Strategic Interagency Collaboration and Regional Stability: Lessons from Nigeria–Benin Border Governance

Ugochukwu D. Abasilim, Comfort Olanrewaju Sofela, Daniel Eseme Gberevbie and Oluwakemi D. Udoh

Department of Political Science and International Relations, College of Leadership and Development Studies, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

ugochukwu.abasilim@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
comfort.sofela@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
daniel.gberevbie@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
oluwakemi.udoh@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract: The growing complexity of transnational security threats is rendering a standalone institutional approach to border management ineffective. Matters related to smuggling, illegal immigration, trafficking, illicit trade in weapons and other criminal activities transcend borders and demand the participation of multiple agencies in their resolution. In this paper, we will analyse interagency strategic collaboration to determine how it helps maintain regional stability in border management, specifically in the Nigeria-Benin border region. We are going to examine the influence of institutional collaboration, information sharing, joint operations, and policy integration on the efficiency of border control efforts. The research in the present paper follows a qualitative descriptive case study methodology and focuses on the governance of the Nigeria-Benin border. The data for the research were collected from secondary sources and analysed using thematic content analysis, guided by Collaborative Governance Theory and Strategic Management Theory. However, several issues, including institutional competition, disjointed administrative structures, insufficient technology infrastructure, and financial constraints, continue to compromise the effectiveness of cooperative initiatives. As a result, the study concludes that bolstering cooperative governance systems is crucial to fostering long-term regional stability and improving border management efficiency in the area.

Keywords: Border, Governance, Interagency, Collaboration, Nigeria–Benin border, Regional stability

1. Introduction

The development of transnational security threats has become increasingly sophisticated, posing a challenge to states' capacity to manage borders using separate institutional arrangements. Current security challenges, such as smuggling, irregular migration, trafficking in persons, arms proliferation, and criminal activities, increasingly transcend administrative and territorial boundaries, necessitating joint efforts of several institutions and states (Gana, Adamu, and Zakariya'u, 2023; International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2019). Traditional state-centred and agency-specific approaches to addressing current multidimensional security challenges have become increasingly inadequate because these challenges often cut across interconnected social, economic, and political systems (Mbandlwa, 2025). In turn, border regions have become complex governance spaces requiring a collaborative institutional approach that balances economic openness with security needs (Logvinov et al., 2025).

Globalisation and regional integration have accentuated these facts through increased flows of people, goods, services, capital, and information across international borders. Even though globalisation processes create important opportunities for economic growth, regional trade, and socio-economic integration, they also pose significant governance challenges related to transnational insecurity and cross-border vulnerability (Onu & Oche, 2025). In particular, West Africa has witnessed the rise of these challenges due to increased mobility in the region facilitated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services (ECOWAS, 1979). Even though regional integration processes have greatly expanded trade and socio-economic relations among member states, they have also increased the complexity of border management, creating opportunities for both legitimate and illicit cross-border activities (Shedrack & Kelechi, 2025).

The Nigeria-Benin border is one of the most active and strategically important transnational corridors in West Africa. Extending to approximately 773 km, this border is one of the key trade routes in the region. Besides its economic role, the corridor is also important for regional trade and mobility under ECOWAS arrangements. Unfortunately, the same features that enable economic interactions are also what make the border corridor vulnerable to security challenges, including smuggling of petroleum products, trafficking in persons, proliferation of small arms, drug trafficking, and irregular migration (Albert-Makyur & Mbanaso, 2022).

The Nigeria-Benin border corridor is an important case for studying collaborative border governance, as it combines high levels of legitimate and illegitimate interactions with security vulnerabilities and established mechanisms of bilateral and regional cooperation (Chukwudi et al, 2024). The recent example of Nigeria's temporary border closure policy in 2019 only confirms the importance of this approach because even though the objective of the policy was to strengthen border security and counter smuggling, it turned out that the border closure was not enough to tackle the complex transnational security challenge (Akinola & Adesopo, 2021). This experience once again confirmed the idea that effective border governance is increasingly a matter of collaborative response rather than fragmented action by individual agencies.

Traditionally, border governance has been based on the independent operation of customs services, immigration departments, law enforcement, intelligence, and military agencies within their administrative mandate. In turn, modern security challenges require collaborative mechanisms that help increase coordination, facilitate information exchange, enable joint operations, and support integrated policies.

Battisti, Cuomo, and Manganelli (2025) define collaborative governance as a process in which public institutions involve various actors in collective decision-making arrangements to achieve a goal that is hard to achieve individually. At the same time, the effectiveness of collaborative governance depends on principled engagement, mutual trust, shared motivation, and the ability of all parties involved to take joint action (Emerson et al., 2012; Farazmand, 2023). As far as strategic management is concerned, Seo, Bryson, Crosby, Williams, and Cheng (2025) emphasise the importance of institutional alignment, coordinated resource use, organisational flexibility, and strategic thinking in achieving common goals. The combination of Collaborative Governance Theory and Strategic Management Theory is useful for analysis because collaborative governance helps to understand the relational and institutional aspects of interagency interaction. On the other hand, strategic management sheds light on the process by which organisations manage their resources, capabilities, and institutions to pursue common objectives (Joshua et al, 2021).

Despite the rising academic interest in border security and regional cooperation in West Africa, contemporary research mostly concentrates on aspects such as migration dynamics, trade facilitation, regional integration and security issues. However, few studies consider aspects of interagency cooperation which involve coordination, information exchange, joint operations, and policy integration.

In this context, the present paper addresses the problem of interagency cooperation, a key tool for fostering regional stability through border governance at the Nigeria-Benin border. Specifically, this study will look into the impact of interagency cooperation (coordinating, exchanging information, conducting joint operations, and integrating policies) on the efficiency of border governance institutions.

This paper has made three main contributions to the current literature. First, the paper has developed a theoretical perspective by combining Collaborative Governance Theory and Strategic Management Theory in explaining interagency collaboration and its effects. Secondly, the focus of this paper has shifted from institutional actions in isolation to collaborative processes that help manage borders effectively. Lastly, this paper provides an empirical analysis of the governance process at the Nigeria-Benin border.

This paper is further divided into the following sections. The next section discusses the paper's theoretical framework. The next section discusses the methodology followed in this paper. It discusses the methodological strategy and data used in this paper. The next sections discuss results from the areas of institutional coordination, information sharing, joint operations, and policy integration and conclude with policy recommendations.

This version of the paper now reads like a governance conference paper.

2. Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative descriptive case study approach, with the Nigeria-Benin border governance system as the embedded case study. This qualitative case study method was found to be ideal, as it would enable the thorough exploration of the complex interactions and collaborations in the actual governance environment (Yin & Jamali, 2021). The Nigeria-Benin border was deliberately chosen owing to its importance in West African security and economic systems, its role in the ECOWAS free movement system, and its long experience in addressing transnational security threats such as smuggling, irregular migration, trafficking, and illicit trade. (Chidozie et al, 2025).

In the current research, the sources of information are secondary data. To increase the analytical relevance and timeliness of the collected information, the focus was on literature published between 2021 and 2026.

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The analytical process involved:

- familiarisation with documentary materials;
- coding of recurring concepts and patterns;
- grouping codes into broader themes; and
- interpretation of relationships among identified themes.

The major themes that were identified from the analysis include:

- coordinating across institutions;
- intelligence and information sharing;
- operations and enforcement actions;
- integration and harmonisation of policies; and
- barriers to interagency cooperation.

3. Results and Discussion

Institutional Coordination and Border Governance Effectiveness

One of the objectives of the aforementioned studies was to assess the effects of institutional coordination on governance efficiency in the Nigerian-Benin borderlands. The findings reveal that institutional coordination is one of the key factors facilitating effective cross-border security governance.

The analysis of the regional Nigerian-Benin initiatives reveals that coordination between customs authorities, immigration authorities, policing agencies, and other security agencies becomes more effective and efficient. Regional initiatives, such as the implementation of the ECOWAS Integrated Border Management concept and joint border operations, including the Seme-Krake Joint Border Post, foster cooperation through integrated operations, information systems, and coordinated actions. Such approaches facilitate interaction among different agencies and enable them to respond to security threats in a coordinated manner.

On the other hand, the documentation review shows that fragmented institutional arrangements create challenges, including duplication of functions, coordination problems, slow responses to security threats, and other issues that undermine agency efficiency. Such problems prevent agencies from responding to multidimensional security threats (Jatau et al, 2026).

Thus, the results support the conclusions of AbouAssi et al (2021) that cross-sector cooperation helps organisations coordinate resource use and increase organisational efficiency. At the same time, Collaborative Governance Theory argues that cooperation between institutions is the mechanism of collective action that improves governance outcomes (Bates, 2025). Hence, institutional coordination leads to increased efficiency and regional stability.

Information Sharing and Regional Stability

The second objective was to examine how information sharing among agencies working at the border and in security impacts regional stability. The findings reveal information sharing as one of the most crucial variables affecting the success of the collaborative border governance model.

Effective information systems allow for enhancing:

- threat recognition;
- early warning systems;
- reaction;
- decision-making process.

Information sharing helps agencies detect and respond to security threats effectively before they cause trouble. According to a documentary analysis conducted by the African Union Border Programme, insufficient information systems continue to prevent effective border governance across various African countries (African Union, 2016). Furthermore, the International Organisation for Migration notes that the coordination of information among various organisations is key in the management of migration and transnational crimes (IOM, 2019).

The results indicate that information asymmetry creates vulnerabilities within institutions that can be exploited by criminals involved in trafficking, smuggling, arms trading, and immigration. Therefore, an integrated information system is a valuable tool for improving regional security and the effectiveness of border governance.

These findings align with the ideas of Cepiku, Giordano, and Mastrodascio (2024) about how collaboration depends on mutual motivation, trust, and a shared action potential.

Joint Operations and Security Outcomes

The third objective assessed the effects of joint operations on cross-border security management. The results reveal that joint operations greatly enhance the efficiency of institutional activities by enabling coordinated enforcement actions and comprehensive responses to security issues.

Some of the collaborative operational practices include:

- joint border patrolling;
- anti-smuggling operations;
- joint surveillance activities;
- intervention based on intelligence.

Joint operational processes enhance institutional synergy and help eliminate overlap in security responsibilities among participating institutions. According to evidence gathered on border security arrangements in Nigeria-Benin, joint enforcement actions significantly enhance institutional capacities to counter security threats compared to those of isolated institutions (Sowale & Ukeje, 2025; Olomu et al., 2024).

The experience of the 2019 border closure in Nigeria also highlighted the limitations of a unilateral security approach and the need for a coordinated strategy that involves various actors and institutions to ensure border security (Kanu & Olua, 2025; Nebeife et al., 2022). Although temporary restrictions can help achieve specific goals, achieving sustainable results depends on collaboration.

However, the results show that poor logistics, inadequate technological infrastructure, insufficient funding, and unequal institutional capacities across agencies constrain operational efficiency.

From the perspective of Strategic Management, joint operations are the coordinated use of institutional resources, capabilities, and information systems to achieve the highest level of operational efficiency and to advance collective security objectives. The collaborative governance research also confirms that coordinated action positively affects organisational efficiency and problem-solving capacity (Waardenburg et al, 2025).

Policy Integration and Strategic Governance

Objective four sought to assess the effect of policy integration in enhancing governance effectiveness. The findings revealed that policy integration plays an integral role in improving governance effectiveness by harmonising policies and coordinating processes.

Policy integration promotes consistency across institutions and addresses the contradictions that are typically created by the fragmentation of the governance system. Harmonisation of border processes, security, and regional operations promotes coordination within the institution and ensures effective implementation.

For instance, ECOWAS protocols of free movement and regional cooperation form an important policy basis for border governance and security management in West Africa (ECOWAS, 1993). Likewise, the African Union Border Programme emphasises policy harmonisation as an important way of promoting border security and regional integration (African Union, 2016).

In addition, policy integration promotes strategic governance by aligning institutional objectives with regional development and security objectives.

Challenges Limiting Effective Interagency Collaboration

The fifth research objective addressed the challenge of identifying barriers to effective collaboration among institutions within Nigeria-Benin border management systems. Findings identified various existing barriers to effective collaboration:

- agency rivalry;
- bureaucracy;
- lack of effective funding schemes;

- poor technological integration;
- poor intelligence capability;
- policy inconsistency.

Such barriers negatively affect the effectiveness of any collaboration framework and institutions' ability to sustain cooperation. From these findings, it can be concluded that the success of collaborative efforts depends not only on the presence of an institutional framework and policies, but also on the capacity to implement them and the willingness of participating institutions. Emerson et al. (2012) assert that institutional trust and collaboration capability are important determinants of effective governance.

4. Conclusion

In this regard, this research paper investigated the role of interagency cooperation in ensuring regional stability through border governance mechanisms, focusing on Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. In particular, the research evaluated the impact of institutional coordination, information exchange, joint actions, and policy integration on the effectiveness of border governance measures. Accordingly, the results of this study revealed that current challenges in border governance largely exceed the operational capacities of the institutions involved and, therefore, necessitate a collaborative approach involving multiple institutions and actors. According to data gathered along the Nigeria-Benin border corridor, institutional coordination increases the efficiency of measures by eliminating function duplication and enhancing the ability to counter transnational security threats. At the same time, efficient information exchange systems enhance intelligence-gathering, early warning, and responsiveness to emerging threats.

Also, according to the research, the joint operations enhance enforcement capabilities and increase institutional coordination of security measures. The role of policy integration in enhancing governance effectiveness was also important because it contributes to harmonising procedures and ensuring institutional consistency. However, despite these achievements, certain obstacles to successful collaboration remain, namely institutional rivalry, bureaucratic fragmentation, insufficient technological infrastructure, insufficient financial resources, and weak intelligence systems. Therefore, this paper concludes that interagency collaboration is not only about operational security but is also an important part of contemporary governance. The sustainability of regional stability in the corridor between Nigeria and Benin depends largely on the ability of institutions to develop a framework for coordination, communication, and integration in response to security challenges.

5. Recommendations

In light of the results obtained from this research, the following recommendations can be made:

- The governments of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin must develop better mechanisms of coordination within their institutions through the use of formalised interagency mechanisms defining roles, methods of communication and the process of cooperation.
- The border and security agencies should create an integrated information-sharing system, which will allow them to communicate with each other and coordinate actions to deal with security threats.
- The joint operations involving the customs, immigration, police and other security organisations should be organised regularly.
- The governments should provide their border management with the necessary modern infrastructure, such as surveillance systems, databases, biometric systems and an intelligence management system.
- The capacity-building programmes should be implemented by organising joint training sessions for border officials aimed at increasing collaboration and effectiveness of cooperation between organisations.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Covenant University Centre for Research, Innovation, and Discovery (CUCRID) for funding the conference and publication expenses, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers for their informative remarks.

AI Declaration: Grammarly was utilised to improve grammatical consistency and flow.

Ethics Statement: In this study, only secondary sources of data and documentation were utilised; no human subjects were involved in interviews, surveys, or the collection of personally identifiable data. Thus, no ethical

approval or informed consent was required. All sources used in this study have been cited, and the analysis was conducted objectively.

References

AbouAssi, K., Bowman, A.O.M., Johnston, J.M., Bauer, Z. & Tran, L. (2021). Relations, resources, and costs: Exploring cross-sectoral collaboration at the local level in a developing country. *International Public Management Journal*, *24*(5), pp.646–672.

Albert-Makyur, S.D. & Mbanaso, M.U. (2022). Irregular migration and governance: Implications for Nigeria. *Journal of Global Social Sciences*, *3*(11), pp.135–171.

Bates, M. (2025). 'Developing an evidence-based model to implement co-governance', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 84(1), pp. 1–19.

Battisti, L., Cuomo, F. & Manganelli, A. (2025). Collaborative governance arrangements: what makes nature-based solutions endure?. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, *13*(10), pp.1421–1441.

Chidozie, F., Osimen, G.U., Bhadmus, J. & Newo, O. (2025). Sustainable development goals implementation in a post-colonial African state: any future for the African continental free trade area?. *Sustainable Development*, *33*(1), pp.1479–1490.

Chukwudi, C.E., Osimen, G.U., Dele-Dada, M. & Ahmed, T.M. (2024). Conflict and security challenges in the Sahel's semi-arid region: implications for Sahel women's empowerment and the demographic dividend (SWEDD). *Journal of Somali Studies*, *11*(1), pp.81–108.

Economic Community of West African States (2024) *ECOWAS Integrated Border Management Strategy 2024–2028*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission.

Farazmand, A. (2023). 'Collaborative governance and public administration in the era of complexity', *Public Organisation Review*, 23(4), pp. 743–760.

Jatau, M.P., Chidozie, F. & Lenshie, N.E. (2026). When Violence Targets Meaning: Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Cultural Harm, and Human Security in Southeast Nigeria. *Society*, pp.1–15.

Joshua, S., Gberevbie, D. & Onor, K. (2021). Building security through insecurity: The Nigerian military and counter-violent campaigns in the fourth republic. *Armed Forces & Society*, *47*(1), pp.177–200.

Logvinov, P., Buriachenko, A., Gaponiuk, M., Petrukha, S. & Siusko, M. (2025). EU cohesion policy and cross-border cooperation: Strategies for sustainable development of the Carpathian region. *International Journal of Organisational Leadership, 14, pp.* 170–189.

Mbandlwa, Z., 2025. Challenges of International Collaborative Governance in Africa. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, pp.293-302.

Musoni, M., Karkare, P. & Teevan, C. (2024). Cross-border data flows in Africa: Continental ambitions and political realities. *Maastricht: ECDPM*.

Nebeife, C. J., Chinwuba, M. E., & Onwuanibe, J. O. (2022). "ECOWAS regional integration and trans-border security management in Nigeria", *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy*. Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, 3(1), pp. 379–399. doi: 10.53982/jcird. 2022.0301.04-j.

Olomu, B., Saulawa, S.T. & Murtala, S.M. (2024). 'Illicit trade and its implications on national security: An assessment of Seme–Krake Joint Border Post', *Journal BPPK*, 17(3), pp. 243–256.

Olomu, B., Saulawa, S. T. & Murtala, S. M. (2024). "Illicit trade and its implications on national security: an assessment of seme-krake joint border post ", *Journal BPPK: Badan Pendidikan dan Pelatihan Keuangan*, 17(3), pp. 243–256. Available at: https://jurnalbppk.kemenkeu.go.id/jurnalbppk/article/view/886 (Accessed: 8 June 2026).

Onu, F.O. & Oche, I.O. (2025). Globalisation, Transnational Organised Crime, and Nigeria Development Quest: A Desk-Based Survey. In *The Palgrave Handbook of (In) Security and Transnational Crime in Africa* (pp. 155–166). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Osimen, Goddy Uwa, Edwin Ochoga, and Judith Ehibor. "ECOWAS Integration Policy and the Dynamics of Trans-border Mobility in West Africa." *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 660–672.

Seo, D., Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C., Williams, M., & Cheng, Y. (2025). Achieving organisational transformation: Leadership and strategic planning as a structurational process. *International Public Management Journal*, pp.1–19.

Shedrack, C. & Kelechi, N.B. (2025). Border Management and Insecurity in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, *9*(10).

Sowale, A. and Ukeje, C. (2025). 'Hybrid security in Nigeria–Benin borderlands: Formal and informal security actors' collaboration and implications for cross-border security (2010–2023)', *African Security Review*, 34(2), pp. 134–151. doi: 10.1080/10246029.2024.2419065.

Voets, J.J., Brandsen, T., Verschuere, B. and Koliba, C., 2021. Collaborative governance.

Waardenburg, M., Groenleer, M. & de Jong, J. (2025). Performance management in collaborative governance: a review of the literature and synthesis of the challenges. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *48*(4), pp.735–767.

World Customs Organisation (2023) *Coordinated Border Management Compendium*. Brussels: World Customs Organisation.

Yin, J. & Jamali, D. (2021). Collide or collaborate: The interplay of competing logics and institutional work in cross-sector social partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *169*(4), pp.673–694.