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The Architecture of Nigeria–Benin Transborder Security Cooperation: A Study of Tsamiya/Segbana Borderlands

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Abstract

This study examines the architecture of Nigeria–Benin transborder security cooperation, with particular reference to the Tsamiya–Segbana borderlands. The study is premised on the recognition that the increasing complexity of transnational security threats, including smuggling, human trafficking, arms proliferation, irregular migration, organised criminal activities and other cross-border crimes, has exposed the limitations of unilateral border security approaches. Consequently, effective border management requires institutional collaboration, coordinated security policies and sustained bilateral engagement between neighbouring states. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, relying on primary and secondary data obtained from Interviews, FGDs and scholarly publications. The analysis is anchored on Complex Interdependence Theory, which explains the necessity of institutional cooperation and mutual dependence in addressing shared security challenges. The study argues that Nigeria–Benin transborder security cooperation is shaped by institutional arrangements, intelligence sharing mechanisms, joint security operations and diplomatic engagements. However, its effectiveness is constrained by institutional weaknesses, corruption, inadequate operational resources, poor inter agency coordination, porous border routes and the complexities of informal cross-border activities. The study further contends that sustainable border security cannot be achieved exclusively through militarised surveillance but requires an integrated security architecture that incorporates state institutions, traditional authorities and border communities. It concludes that strengthening bilateral coordination, institutional accountability, intelligence sharing and community participation is essential for developing an effective and sustainable Nigeria–Benin transborder security framework.

Keywords: Border, Security, Architecture, transborder security cooperation, Nigeria–Benin relations

Introduction

The changing character of contemporary international security has increasingly demonstrated that national security can no longer be adequately understood or sustained within the territorial boundaries of individual states. The growing interconnectedness of societies, economies and political systems has created security environments in which threats originating within one country can generate far reaching consequences for neighbouring states (Sowale & Ukeje (2025). Transnational organised crime, human trafficking, arms proliferation, drug trafficking, irregular migration, terrorism, smuggling and other forms of cross-border criminality have consequently become significant challenges to national, regional and international security. These developments have necessitated a shift from conventional state centred security approaches towards collaborative security arrangements that emphasise institutional coordination, intelligence sharing, joint operational mechanisms and bilateral cooperation. Within this context, transborder security architecture has emerged as an important framework for understanding how neighbouring states organise their institutions, policies, resources and operational relationships to manage shared security threats.

In Africa, the significance of transborder security cooperation is particularly pronounced because of the historical, geographical, economic and sociocultural circumstances surrounding the continent's international boundaries. Many African borders were established during the colonial period without sufficient consideration of existing ethnic affiliations, traditional political arrangements, commercial networks and patterns of human settlement (Shittu, 2017). Consequently, national boundaries frequently divide communities that share historical identities, languages, religious practices, kinship relations and economic interests. While these relationships facilitate regional integration and cross-border economic activities, they also create complex security and governance challenges, particularly where state institutions lack adequate capacity to regulate the movement of people, goods and services. The situation is further complicated by the activities of criminal networks that exploit geographical accessibility, institutional weaknesses, corruption and inadequate border surveillance to facilitate illicit

cross-border transactions.

The challenges of border security in Africa therefore extend beyond the conventional responsibility of protecting territorial sovereignty. They involve the broader responsibility of ensuring human security, protecting livelihoods, facilitating legitimate commercial activities and maintaining peaceful relationships among communities located along international boundaries. This reality makes collaborative security governance particularly important because the security of one country is increasingly connected to the institutional capacity and operational effectiveness of its neighbouring states. Accordingly, the management of contemporary border threats requires cooperation among national security institutions, diplomatic authorities, customs and immigration services, local governments and border communities.

The Tsamiya–Segbana borderlands, located within the Kebbi State–northern Benin border corridor, provide a particularly important setting for examining these security challenges. The area represents a strategic point of interaction between Nigeria and Benin, where the movement of people, agricultural commodities, livestock and other commercial goods sustains local livelihoods and cross-border economic relationships. The corridor is also connected to wider regional trading networks linking Nigeria, Benin and Niger. Its importance became particularly evident in November 2025 when the Nigeria Customs Service, Kebbi Area Command, and the Beninese Customs Service strengthened their bilateral engagement through a strategic meeting at Segbana, involving military and customs officials from both countries. The engagement underscored the importance of coordinated border management, intelligence exchange and institutional collaboration in combating transborder criminal activities (Punch Newspapers 2025).

Against this background, the central concern of this study is the extent to which the existing institutional and operational arrangements underpinning Nigeria–Benin transborder security cooperation have translated into effective security governance within the Tsamiya–Segbana borderlands. While both countries have demonstrated commitment to bilateral security collaboration through diplomatic agreements, joint security initiatives and institutional engagements, persistent cross-border security challenges suggest that significant gaps may exist between policy commitments and operational realities.

Methodology

The study was conducted across two settlements. Out of these, one settlement located along the Northwestern border of Nigeria was carefully selected with the intention of accurately depicting the various communities residing in close proximity to the Nigerian border. Their neighboring border community from Benin republic covered the remaining one. They are Tsamiya border land in Bagudo local Government Area of Kebbi state which shares borderland with with Segbana of Aliboro department in Benin Republic. A case study design was used to explain the architecture of Nigeria-Benin trans-border security cooperation. The approach employed in this study was the qualitative approach.

Data were generated from both primary and secondary sources. Key Informant Interview (KII), Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and personal observation were the primary sources while documentary evidence served as the secondary which was used to complement and corroborate the primary data. As important qualitative techniques, key informant interview and focused group discussion encourage the respondents to talk freely. This is with a view to capturing the respondents' experience, beliefs or attitudes in relation to the research problem. Usually, respondents are made up of key informants by virtue of identifiable positions they occupy within the research location. Conversely, however, the documentary sources help in situating and contextualizing the research.

Given the theoretical framework and objectives of the study, purposive sampling was used to identify the affected Border Community leaders, border community based associations such as traders associations, farmers associations etc, the joint border patrol teams (Nigeria Custom Service, the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Immigration Service), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the National Boundary Commission, Benin Republic Consulate in Nigeria, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and members of the Academic Community who specialise in border and security studies are the most fitting respondents that could provide useful information on the structure and design of Transborder security cooperation between Nigeria and Benin Republic

Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focused Group discussion (FGD) were implemented. The interview method was be structured so as to give chance for the participants to adequately express their perspectives. As a means of data collection, interviews entail a face-to-face interaction involving both verbal and non-verbal communication between the researcher and the selected individuals

(Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006). Interviews serve as a tool for the researcher to administer, extract, and document information from and about the respondents. They enable the researcher to have a broader and comprehensive knowledge of the issues at hand through the verbal and non-verbal responses obtained from the interviewees via face-to-face interaction or telephone conversations, or both. Given the qualitative nature of this study, structured interviews were conducted with relevant organizations involved in Nigeria-Benin Trans-Border Security Relations, such as the Joint Border Patrol Officials, the Nigeria Custom Service, the Nigeria Immigration Service, the National Boundary Commission, and the Benin Consulate in Nigeria. As a complement, documentary analysis was employed as part of the qualitative methodology utilized in this research. This entails a comprehensive examination of relevant documents, including newspapers, books, journals, policy documents, and other sources, in relation to the main objectives of the study.

Furthermore, two sources (Key Informant Interview and documentary source) were used in this study to generate data. Both sets of data were subjected to systematic qualitative content analysis. As previously mentioned, the primary characteristic of qualitative research lies in its reliance on the researcher's skills, creativity, and capabilities. Consequently, qualitative analysis is contingent upon the researcher's own distinct mode of rigorous thought, as well as their adept presentation of evidence and thorough examination of alternative interpretations.

To initiate the analysis, the key informant interview data was subjected to a methodical utilization, meticulous examination, and scrutiny, thus diminishing and/or minimizing any potential ambiguity and biases. The interviews were documented. The information generated using Bussanci, Dandanci and French languages were be transcribed and subsequently typed to ensure uniformity and precision. The process of filtering the data was conducted during the coding phase, as well as during the process of composing the final report.

Consequently, the interviews were transcribed in their entirety and an exact account was provided to ensure comprehensiveness. As emphasized by Mcllelan et al. (2003: 66), this is an arduous endeavor due to speech elision, overlapping speech, background noises, and other factors. The supplementary notes taken during the interviews aided in overcoming these challenges. The data were then be categorized based on the major themes and sub-themes that emerge from it. Indeed, the themes and sub-themes were derived from the objectives and research questions of the study. This was done to prevent any deviation from the primary context of the research. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 62) define this process as one where "...the data is broken down into distinct parts, closely examined for similarities and differences, and inquiries are made regarding the phenomena as reflected in the data."

Through this process, individuals and their assumptions about phenomena were subjected to questioning or exploration, ultimately leading to the emergence of new discoveries (Aberbach and Rockman, 2004:1-6). This particular study adopted four levels of qualitative data analysis, following the three stages proposed by Connolly (2003: 103-112). These stages encompass the transcription phase, the generative stage, the interpretive phase, and the theorising phase. During the generative phase, the researcher will meticulously scrutinize the data obtained from interviews, analyzing it at the sentence, paragraph, or even word level. This meticulous examination enabled the researcher to discern and explore the underlying meanings and essence of the data, subsequently coding it accordingly.

In the generative phase, the coded data was organized into themes and sub-themes with the aim of synthesizing the data to distinguish the significant from the insignificant (Morse, 1994: 30). The interpretive phase involved a reducible process. This is the stage where themes and sub-themes were systematically condensed into 'conceptual categories' (Connolly, 2003: 109). Subsequently, patterns and relationships between themes were established and conceptually integrated. This further facilitated the process of transitioning from specific coding to more general and abstract grouping of themes. It allowed for greater flexibility in considering the categories from different perspectives, exploring alternative interpretations, and gaining new insights (Connolly, 2003: 110). This iterative process aided in further validating the categories by repeatedly returning to the entire process. According to Connolly, this confirmation of the categories consistently enhances the grounded validity of the findings, meaning that the findings are firmly and systematically rooted in the data (Connolly, 2003: 110). In the theorizing phase, theoretical explanations were constructed accordingly. The entire process enabled the development of coherent explanations based on the research questions and objectives. This method also facilitated the attainment of rigour and trustworthiness in the data, consequently enhancing the reliability and validity dimensions of the study.

Theoretical Framework: Complex Interdependence Theory

This study adopts Complex Interdependence Theory, developed by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (1977), as its theoretical framework for examining the architecture of Nigeria–Benin transborder security cooperation in the Tsamiya–Segbana borderlands. The theory challenges the traditional realist assumption that states operate primarily through military power and that international relations are dominated exclusively by state-to-state interactions. Instead, it emphasises the interconnectedness of states through multiple channels of interaction, including government institutions, non-governmental actors, economic networks, and transnational organisations.

Complex Interdependence Theory rests on three major assumptions: the existence of multiple channels connecting societies; the absence of a rigid hierarchy among issues in international relations; and the declining effectiveness of military force as the principal instrument for resolving certain forms of interstate challenges. These assumptions are relevant to Nigeria–Benin border relations, where security threats such as smuggling, human trafficking, arms proliferation, irregular migration, and organised cross-border crime transcend territorial boundaries and require coordinated responses. The theory provides an analytical basis for understanding how Nigeria and Benin can strengthen security cooperation through bilateral agreements, intelligence sharing, joint border patrols, inter-agency coordination, diplomatic engagement, and collaboration with border communities and traditional institutions. It also recognises that effective border security cannot depend exclusively on military and law-enforcement agencies but requires cooperation among multiple state and non-state actors.

The relevance of the theory lies in its explanation of the mutual security interests and institutional interdependence between the two countries. It helps investigate how domestic institutional weaknesses, inadequate coordination, corruption, and competing national priorities may constrain collaborative security arrangements. Consequently, Complex Interdependence Theory provides a suitable framework for analysing the institutional architecture, operational mechanisms, challenges, and prospects of Nigeria–Benin transborder security cooperation in the Tsamiya–Segbana borderlands.

The Architecture of Nigeria-Benin Transborder Security Relations

The initiation of transborder cooperation in West Africa arose from a blend of the colonial experience and the pursuit for regional integration and development. This was further catalysed by the plight of persons living along international boundaries in post-independence West Africa, stemming from colonialism. During the colonial era, international boundaries were a colonial imposition devoid of the consent of the people, hence many ethnic communities were divided between different colonial territories (Ayodele, 2018). The consequences of the colonial demarcation of borders were especially felt in the domain of socio-economic, cultural, ethno-religious, and political activities (Interview, Birnin Kebbi, July 10, 2024).

The colonial states generally applied strict regulations and controls on movement, trade, and agriculture across international boundaries. Independence did not remove the consequences of colonialism; rather, it inhibited former colonial states from undertaking measures to guarantee the safety of the affected communities. The impact of colonialism exacerbated under colonial states, which viewed borders as a source of tension and hostility, and thus turned them up from soft to hard (Shittu, 20217: 208). The framework of Nigeria-Benin transborder security relation is shaped by a combination of historical, geopolitical, and socio-economic factors, as well as mutual concerns about security and stability in the region. Given the shared border and common challenges, Nigeria and Benin have developed various mechanisms and agreements to manage transborder security. Below is an outline of the key elements of this framework

Colonial Partition and the Institutionalisation of the Nigeria–Benin Boundary

Prior to the advent of colonial governance in Africa, there existed extensive interactions and reciprocal exchanges among diverse African populations and cultures. The imposition of colonialism and the resultant dominance over these societies significantly disrupted their interactions, primarily due to the demarcation of international boundaries by colonial authorities (Rsasaki, 2019). Consequently, both heterogeneous and homogeneous societies and communities were forcibly partitioned into the distinct spheres of influence of various European nations. During this historical period, the populations shared numerous commonalities and were interconnected through internal trade routes and geographical proximities, thereby coexisting in a state of relative peace. For example, one of the respondents from the Academic community alluded that:

The issue of border and modern states is a paradox, it is a conflict, because these borders are artificial boundaries. They were created by the Europeans for their economic and political imperial interests. Because if you study the border communities, you will find the uncoordinated division between the two

countries. You will find a family belonging to this country and another part of same family belonging to the other country. You will find same family partitioned into two, one living in Nigeria and the other living in Benin republic. You will find a family living in Benin with their own inherited farmlands and estates in Nigeria (Interview, Sokoto, July 15, 2024).

The aforementioned analysis posits that the partitioning of territories precipitated the balkanization of African nation-states and societal structures, as well as the fragmentation of their collective identities through arbitrary territorial delineations that segregated individuals of identical ethnicities or tribal affiliations, whilst concurrently relocating them into disparate societal contexts (Rasaki, 2019). Nigeria and the Benin Republic represent among the African nations that were adversely impacted by this colonial segmentation. The establishment of artificial borders by colonial powers resulted in the formation of novel nation-states, each falling under the aegis of diverse colonial administrations. To illustrate, Nigeria and Benin emerged as prominent examples of such newly constituted countries. The inhabitants of Nigeria became subjects of the British Empire, whereas those residing in Benin were governed under French colonial authority. Despite being administered by divergent colonial powers, Nigeria and Benin maintain enduring bilateral relations.

This exchange epitomized the notions of peace-making, neighborly goodwill, and African cultural identity (Shittu, 2017). Conversely, the inhabitants of Segbana and Medicali in the Benin Republic are believed to share a common historical lineage with those from Lolo and Dole-Kaina. Collectively, they were all part of the ancient Borgu kingdom prior to the delineation executed by colonial powers (Interview, Dole-Kaina, July 7, 2024).

The colonial architecture that emerged as a consequence of the balkanization process endowed sovereign authority upon Nation-states, which had previously operated as monolithic entities in terms of physical, cultural, and geographical attributes. The delineation of the Nigeria-Benin border serves as a prominent exemplification of this theoretical framework. The current distribution of the Zabarmawa, Kyangawa, Bargawa, Bussawa, Dandawa, Dukkawa, and Yoruba ethnic groups on opposing sides of the Nigeria-Benin border is a direct outcome of the colonial partition instituted in 1885. This partition engendered the disintegration of previously cohesive kingdoms and the reallocation of their territories between the colonial powers of France and Britain, thereby instituting a boundary or demarcation in regions where none had existed antecedently (Bimbola, 2012).

Shittu (2017) characterized the Nigeria-Benin demarcation, akin to numerous territories across the African continent, as a remnant of colonial imposition. Benin, historically designated as Dahomey, represents one of Nigeria's neighbouring Francophone countries. Following the attainment of sovereignty by both nations in the 1960s, the boundary transitioned into the Nigeria-Dahomey international boundary and was subsequently rebranded as the Nigeria-Benin boundary, thereby fragmenting populations that share a collective social and cultural heritage (Ajomo, 2014). The historical connections among the traditional authorities of the two nations have, over the years, cultivated and sustained an informal framework of collaboration to facilitate mutual assistance to one another and their respective constituencies across diverse social and cultural domains (Dahiru, 2013). For instance, in 1982, the Onisabe of Sabe and the Alaketu of Ketu from the Benin Republic were invited by the Ooni of Ife, who served as the chairman of the Oyo State Council of Obas in Nigeria. These two Beninese traditional leaders were granted the opportunity to participate in council deliberations within a jurisdiction other than their own. Furthermore, in 1983, the Ooni undertook a royal visit to the Alaketu in Benin (Bimbola, 2012).

In addition to the aforementioned points, findings derived from fieldwork indicate that the communities residing along the Nigeria-Benin borders continue to preserve their traditional affiliations. For example, one of the community leaders interviewed, articulated that:

Well, Segbana, Lolo, Medicali and Tsamiya for us, are like one and same community despite falling under different countries. Therefore, our relationship in terms of security or otherwise, has been like relationship between brothers. It is a relationship in which whatever affects one out of these communities invariably affect the others. So, we have a long-standing history within this region. These communities are headed by members of the same family. If any issue arises, we solve such an issue within ourselves (Interview, Tsamiya, July 7, 2024).

In fact, the phenomenon remains evident that, up to the current era, whenever a new traditional ruler is inaugurated within the adjacent villages of the Benin Republic, such ruler is mandated to pay respects to the district head of Illo (located in Bagudo Local Government Area) in Nigeria. Furthermore, the formal consent of the Emir of Borgu is persistently solicited prior to the designation of the sovereign of the Nikki kingdom within the Benin Republic. Similarly, the Medicali and Lolo communities of Nigeria and the

Benin Republic have maintained their interactions to such a degree that the lineage of the ruler from either community bears little significance. In other words, an individual hailing from Lolo (Nigeria) may attain the leadership of Medicali (Benin). This phenomenon is facilitated by the prevailing perception that the two communities possess a shared identity, notwithstanding the colonial demarcation.

The socio-cultural interplay between the two nations is notably illustrated by the populations of Borgu, Bagudo, Illo, and Dandi in Nigeria, alongside those of Nikki, Segbana, in the Republic of Benin, all of which proclaim a common lineage and have routinely gathered for the Gani festival on an alternating basis between Borgu and Nikki, during which the profound cultural legacy of these groups is vividly showcased. Throughout this festival, the implementation of border security protocols at the checkpoints linking these communities is notably relaxed to enable the unhindered transit of individuals (Interview, Brinin Kebbi, 2024). Similarly, the Gun populace of Badagry has preserved their cultural traditionalism due to their geographical nearness to the original cultural nucleus located in Porto-Novo. The Gun communities residing in Badagry and Porto-Novo manifest correlated cultural traits encompassing religious practices, linguistic features, socio-political frameworks, and even patterns of habitation (Dioka, 2018). The Yoruba Gun and Bariba ethnic groups are not exclusively localized within the confines of the Benin Republic but are also present within the Nigerian territory. These ethnic groups exhibit a tendency for interaction amongst themselves rather than engaging with other ethnic groups within their respective nations. For instance, the Alaketu in the Republic of Benin is universally recognized as the supreme leader by all Ketu, irrespective of their geographical distribution along the border. Furthermore, the local marketplaces in this region, particularly those in Badagry, Nigeria, and in Port-Novo, Ajara, and Topa (Cotonou) in the Republic of Benin, are frequented by all Aja-speaking individuals, regardless of their border affiliations (Bimbola, 2012).

From an economic perspective, the relations between Nigeria and the Benin Republic have flourished even prior to the onset of European colonialism. For instance, it is a common occurrence for Nigerians to trade consumable commodities that are comparatively scarce for their counterparts across the border. In return, these individuals supply Nigerians with goods that are in considerable demand (Alkali, 2001). Individuals from both communities actively engage in cross-border trading practices. Notably, there exists a well-attended weekly local market in Tsamiya (Bagudo, Nigeria), which is predominantly frequented by approximately sixty percent of participants hailing from neighbouring communities within the Benin Republic (Fieldwork). In concordance with this, Akhigbe (2021) elucidated that historically, the residents along our mutual border have participated in legitimate trade with one another, alongside shared livelihoods such as agriculture and fishing.

Following the attainment of sovereignty, both nations have participated in the formal endorsement of a multitude of treaties and sustain affiliations with a wide spectrum of bilateral and multilateral organizations, including but not limited to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Nigerian-Benin Joint Commission for Cooperation. This endeavour is distinguishable from an extensive array of bilateral and multilateral collaborations that are pivotal for the economic advancement of both countries. For instance, subsequent to the formation of agreements between the respective governments and their technical collaborators, the Save Sugar Company was established in July 1975 with an initial capital infusion of 30 million dollars, allocated in the following manner: Benin 49%, Nigeria 46%, and the technical partners 6%. The governance of the company was overseen by a Board of Directors composed of members from Nigeria, Benin, and representatives from the technical partners (Adeyemi, 2001).

In the political realm, prior to the colonial partition of West African countries, there existed established political relations among the communities of Bagudo, Dandi, and Segbana. It has been a longstanding custom for border communities and their leaders to attend one another's turbaning or installation ceremonies. Whenever an Emir, District Head, or Village Head on either side of the border had engagements, their counterparts made it a priority to be present (Interview, Lolo, July 7, 2024). Beyond this, visits from government officials also encouraged cross-border interactions. For instance, when the Nigerian Head of State visits areas such as Lolo, Kamba, Tsamiya, or Dolekaina, all traditional rulers, government officials, and citizens from the Benin Republic side of the border would traverse to assist their counterparts in welcoming the distinguished guest. The same phenomenon transpires when the Head of State of the Benin Republic conducts an official visit to any border locality such as Sgebana, Kandi, Madecali, among others (Interview, Madecali, July 7, 2024). This practice is typically undertaken with the objective of fortifying the intricate relationship that exists between the border communities and the two nations at large.

Upon the attainment of independence, the foreign policy paradigm of the Benin Republic shifted towards France and other Francophone countries within the West and Central African region, with which it continues to uphold formalized bilateral and multilateral relationships. In a parallel context, Nigeria recalibrated its diplomatic endeavors towards the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Nations (Dahiru, 2013). The implications of this strategic alignment are such that Nigeria and Benin persist in exhibiting a significant political divide, notwithstanding their geographical contiguity and certain cultural affinities. The establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two nations was initiated when Nigeria severed its diplomatic ties with France in the early 1960s, thereby restricting French aircraft and vessels from accessing its territorial waters; this embargo had detrimental consequences for Benin, which relied on Nigerian ports in Lagos for the importation of vital resources necessary for the advancement of the Cotonou harbour. It was the entreaties from Benin, Niger, and Chad that compelled Nigeria to annul the ban on French aircraft and vessels a few weeks thereafter (Dahiru, 2013).

Both Nigeria and Benin have strategically directed their efforts towards the formal regulation of transboundary movements of their respective populations. This initiative was subsequently succeeded by a bilateral agreement aimed at the abolishment of visa restrictions. In acknowledgment of the critical significance of fostering amicable neighborly relations for enhancing security, Benin was the inaugural nation with which Nigeria formalized its first friendship treaty following the conclusion of the civil conflict (Oyebode, 1991). Moreover, the political and traditional leadership of both nations have engaged in official diplomatic visits, including the visitations by the Onisabe of Sabe and the Alaketu of Ketu (Benin Republic) to Ife, at the invitation of the Ooni of Ife (Bimbola, 2012). Furthermore, Shittu (2017:210) posited that in 1975, General Gowon conducted an official visit to Benin in an effort to strengthen the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and its neighboring country, and he observed:

We attach to the relations between our two countries that geography, history, culture and family ties, have inextricably bound together from the very beginning of time. Happily, for our government and people the relations have always been close, solid and fraternal. It should not and could not be otherwise, since our people have been communicating trading, cooperating, co-existing and inter-marrying from time immemorial (Shitu, 2017:210).

He further elaborated that both Nigeria and Benin are founded upon comparable foreign policy tenets: the advocacy for amicable relations and collaboration with all countries, the preservation of the principle of sovereign equality among all states, regardless of their magnitude or demographic structure, and he clarified that the two nations consistently align their positions within the United Nations Organization (UNO), the Non-Alignment Movement, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now known as the African Union (AU). The diplomatic endeavors executed by Nigeria's leadership did not conclude with General Gowon, as General Obasanjo likewise conducted a visit to the Benin Republic in 1978. Furthermore, six months following the commencement of General Babangida's administration, the previously restricted Nigeria-Benin border was officially reinstated. Prior to his ascension to the presidency in Nigeria, President Yaradua engaged in a visit to the Benin Republic as a fundamental aspect of his official tour encompassing multiple African nations following his electoral success in the 2007 presidential election. At one point, President Jonathan was compelled to land in the Benin Republic due to territorial disputes between Nigeria and the Benin Republic (Interview, Sokoto, July 15, 2024).

In their endeavours to combat transnational criminal activities, the two states instituted a joint patrol initiative in 2003, comprising a committee of nine members, with five representatives from Nigeria and four from the Benin Republic. This initiative further reinforced the diplomatic relations between the two nations as the Nigerian police successfully repatriated 106 trafficked children to their home government in Benin and recovered 80 stolen vehicles from Benin in a similar manner (Adeniran, 2007).

The collaborative efforts between these nations did not solely manifest at the national level but also permeated local contexts. For instance, a socio-cultural organization designated as Dandi-Ganda was established out of a commitment to assist the underprivileged within the Dandi enclave (Interview, Tsamiya, July 7, 2024). One of the respondents from the community leaders articulated that:

The Dandi enclave spans from Lolo, Dole-Kiana, Kamba, Arewa, Bagudo, Suru, Malanville, Karimama, Gaya, Tanda, Yelu, Bana up to Bengu in Niger republic. Some of these areas are lacking basic amenities of life and the need was felt to come this way and salvage the situation (Interview, Dole-Kaina, July 7, 2024)

In all, Dandi-Ganda consists of twelve local government areas – Arewa, Bagudo, Suru, Dandi (Nigeria), Karimama, Mallanville, Aliboro (Benin) Gaya, Bengu, Tanda, Yelu, Bana (Niger republic). Chairmen of these local governments and some prominent personalities within the region meet as a local committee regularly to share information and make decisions on the welfare of the people in the region (Interview

Dolekaina, July 7, 2024). The headquarters of the organisation is Gaya in Niger republic and is currently chaired by the mayor of Malanville because the leadership is rotational. Apart from giving assistance to the economic disadvantaged persons, the Dandi-Ganda also serves as a platform for information sharing on security matters.

The aforementioned illustrates the unwavering dedication not solely of the populace but also of both political and traditional leaders in preserving the enduring socio-cultural connections as well as the re-integration process of individuals fragmented by colonial demarcations. The capacity of the populace to exhibit tolerance towards one another in utilizing the facilities afforded by the governments, regardless of the specific side of the border to which one belongs, indicates that the boundary has not entirely diminished the sense of unity among the border communities of these two nations.

Institutional Mechanisms for Nigeria-Benin Transborder Cooperation

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has been the precursor of collaboration not just within the West African sub-region but Africa (Idris, 2021). Understanding the status of boundaries and the need for peaceful co-existence among African states, Nigeria established National Boundary Commission (NBC) in 1987 (Dahiru, 2003). The mandate of the commission is to among others, promote border cooperation with Nigeria's neighbours and build stronger regional cooperation as stated by a respondent from the National Boundary Commission. He stressed that:

The mandate of the National Boundary Commission is to among things define Nigeria’s territorial boundary with her proximate neighbor, monitoring transborder relation with the aim of detecting areas of tension and possible conflict. we also facilitate equitable utilization of transboundary resources and we promote cross border cooperation and border region development (Interview, Abuja, February 21, 2024)

This phenomenon may elucidate the amicable border relations that prevail among Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and the Republic of Benin. Notwithstanding the presence of the Nigeria-Benin Republic frontier, the Busawa, Kyangawa, Dandawa, Yoruba, Hausa, and Fulani communities that inhabit the border with the Republic of Benin have maintained a harmonious coexistence for centuries, attributable not solely to their proclivity for peace but also to their shared cultural connections encompassing language, occupation, and religion. The inhabitants of the border region, who predominantly engage in agriculture, share arable lands across the demarcation, facilitating the sale and exchange of agricultural products in regions of comparative advantage. On a religious level, they predominantly identify as Muslims and Christians, interacting with one another based on principles of brotherhood and mutual comprehension. This collective cultural affinity, in conjunction with intermarriages among the inhabitants of the border communities, serves to bind the various nationals residing along the border beyond the confines of their respective national identities.

Nonetheless, the Nigeria-Benin border currently stands as the most contentious frontier among Nigeria's international boundaries, particularly within the Bagudo-Segbana border region. The colonial delineation and boundary establishment of the Bagudo-Segbana area can be traced back to the epoch of the race to Nikki in Borgu (Bako, 2021:45). Two principal factors rendered the scramble for the partition of Borgu, specifically the race to Nikki, distinctly noteworthy. Firstly, the paramount concern of the two colonial powers (Britain and France) was the River Niger, which represented the most accessible and secure route to maritime trade for shipping hinterland resources back to their respective home countries.

Conversely, the race to Nikki was partially spurred by nationalism on the part of the British, linked to the pride of the English crown, while the French were driven by a vision of internationalism, aspiring to create a borderless French territory that could assimilate individuals globally as French citizens (Niworu, 2016: 79). Substantial evidence indicates that Britain and France initially held the perspective that Borgu possessed a coherent political structure that ought not to be fragmented by an arbitrary boundary line. This hypothesis contributed significantly to the initiation of the renowned "race" to Nikki, which was presumed to be the capital of Borgu (Interview, Sokoto, July 15, 2024). The British Commission subsequently asserted that "history had clearly proved the unity of the country in the past… and … the evidence of our own agents… proved its unity at present time" (cited in Bako, 2021:46).

In light of this context, the race to Nikki commenced with Frederick Lugard departing from Liverpool in July 1894 enroute to Borgu via the River Niger. In the same month, Captain Decceur departed from France for Borgu through Dahomey. The negotiations between Britain and France regarding the boundary delineation of their Borgu territories progressed through three distinct phases. During the initial phase, France found itself on the defensive due to its incomplete political control over Dahomey. In contrast, Britain possessed a significant advantage, fortified not only by Lister’s Bussa Treaty of 1890 but also by the Anglo-French Say-Barrua agreements (Niworu, 2016). Britain could therefore, insist with

complacency on the importance of maintaining the historical veracity of Borgu.

The subsequent phase, characterised by France's activities following the annexation of Dahomey, gradually relinquished defensive strategies and asserted claims predicated partially on the theoretical concept of Dahomey's hinterland and partially on the supposition that Borgu did not constitute a coherent political unit for which the Treaty of Bussa could be deemed sufficient. The concluding phase of the Anglo-French dispute was marked by profound animosity, wherein escalating emotions nearly obliterated the fundamental inquiry regarding whether Borgu represented a unified nation or merely an incoherent collection of distinct states. The documentary evidence pertaining to the Anglo-French negotiations proved to be indispensable, as it elucidated the diverse interpretations of the political architecture of Borgu.

It was diplomatically advantageous for Britain to maintain, whether earnestly or disingenuously, the presumption that Borgu was a nation governed centrally from either Bussa or Nikki, or potentially from both locations. Consequently, the British stance until 1892 was predicated on the Anglo-French declaration of 1890, which was further substantiated with respect to Borgu by the Lister treaty with Bussa, wherein France had undertaken a commitment to refrain from actions south of the so-called Burrua line. The exclusive dominion held by both Britain and France over the lower and upper Niger, respectively, did not establish any definitive boundary along the Niger (Bako, 2021:47). The second phase of boundary negotiations between Britain and France concerning Borgu, which undoubtedly preserved its integrity, was the 1890 accord in which the king of Bussa alluded to territorial sovereignty. Between the years 1890 and 1894, no representatives of the Royal Niger Company endeavoured to infiltrate the hinterland of Borgu, which was presumed to be under British protection (Bako, 2021).

An alternative boundary, designated as the Hanotaux Line, was proposed; this line extended from the coastline east of Dahomey and was intended to be extended directly northward along the Niger's course, subsequently following the western bank of the Niger (Interview, Sokoto, July 15, 2024). Upon Britain's realization that Lagos could sever Nikki from Borgu, the Hanotaux Line was dismissed by the British authorities. The Anglo-French dispute materialized when the French contested the fundamental premise of British assertions that the King of Bussa governed all of Borgu, to which the British countered that there existed no accord permitting the Royal Niger Company to visit any locality within Borgu apart from Bussa (Interview, Sokoto, July 15, 2024).

In a nut shell, the foregoing illustrates a protracted discourse that, although ostensibly resolved by the Anglo-French Convention of 1898, remains contentious. This agreement delineated the Benin Republic along a meridian extending to the ninth degree of north latitude in the southwest, effectively partitioning the territories of Appa and Porto Novo between Britain and France during the colonial incursion; concurrently, Article II of the Anglo-French Convention of 1898 articulated the boundaries of Borgu as follows:

The line of demarcation shall start from the extremity of the present frontier on the 9th degree of north latitude and shall be drawn northwards so as to include in the British sphere the territories of Bere and Okunta, together with the towns of Ashigere and Bete. It will follow generally the direction of the meridian 3*2' east Greenwich, thus leaving Nikki and the surrounding district within the French sphere, but will be deflected so as to touch the Niger at a point ten miles to the north of the town of Illo, leaving within the British sphere all territory belonging to the Province of Boussa and the district of Gomba (cited in Yaqub, 2011:18)

There exists an unequivocal consensus that the arbitrary methodology employed in delineating boundaries has significantly influenced and continues to influence the cultural and ethnic uniformity of the border communities. To date, the Nigeria-Benin boundary remains embroiled in considerable areas of contention (Interview, Abuja, February 21, 2024). The Nigeria-Benin international boundary extends for more than seven hundred and seventy kilometers, commencing from the Atlantic Ocean in Lagos and culminating at the tripoint shared by Nigeria, Benin, and the Niger Republic, which concludes in Kebbi State near the Dole-Kaina region (Interview, Abuja, February 21, 2024). This boundary is categorised into two distinct sectors: the southern sector and the northern sector.

The southern sector encompasses the states of Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo, whereas the northern sector comprises the states of Kwara, Niger, and Kebbi. In Lagos, there exists one Local Government Area (LGA), while Oyo is subdivided into three LGAs, and Ogun likewise contains three. Kwara features one LGA, Niger has one LGA, and Kebbi comprises two LGAs. Collectively, there are eleven LGAs distributed along the expanse of this boundary. A principal concern arises from the fact that the sectors of the boundary are delineated by disparate colonial instruments. However, the northern sector presents the most significant challenges, as approximately thirty-five pillars were utilized to demarcate this sector,

extending over four hundred and seven kilometers. Consequently, there exists a variance of approximately ten, fifteen, or even twenty kilometers in certain instances. The pressing issue at hand is the densification of these pillars, aiming to enhance the visibility of the boundary for security operatives as well as for the communities residing therein, thereby mitigating numerous boundary-related conflicts. Below is a table indicating the current institutional mechanisms of Nigeria-Benin Security cooperation.

Table 1: Nigeria-Benin Cooperation Institutional Mechanisms

Sector/Institution	Formal Role in Cooperation	Evidence specific to Tsamiya–Segbana
Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and Benin Customs Service	Customs administration, inspection of goods, prevention of smuggling, information exchange and coordination of border enforcement.	**Observed institutional engagement:** In November 2025, the Kebbi Area Command of NCS, accompanied by the Nigerian Army, visited Beninese customs officials at Segbana to strengthen cooperation on border security and management.
Nigerian Army and Beninese security counterparts	Support border security through surveillance, security operations and collaboration against transnational crime.	**Documented engagement:** The Commanding Officer of the Nigerian Army's 1 Battalion participated in the November 2025 working visit to Segbana. This confirms institutional contact, but does not establish routine joint military patrols.
Nigeria Immigration Service and Beninese immigration authorities	Border movement management, migration control, detection of irregular entry and cooperation against human trafficking.	**Formal mandate:** The 2003 Nigeria–Benin cross-border MoU provides for joint patrols involving immigration and other security agencies. However, the sources identified do not independently establish routine joint immigration operations at Tsamiya–Segbana.
Nigeria Police Force and Beninese Police	Prevention and investigation of cross-border crime, law enforcement, and participation in joint border patrols.	**National-level precedent:** Joint Nigeria–Benin police patrols were reported in 2001, while the 2003 MoU provided for further joint patrol arrangements. Specific continuing implementation at Tsamiya–Segbana remains unverified.
National Boundary Commission (NBC), Nigeria	Boundary governance, coordination of cross-border cooperation, and facilitation of boundary delimitation and demarcation.	**Documented institutional involvement:** The NBC led Nigeria's delegation at the signing of the local-level Nigeria–Benin cooperation MoU on 18 August 2025. The agreement provides for local cooperation, but its implementation in Tsamiya–Segbana requires further evidence.
Border local governments and traditional authorities	Community dialogue, conflict prevention, local information sharing, peaceful coexistence and support for cross-border cooperation.	**Formalised arrangement, implementation pending verification:** The August 2025 MoU provides for cooperation between Nigerian border local governments and Beninese communes, alongside traditional rulers. Joint dialogue platforms and pilot security programmes were identified as subsequent steps, not confirmed operational achievements.
Nigeria and Benin foreign affairs authorities	Diplomatic coordination, negotiation of bilateral agreements and resolution of interstate border-management issues.	**Documented policy engagement:** Their representatives participated in the bilateral processes leading to the proposed one-stop border post at Tsamiya–Segbana in 2024. The available reports establish planning and meetings, rather than proof of a fully operational joint facility.

Source: Researcher's personal compilation, 2026

The above table illustrates how institutional mechanisms work with a view to strengthening the security relationship between the two countries.

Further to the above, in a bid to foster border alliance and peaceful coexistence between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries, the National Boundary Commission (NBC) orchestrates a series of initiatives that convene experts and stakeholders from both Nigeria and Benin to deliberate and investigate avenues for enhancing border cooperation and security. Indeed, a platform was established for the express purpose of promoting harmonious coexistence among communities inhabiting transborder regions (Interview, Phone, July 10, 2024). Numerous workshops and seminars have been convened by

the two nations with the objective of advancing transborder cooperation. One exemplary event was the Nigeria-Benin transborder workshop conducted in May 1988 at the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria in Topo, Badagry. The primary objective of this gathering was to ascertain collaborative opportunities and devise solutions to the challenges associated with transborder cooperation between the two nations. The reconnaissance campaign conducted from 1995 to 2000 was a direct outcome of the 1988 workshop. It was during this workshop that both countries reached a consensus to fortify border cooperation through comprehensive campaigns aimed at raising awareness among residents of border communities regarding the imperative of collaboration and peaceful coexistence among diverse nationals residing in borderlands, as well as with border security agencies.

One of the principal conclusions derived from the workshop was that the border communities exhibited significant deficiencies regarding infrastructural advancement and fundamental social amenities, particularly in domains such as education, transportation, healthcare, telecommunications, electricity provision, and access to potable water, among others. Consequently, the enhancement of the border regions was prominently featured in the workshop's recommendations. Subsequent to the workshop, the National Committee for the Development of the Border Regions (NCDBR) was instituted to expedite the delivery of essential amenities, including electricity, potable drinking water, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and transportation infrastructure, which are currently absent in the border communities.

The workshop further underscored the necessity of decentralizing authority to local governments within Nigeria and their equivalent entities in the Benin Republic, to foster collaborative engagement among the border communities. Although the primary challenge has been achieving continuity, it is noteworthy that the initiative has realized modest successes in various communities, particularly within Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Kwara, and Kebbi States, alongside their respective departments in Porto Novo, Cotonou, Aliboro, and Malanville in the Benin Republic.

From the preceding examination of the Nigeria-Benin border context, it can be inferred that despite being among the most marginalized segments of Nigeria's populace, the inhabitants of the border communities coexist in relative tranquillity. Nonetheless, persistent issues such as widespread poverty, high illiteracy rates, limited opportunities, and infrastructural inadequacies remain detrimental to the effective management of the frontier

Conclusion

The study concludes that Nigeria–Benin transborder security cooperation in the Tsamiya–Segbana borderlands is characterised by an emerging institutional framework supported by bilateral commitments and practical engagements between relevant agencies. Three findings are particularly significant. First, the November 2025 engagement involving the Kebbi Area Command of the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigerian Army, and their Beninese counterparts at Segbana demonstrates that institutional contact and inter agency dialogue are taking place within the study area. Second, the discussions surrounding the proposed Tsamiya–Segbana one-stop border post indicate a shared recognition by both countries of the need to improve border management and facilitate coordinated operations. Third, the August 2025 local level cooperation agreement involving border local governments and traditional authorities provides an additional framework for grassroots participation in cross-border cooperation.

These demonstrate that cooperation is not entirely confined to diplomatic declarations; there is evidence of practical institutional engagement, policy coordination and efforts to establish local cooperation mechanisms. However, the available evidence does not sufficiently establish the regularity of joint patrols, the extent of intelligence sharing, the operationalisation of the proposed one-stop border post, or the measurable impact of these arrangements on crossborder crime and community security. It would therefore be premature to conclude that the existing architecture has achieved effective or sustainable border security.

The study consequently argues that the major challenge is translating institutional commitments and occasional engagements into consistent operational collaboration. Strengthening inter agency coordination, documenting joint activities, improving accountability and incorporating border communities into security planning are essential steps towards this objective. Eventually, the experience of Tsamiya–Segbana suggests that sustainable transborder security cooperation requires not only formal bilateral arrangements but also demonstrable implementation, institutional continuity and responsiveness to the security needs of borderland populations.Top of Form

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