Cross Border-Migration and Banditry in Some Selected States in Northwest Nigeria (2014-2024)

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Certification

This is to certify that Onwuharaonye Cyriacus Nnadozie, with the matriculation number **LCU/PG/000302,** carried out this thesis entitled "**Cross Border-Migration and Banditry in Some Selected States in Northwest Nigeria (2014-2024)**" in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, under my supervision and that this work has not been previously submitted anywhere.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to God Almighty and to all innocent children that have been killed by Bandits in Northwest Nigeria, especially in both Sokoto and Zamfara States.

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Acknowledgement

I give profound gratitude to God Almighty for His infinite mercies, protection and sustenance throughout the duration of this PhD programme in International Relations. To the great institution that has provided the platform for this PhD. programme, Lead City University, I am forever grateful. The institution has given me the opportunity to study this course and to consolidate on my academic success.

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Abstract

Cross-border migration has historically shaped the socio-economic and political landscape of West Africa, but in recent years its security implications have become increasingly significant, particularly in Nigeria's north-western region. In Sokoto and Zamfara States, porous borders, shared ethnic and cultural ties, economic inequalities, and weak border governance have facilitated the movement of both legitimate migrants and criminal actors. The influx of foreign and internal migrants, widespread proliferation of small arms, shifting settlement patterns, and the erosion of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have intersected with rising banditry to produce acute security and humanitarian challenges. Communities have been displaced, farmlands abandoned, educational institutions disrupted, and state security responses overwhelmed. This study examined the impact of cross-border migration on the escalation and dynamics of banditry in Sokoto and Zamfara States between 2014 and 2024. Using a qualitative exploratory design, 60 purposively selected participants; including school personnel, traditional rulers, military officers, religious leaders, NGO actors, and community residents, provided firsthand insights through in-depth interviews. Data were collected using a validated interview guide and analysed through thematic and content analysis, supported by secondary evidence from academic publications, government reports, and institutional documents. The findings reveal that cross-border migration significantly contributes to the complexity of banditry by enabling transnational mobility of armed groups, intensifying demographic pressures, fuelling informal and criminal economies, and weakening local governance structures. Internal migration was also found to heighten insecurity by increasing population pressure on scarce resources, spreading violence to previously stable areas, and facilitating the recruitment of vulnerable youth into armed groups. Socio-economic and political drivers; including poverty, unemployment, mineral exploitation, environmental stress, weak law enforcement, and political complicity, were identified as the major push-and-pull factors linking migration to banditry. Government responses, though numerous, were largely ineffective due to poor coordination, weak implementation, insufficient border surveillance, overstretched security forces, and limited socio-economic interventions. The study concludes that migration; both voluntary and forced, remains deeply implicated in the escalation of banditry in Northwest Nigeria. Sustainable solutions must go beyond militarised responses to address root causes. Key recommendations include strengthening border governance and migration documentation systems; improving community-based security structures; investing in socio-economic empowerment for migrants and host communities; enhancing inter-state and regional security cooperation; revitalising traditional conflict resolution institutions; and ensuring consistent political will in policy implementation.

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
USA	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom
SAP	Structural Adjusted Program
GPMG	General Purpose Machine Guns
SALWs	Small Arms and Light Weapons
MACBAN	Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
UN	United Nations
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
LGA	Local Government Area
GDP	Cross Domestic Product
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
NDC	National Defence College
ECWAS	Economic Community of West African States
CBDA	Chad Basin Establishment Authority
ICJ	International Court of Justice

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SAT	Situational Action Theory
GBV	Gender Based Violence
NCFRMI	National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons
NSIP	National Social Investment Program
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
IOM	International Organization For Migration
NDE	National Directorate of Employment
NIS	Nigeria Immigration Service
NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps
NCS	Nigerian Customs Service
SEMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria

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