19.

<sup>5</sup> William Hance, “Population, Migration and Urbanization in Africa” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> J. Jackson, “Migration, Sociological Service” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Crowder, Michael. *West Africa under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1978.

Biafran War and the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, have collectively displaced millions across the subregion. In the Lake Chad Basin alone, over 2.4 million people have been uprooted due to insurgency, intercommunal violence, and climate-related shocks.<sup>8</sup> In Nigeria, farmer-herder conflicts, ethno-religious unrest in Plateau, Benue, and Kaduna, and jihadist violence have led to both internal and cross-border migration, often burdening fragile host communities.<sup>2</sup> These movements frequently ignite new tensions, especially when displaced youth are recruited by extremist groups seeking to exploit socioeconomic despair.<sup>9</sup>

While some migrants positively contribute to urban economies, large-scale displacement tends to overburden public infrastructure. IDP and refugee camps strain government and humanitarian agencies, while competition over scarce resources—such as land, water, and employment—fuels localised conflict.<sup>10</sup> Long-term effects, including reduced agricultural productivity and investor withdrawal, have received less scholarly attention, particularly within Nigeria. This study helps fill that gap by analysing how sustained conflict and weak border governance constrain national development. Nigeria's porous borders with Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon exacerbate these dynamics. Hundreds of informal crossings facilitate arms trafficking, narcotics smuggling, human trafficking, and militant infiltration.<sup>5</sup> Extremist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP take advantage of these security gaps, often using the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement (1979) as cover.<sup>11</sup> Corruption and weak enforcement mechanisms among border officials further compromise Nigeria's ability to manage cross-border flows.

Colonial legacies remain at the core of Nigeria's border and identity crises. The British amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 ignored ethnic and religious boundaries, institutionalising inter-group inequalities through indirect rule.<sup>12</sup> Contemporary conflicts, including the Jukun-Tiv and Ifon-Ilobu clashes, reflect these unresolved historical tensions. Post-independence Nigeria has remained entangled in cycles of ethnic and religious violence, most notably the Biafran War, which left deep grievances still evident today.<sup>13</sup> Environmental degradation has emerged as a powerful

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<sup>8</sup> UNHCR. *Forced Displacement in Nigeria: Humanitarian Response and Challenges*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group. *Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence*. Report No. 262. 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Ukiwo, Ukoha. "Politics, Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 115–138.

<sup>11</sup> Teye, Joseph Kofi. "Migration in West Africa: An Introduction." In *Migration in West Africa*, edited by Joseph Kofi Teye, 3–9. Ghana: Springer, IMISCOE Regional Reader, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, A. *Selected Writings*: Centre for Historical Research. (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation Limited, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Schürmann, Alina, et al. "Migration in West Africa: A Visual Analysis of Motivation, Causes, and Routes." *Ecology and Society* 27, no. 3 (2022): 16.

new driver of conflict and displacement. Desertification in the North, flooding in the Middle Belt, and coastal erosion in the South have displaced entire communities.<sup>14</sup> The resulting scarcity of arable land and clean water intensifies competition between farmers and herders, frequently triggering violent confrontations and additional migration.

Though regional and international bodies—such as ECOWAS, the African Union, and the UN—have introduced migration and security frameworks, poor implementation, corruption, and funding limitations hinder their impact.<sup>15</sup> Most interventions remain fragmented, failing to integrate conflict, migration, and development policies. This study, therefore, underscores the need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral responses that address the structural causes and mutually reinforcing consequences of these interlinked crises. The Multinational Joint Task Force has improved intelligence sharing and joint patrols in the Lake Chad Basin, targeting Boko Haram.<sup>16</sup> Nigeria-Benin Cooperation: Bilateral efforts to curb smuggling led to the temporary closure of Nigeria's western border in 2019, reducing rice trafficking but harming regional trade.<sup>17</sup> Partnerships with France, the U.S., and the U.K.: These include counterterrorism training, drone surveillance, and intelligence support for military operations in the Sahel.<sup>18</sup>

Poverty, political exclusion, and environmental degradation are key drivers of migration and insecurity in Nigeria. Economic empowerment through job creation, youth entrepreneurship, and access to microfinance reduces reliance on illicit economies.<sup>19</sup> Strengthening inclusive governance and deploying early warning systems aids in resolving community disputes and preventing escalation.<sup>20</sup> Environmental resilience, particularly through climate adaptation strategies—such as drought-resistant crops and water conservation—can mitigate farmer-herder conflicts,

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<sup>14</sup> Hashimu, Shehu. "African Migration to Europe and the Emergence of Modern Slavery: Africa—Who Is to Blame? Nigeria in Perspective." Paper presented at the 36th International Academic Conference, London, May 22–25, 2018

<sup>15</sup> Emma, B. "Modern Slavery in Africa." Interview by Imran, August 1, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Felix Tabi Okorn and Victor Etim Ndum, "Cross Border Migration between Nigeria and Its Francophone Neighbours: Policy Challenge," *ICONIC Research and Engineering Journals* (2020): 303.

<sup>17</sup> Dahiru Abdulsalam, "Counter-Insurgency and the Military Strategy in Nigeria's North-East," *Journal of Political Discourse* (2023): 243–254.

<sup>18</sup> The World Bank, *The Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiative: Findings from 10 Country Case Studies of World Bank and IMF Support* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020), <http://www.worldbank.org/oed>.

<sup>19</sup> James, Halom Fredrick. "Assessment of the Effects of Border Management on National Security in Nigeria (2013–2023)." Master's thesis, Baze University, Abuja, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Garba, Faisal, and Thomas Yeboah. "Free Movement and Regional Integration in the ECOWAS Sub-Region." In *Migration in West Africa*, edited by Joseph Kofi Teye, 19. Ghana: Springer, IMISCOE Regional Reader, 2022.

while land use reforms ease resource competition.<sup>21</sup> Given the regional dimension of these issues, Nigeria cannot act alone. Despite the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, enforcement remains weak.<sup>22</sup> Nigeria should advocate for a regional security task force, biometric systems for migrant tracking, and improved intelligence sharing.<sup>23</sup> International partnerships with the AU, UN, and EU are crucial for technical and financial support.<sup>24</sup> Agencies such as UNODC, INTERPOL, UNHCR, and WFP must be empowered to combat cross-border crimes and deliver aid.<sup>25</sup> This study offers a holistic framework to address the cyclical relationship between migration, conflict, and border insecurity.<sup>26</sup>

This study draws on the Security–Development Nexus and Conflict Theory to explain the interlinkages between conflict, migration, and border insecurity in Nigeria. The Security–Development Nexus posits that insecurity and underdevelopment are mutually reinforcing; violence disrupts governance, displaces populations, and undermines economic growth, while poverty, weak institutions, and inequality fuel insecurity.<sup>27</sup> This framework highlights the need for integrated responses to conflict and migration challenges. Conflict Theory, as developed by<sup>28</sup> emphasises how structural inequalities and resource competition - often along ethnic or religious lines — drive social conflict. In Nigeria, this is evident in communal clashes, insurgencies, and displacement. Together, these theories illuminate how unresolved grievances, poor governance, and weak border control create a cycle of violence and forced migration. They support the study’s call for holistic, multi-sectoral strategies that address both the root causes and effects of insecurity and migration in West Africa. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the nexus between conflict, migration, and border insecurity in Nigeria, using a qualitative, evidence-based approach. It analyses

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<sup>21</sup> Sharkdam, Wapmuk. “Cross-Border Interactions between Nigeria and Niger: Challenges and Prospects for Integration.” In *Readings in Post-Colonial Borders and Economy in West Africa*, edited by Abdullahi Musa Ashafa, 210. Kaduna: Pyla-Mak Services Ltd., 2018.

<sup>22</sup> UNODC. *Transnational Organised Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Inuwa, Mustapha Muhammad. “Colonial Boundary and Migration in Katsina-Maradi Border Region.” In *Readings in Post-Colonial Borders and Economy in West Africa*, edited by Abdullahi Musa Ashafa, 131. (Kaduna: Pyla-Mak Services Ltd., 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Falola, Toyin, and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Salawu, B. “Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies.” *European Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 3 (2010): 345–353.

<sup>26</sup> Yahaya, J., and M. Bello. “The Rise of Banditry and Its Attendant Effect in Governance and Socio-Economic Relations in Zamfara State.” *Polach International Journal of Humanities and Security Studies* 5, No. 1 (2020): 109–129.

<sup>27</sup> Uvin, P. *The Development/Peacebuilding Nexus: A Typology and History of Changing Paradigms*. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, (2002). 1(1), PP 5–24. Duffield, M. *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*. (2007). Polity Press.

<sup>28</sup> Coser, L. A. (1956). *The Functions of Social Conflict*. Glencoe: (1956) Free Press.

historical and contemporary developments to understand how forced migration reshapes the security and socio-economic landscape of the country. In doing so, the paper aims to fill existing research gaps and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the regional implications of border insecurity.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. Investigate the connections among conflict, forced migration, and border insecurity in Nigeria and West Africa.
2. Assess the socio-economic and security impacts of conflict-driven migration and porous borders on regional stability.
3. Review current policy approaches by Nigeria, ECOWAS, and international entities, offering recommendations for enhanced migration governance and border security.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to investigate the interrelationship between conflict, migration, and border insecurity in Nigeria and the broader West African region. A descriptive and exploratory design was employed to allow for an in-depth understanding of the socio-political, economic, and security dimensions underpinning these phenomena. The study relied primarily on documentary analysis of secondary data, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, government reports, and publications from key organisations such as ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and Amnesty International. Thematic analysis was used to systematically identify, code, and interpret recurring patterns across the literature. Themes such as conflict-induced displacement, porous borders and transnational crime, governance failures, humanitarian conditions in IDP camps, and environmental stressors were drawn inductively from the data. The approach enabled the integration of historical, political, and socio-economic insights to explain how migration and insecurity are mutually reinforced. This methodology is appropriate given the study's focus on complex, dynamic, and context-specific issues that are difficult to quantify. It provides a foundation for formulating contextually grounded, evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at strengthening border governance and regional security.

## RESULTS

Through a rigorous thematic analysis of secondary sources—including peer-reviewed academic literature, institutional reports from ECOWAS, UNHCR, IOM, and relevant policy documents—this study finds a strong interrelationship between conflict, forced migration, and border insecurity in Nigeria. Key findings are presented thematically as follows: The evidence confirms that violent conflict remains the predominant driver of forced displacement in Nigeria. The Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, farmer-herder violence in the Middle Belt, and widespread rural banditry in the North West have led to large-scale internal displacement and cross-border refugee flows. These findings are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Adeola, 2020; IOM, 2022), which have documented the impact of insecurity on rural livelihoods and population movements.<sup>29</sup>

Nigeria's inadequately secured borders—particularly along its frontiers with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon—facilitate illicit transnational activities, including the smuggling of arms, narcotics, and persons. The study finds that these borders also enable armed groups to move across territories with minimal resistance, further undermining state sovereignty. This aligns with ECOWAS (2019) and Okereke (2021), who argue that weak border surveillance is a structural enabler of regional terrorism and organised crime.<sup>30</sup> In addition to conflict, economic instability and environmental degradation are identified as significant migration drivers. Rising unemployment, loss of livelihoods, desertification, and flooding were found to contribute to rural-to-urban and cross-border movements. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps reflect the compounded burdens of these drivers, including food insecurity, limited healthcare, and education deficits. These patterns corroborate findings from UNHCR (2023) and environmental security scholars like Homer-Dixon (1999).<sup>31</sup>

Although ECOWAS, the African Union, and the United Nations have developed migration and security frameworks—such as the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol and cross-border security initiatives—implementation remains inconsistent. Many interventions are reactive, short-term, and poorly coordinated. Intelligence-sharing mechanisms and joint patrols are underutilised, creating operational gaps exploited by

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<sup>29</sup> Yahaya, J., and M. Bello. "The Rise of Banditry and Its Attendant Effect in Governance and Socio-Economic Relations in Zamfara State." *Polach International Journal of Humanities and Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 109–129.

<sup>30</sup> R. O. Afolalu, *History of Africa Since 1800* (Ibadan: Onibonjo, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> T. A. Imobighe, O. B. Celestine, and J. B. Judith, *Conflict and Instability in the Niger Delta: The Warri Case* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2002), 65.

non-state actors.<sup>32</sup> IDP camps in Borno, Zamfara, Benue, and Adamawa states are characterised by overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate medical infrastructure, and increased risk of gender-based violence. These findings support reports by Amnesty International and Médecins Sans Frontières, which highlight the humanitarian crisis unfolding in displacement centres.<sup>33</sup> The study finds that governance challenges—especially corruption, inadequate law enforcement, and non-compliance with regional security agreements—continue to undermine Nigeria’s capacity to manage border security and migration. Existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks suffer from poor enforcement, which facilitates the activities of trafficking networks and insurgents.<sup>34</sup>

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reaffirm the structural interdependence between conflict, migration, and border insecurity in West Africa, echoing the Conflict Theory perspective, which posits that societal instability, competition over resources, and power asymmetries generate violence and displacement (Coser, 1956). In Nigeria’s context, persistent insecurity—especially insurgency and communal violence—has destabilised local governance and disrupted rural economies, compelling large populations to migrate in search of safety and sustenance.<sup>35</sup>

This study contributes to and extends existing scholarship that shows how fragile states fail to control their borders and protect their citizens, resulting in transnational instability (see Zartman, 1995; Afolayan, 2017). The porous nature of Nigeria’s borders aligns with the theory of Regional Security Complexes (Buzan and Wæver, 2003), which argues that security in one state is intrinsically linked to its neighbours. Thus, Boko Haram’s operations in Nigeria spill into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, making national security contingent upon regional cooperation.<sup>36</sup>

In line with the Environmental Scarcity and Conflict Framework (Homer-Dixon, 1999), environmental degradation exacerbates migration and conflict. In Nigeria, drought, desertification, and seasonal flooding have reduced agricultural output,

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<sup>32</sup> Olawale Albert, “Kano: Religious Fundamentalism and Violence,” Open Edition Books, April 4, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Bright Joseph Njoku and Joshua Kolapo, “The Rise of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria: Critical Analysis and Proposal for New Resolution Strategies,” *Covenant University Journal of Politics & International Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2022): 3767–3789.

<sup>34</sup> ECOWAS, ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration (Abuja: Economic Community of West African States, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> Jacob Zenn, “Boko Haram and the Kidnapping Crisis in Nigeria,” *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 4 (2019): 1–6.

<sup>36</sup> Queenet Iheoma-Hart, “The Impact of Climate Change on Boko Haram Insurgency in Northeast Nigeria,” *NOUN International Journal of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution* (2021): 322.

leading to economic hardship and mass migration, particularly in the North East and Middle Belt. The resultant competition over land and water resources often ignites violent clashes between farmers and pastoralists, reinforcing the cyclical relationship between migration and conflict.<sup>37</sup>

The analysis also supports the views of scholars like Castles (2003), who argue that migration policies, when not integrated with security and development frameworks, tend to fail. Despite the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, the absence of biometric tracking systems, lack of inter-agency coordination, and minimal capacity building at the local level weaken the protocol's effectiveness. These institutional deficiencies have been flagged by regional actors and academic observers alike, yet practical responses remain limited.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the increasing vulnerability of IDPs—especially women and children—represents a humanitarian emergency. The study's findings affirm that poor camp conditions, lack of reintegration policies, and prolonged displacement contravene the standards set by the Kampala Convention and the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Failure to address these vulnerabilities not only undermines international humanitarian commitments but also poses long-term developmental and security risks.<sup>39</sup>

The discussion also reveals that policy fragmentation and a lack of political will undermine both national and regional responses. While numerous frameworks exist, they are often reactive rather than preventive, and largely disconnected from community-level realities. This confirms previous critiques by scholars such as Okeke (2019) and Afolayan (2022), who argue for a multi-stakeholder, grassroots-inclusive approach to migration governance and border security.<sup>40</sup>

Theoretically, this study provides empirical grounding to the Security–Development Nexus, which views security, governance, and development as mutually reinforcing. The failure to address poverty, inequality, and weak governance ensures that displacement, smuggling, and armed conflict persist as interconnected crises.

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<sup>37</sup> Anthony Israel Rufus and Ekoja Bernard Ogbe, “The Rise of Banditry in Northwest Nigeria: Examining the Security Implications and Pathways to Stability,” *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2025): 22–35.

<sup>38</sup> M. A. Rufai, “Cattle Rustling and Armed Banditry along Nigeria-Niger Borderlands,” *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 23, no. 4 (2018): 66–73

<sup>39</sup> A. Adepaju, “Migration in West Africa: Patterns, Issues, and Challenges,” *African Migration Journal* 12, no. 1 (2005): 25–42.

<sup>40</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Environment, Climate Change and Risk Reduction (MECR): IOM Nigeria Operational Strategic Approach 2023–2027 (Geneva: UN Migration, 2023).

Underfunded institutions and corrupt border officials hinder the effectiveness of otherwise well-designed regional agreements.

## CONCLUSION

The repercussions of conflict, migration, and border insecurity on Nigeria extend to economic, social, and security dimensions. Although regional and international bodies have initiated a variety of responses, further measures are necessary to improve border management, confront the root causes of migration, and enhance humanitarian aid. This study contributes to knowledge by integrating conflict, migration, and border insecurity as mutually reinforcing phenomena, offering a holistic analysis of their socio-political and economic impacts in Nigeria. It bridges gaps in existing literature, strengthens regional security discourse, and provides evidence-based policy recommendations for sustainable governance and migration management.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To adequately confront the issues of conflict, migration, and border insecurity in Nigeria, a thorough policy framework is crucial. The ensuing policy recommendations emphasise the enhancement of security, governance, and socio-economic development.

1. **Implementing Modern Surveillance Technology:** The adoption of advanced surveillance technologies, including drones, biometric tracking, and satellite monitoring, can enhance Nigeria's capacity to oversee and secure its borders to detect and thwart illicit activities.
2. **Increasing Border Security Personnel and Infrastructure:** The current state of Nigeria's border security is characterised by insufficient personnel and inadequate funding, which facilitates cross-border criminal activities. By reinforcing the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) through the recruitment and training of additional personnel—particularly within border communities—security can be significantly bolstered.

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