

## Defensive walls: A neglected security strategy in northern Nigeria

Abdullahi, Muhammad Maigari <sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Qalam University Katsina, College of Social and Management Sciences, Department of Sociology, Nigeria

\*Corresponding author E-mail: [maigariabdullahi@auk.edu.ng](mailto:maigariabdullahi@auk.edu.ng)

Received: Feb. 3, 2023  
Revised: Feb. 22, 2023  
Accepted: Feb. 24, 2023  
Online: Feb. 28, 2023

### Abstract

Nigeria from 2016 to 2023 has been facing new security challenges, including kidnapping of people for ransom, sporadic shooting of inhabitants, and the rustling of livestock. There is a rich history of how cities in Nigeria, erected defensive walls or fortifications to protect the inhabitants and their property against invaders, criminals, or rustlers centuries before the arrival of the European colonialists to Africa. The incessant attacks on rural communities, highways, and urban centers have compelled criminologists and security experts to rethink and revisit the security strategies adopted in the past and worked effectively in protecting the populace and their belongings. Kingdoms and Empires, as well as Emirates in different parts of Africa, had developed or erected defensive walls or fortifications which if replicated in the 21st century, will ease neighborhood watch and community surveillance and policing. This paper has helped to identify cities in Nigeria with defensive walls and restricted entrances (gates) in places such as Kano, Katsina Sokoto, Zaria, and Benin City. These are some of the cities known for prehistoric warfare and their people were brave and famous in intercity and inter-community battles. The study found that towns and cities in Nigeria and other parts of the world used defensive walls or fortified their jurisdiction against enemies or invaders. The strategy proved effective in protecting their people and property. Building defensive walls or fortifications of towns and cities that are facing acute security challenges in Nigeria can enable the Government and community members to protect the residents. The use of defensive walls will make the use of different mass surveillance tactics much easier because the areas are cordoned off hence patrol, searching, and arrest of criminals. Therefore, the researcher recommended that instead of spending huge amounts on the procurement of weapons by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Government should erect or build fences that make criminal investigation more effective hence combat crime and criminals.

© The Author 2023.  
Published by ARDA.

*Keywords:* Armed banditry, Kidnapping, Fortification, Defensive Walls, Security Strategy, Mass surveillance

### 1. Introduction

Fortification walls, also known as defensive walls or battlements, are structures built to provide security and protection. They are typically constructed around a settlement or fortress to defend against external threats such as enemy attacks or invasions. They vary in size, design, and materials used, depending on their purpose and the resources available in the society concerned. They may be made of stone, brick, earth, or a combination of materials, and may include features such as towers, gates, and trenches. Throughout history in different parts of the world, fortification walls have played an important role in the defense and security of cities, towns, and other settlements. They have been used to protect against various threats, including military

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) that allows others to share and adapt the material for any purpose (even commercially), in any medium with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.



attacks, raids, and sieges. In modern times, fortification walls are still used in some parts of the world for security purposes, although they are often supplemented with other forms of defense such as soldiers, guards, and electronic surveillance. Apart from security purposes, fortification walls can also be used for symbolic purposes, such as to mark the boundaries of a city or to serve as a symbol of power and prestige. However, they can also be a source of conflict and division, as they may be used to segregate or isolate certain groups or communities.

At the turn of the 21st century, countries in the world are facing both internal and external security threats which demand different measures to protect their citizens and territorial integrity. Despite advancements in science and technology as well as the manufacturing of sophisticated weapons by developed and developing countries, and huge spending on the military, some countries continue to build fortification walls for defense purposes. In 1945, after World War II, there were only seven [7] nations-state in the world that built walls along their international boundaries. However, increasing demand for protection has increased the number of countries with fortified frontiers to 75 in the world. Some of the popular historical walls in the world are the Great Wall of China, the Great Wall of Zimbabwe and the Taj Mahal in India. Among the fortified fences in the world, the Benin Wall in Nigeria was adjudged as the longest, in the world with an estimated 16,000 kilometers. The wall encompassed 6,500 square kilometers of the vast land of the Kingdom. The purpose of the Walls of Benin is to protect the kingdom against marauding invaders which was the reason why the Walls were used as a demarcation of the entire Kingdom's boundaries hence regulating the in and out of the people in the Benin Kingdom [11].

This paper aims to examine how defence walls were used in different parts of the world to provide security for the residents. Similarly, another objective of the paper is to explain how communities in Nigeria had abandoned the building of defense walls making them vulnerable to attacks from rampaging armed bandits, kidnapers and cattle rustlers.

## **2. Context of the problem**

Nigeria is facing a multitude of security challenges, ranging from ethnic violence, religious conflict and religious fundamentalism which has transformed into an insurgency in the Northeast part of Nigeria. Political and ethnic violence has been replaced by another form of crime which is now prevalent in Northern Nigeria as of 2022. Armed groups hiding in forest reserves and mountainous areas in turn, attack communities and kidnap commuters and residents for ransom. The activities of the Islamic fundamentalist in the Northeast and kidnapers in different parts of Nigeria have forced the Federal Government of Nigeria to deploy armed security personnel to virtually 34 out of the 36 States in the country. With the stoppage of the building of defense walls in Nigeria, communities, cities and towns have become defenseless, and easily accessible to all forms of criminals. It is within this context, the paper attempt to sample some defense walls in the world to see how they were used as very effective means for protecting the residents and their property.

## **3. Literature review**

### **3.1. Defense walls and protection of residents**

A researcher has assessed the impact of the defense wall called the fortification wall of the Kolonna VIII in Sri Lanka. The findings revealed that the fortification was part of the security measures to protect the city against external attacks or aggression. The Walls were made of stones, irons, and bricks made from mud and timbers [4] like defensive walls built in some cities in Northern Nigeria.

In Russian Federation, the castle (Narin-Kala), and fortress cities which are 40 kilometers of defensive fortifications make up Derbent Fortress as an architectural structure (mountain wall). The fortress walls preventing access to the sea have been preserved and remain as historical buildings. Strategically, the Fortress is situated in the Caspian Passage's most congested and exposed area. Two parallel fortress walls that ended at the citadel obstructed the passage along the seashore. The citadel is located on the Jangar mountain ridge's highest, seaward ridge. Established in the fifth century. Up to the nineteenth century, it was a defense structure. Steep declensions protect the citadel's northern and western edges [12]. The Derbent Fortress was not only for decoration of the city but served as a protection against invaders or enemies of the government. Impliedly, the Derbent Walls served two purposes, an aesthetic structure for the beautification and protection of the city.

In his doctoral dissertation, succinctly examined the evolution of defensive walls in some cities in Syria [6]. The study found that the conflict between Ebla and Mari, the invasion of the Akkadian empire Upper Land' the Khabur and Middle Euphrates region and Armanum and Ebla were some of the reasons for the building of defensive walls in Syria. Ditches, fort and fortresses, gates, buttresses, towers and bastions, ramparts, fortification walls, glacis, revetment, retaining and casemate walls were found in Syrian Jazirah, Euphrates region, Northern Levant. The work of Jabbour showed the necessity to protect the cities as a result of inter-city conflict compelled leaders at that time to design and erect defensive walls for the protection of their rule and dynasty as well as citizens.

Furthermore, a study has revealed that Tell el-Retaba Wall which is located in a high (Arabic: "Ras") position on the eastern edge of an ancient lake/marsh, had served as a strategic location in antiquity for the defense of the eastern Delta from the Gisir and Serapeum sills while also being able to control north-south movement through the middle of modern-day Wadi Tumilat [5]. The construction of the Tell el-Retaba Wall revealed the defense system used in the ancient era in Egypt. Despite the existence of military and sophisticated weapons in the 19th and 20th centuries, the defensive wall Tell el-Retaba Wall was used by the rulers and their soldiers as a defense strategy.

A study on fortification in the Arabian States found that as a direct result of emerging transnational concerns including terrorism, irregular migration, drug trafficking, and weapons smuggling, the post-cold war era has seen a dramatic growth in the fortification and militarization of territorial borders. There are around 65 border walls in use today; the majority were constructed in the past three years, primarily in the Arab World and Eastern Europe. Although the circumstances and purposes for the border fortifications of the Arab States vary, their overall design and building methods are similar. Similarly, the different content of the world has their peculiar reason for building defensive walls [8]. Security objectives, particularly the prevention of the entry of armed organizations, are the main reasons for the fortification of Arab borders. The prohibition of irregular immigration remains the major goal in other regions of the world, particularly in North America and Eastern Europe. The above findings have revealed that the fortification of States has dual reasons depending on the prevailing situation and need of the State [8].

For example, the Moroccan-Algerian border has been closed since 1994 as a result of an armed attack on a hotel in Marrakech, which Morocco blamed on Algeria's security forces. The Moroccan-Algerian border is currently being fortified simultaneously on both sides and without coordination between the two close neighbors. The rivalry between Morocco and Algeria for regional sway and their numerous political divisions, particularly concerning the Western Sahara issue, hindered the two nations from cooperating and coming to a consensus on a common approach to securing and maintaining their borders. Morocco started construction of a barrier in 2014 along 150 kilometers of its northeastern border with Algeria. Although Morocco and Algeria started fortifying their shared land borders at the same time, the priorities of their goals varied depending on the unique problems of each nation. The primary goal of Algeria's policy to control its borders is to combat the security threat posed by cross-border armed groups, particularly with Mali, Libya, and Tunisia. In contrast, it is only a secondary goal about its border with Morocco, where the primary goal is to combat smuggling, particularly of gasoline. Before the extensive fortification project that the two nations had pursued over the previous three years, almost everything was being smuggled through the Morocco-Algeria border [8].

Apart from the orthodox building of defense walls, in the 21st century, some countries have started using barbed-wire fences. The Algerian government has started constructing a wire barbed fence along its border with Tunisia and Libya as a result of security issues on this frontier. The 350-kilometer-long, 3-meter-high fence served the same defensive purposes as fortifications in the majority of other Arab nations. The main reason Algeria tightened control on its borders with Libya and Tunisia was because of the unrest in Libya's security situation. Numerous cross-border armed organizations that have conducted operations in neighboring countries continue to see Libya be a favorable environment for their activities. Regarding the short-term goals, the new Algerian security plan aimed to stop armed group infiltration and prohibit the smuggling of weapons into Algerian territory. It is important to note that during the past 20 years, Algeria has seen several bombings of public and private facilities as well as kidnappings of foreign nationals by armed organizations across the country's extensive border, particularly in the south [8].

Furthermore, fortification became necessary in Tunisia due to the turbulence in Libya's security. The Tunisian government started constructing security fortifications on its border with Libya in April 2015. It is a double border barrier that was constructed parallel to one another using water ditches and a sand wall. This

fortification, which stretches 220 kilometers along the roughly 500-kilometer border between Tunisia and Libya, was constructed within five kilometers of the boundary. The fortification cost roughly \$75 million to construct and was supported financially and technically by several countries. In comparison to the costs of certain other border fences, such as the Saudi fences along its borders with Yemen and Iraq, this expense is comparatively low. Due to the escalating security disturbance in Libya, Tunisia adopted this security policy. The attack on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis in March 2015, which was carried out by terrorists who entered Tunisia across its border with Libya, prompted the decision to secure the border. The main goal of the border barrier between Tunisia and Libya is to prevent armed group members from entering Tunisia from Libya. Since then, these defenses have been strengthened and updated by Spanish authorities employing cutting-edge technology, such as infrared cameras, video and audio sensors, observation towers, and radar systems. The EU's policy of hardening its external frontiers against irregular migration includes the construction of barriers at Ceuta and Melilla. Over the past 20 years, thousands of sub-Saharan African migrants have made these two enclaves, which serve as a de facto border of the EU in North Africa, their final destination [8].

In Israel, the "Old City," which is central to Jerusalem, is enclosed by massive walls constructed by Sulayman the Magnificent in the 16th century. Jerusalem began to build suburbs in the 1860s, just like many other cities in the Middle East and the West. The northeastern portion of the expanded city and the Mount of Olives are collectively referred to as "East Jerusalem," which is home to a sizable Palestinian population. It is separated from the West Bank's Palestinian villages by the Israeli defense wall and from West Jerusalem's predominately Jewish neighborhood by North-South Road 1[9]. Similarly, the paper has identified defensive walls in Yemen, Syria, Iran and other parts of the Middle East and explained the walls served defense and decorative purposes in the ancient and present eras.

The research was conducted on the architecture of defense, and fortified settlements of the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age. The study revealed how in those eras, leaders or rulers relied heavily on the construction of fortified as a protection against enemies and beautification of their territories. Some of the Walls identified by Burke in his study were still existing in the Arabian Peninsula and near the East [2].

A study has found that Thermisi Castle was constructed on the precipitous ridge overlooking the nearby salt ponds and sea routes of Ermionis in Eastern Peloponnese, Greece. The Acropolis and an exterior defensive wall make up the fortification, which guards the settlement and has residential ruins outside of the walling system. The main objective for building the Thermisi castle has been explained in the work of Simou, Klotsa, and Koutropoulos. The researchers stated that the fortification's location is unquestionably naturally protective and vital to the defense of the saltpans that extend to the south. The salinities were so significant that they were referred to in a 1451 text as "the most notable salinities in all of the Levant, from which one can mine an ore, Pozo." In sum, it was for a defensive purpose [10].

The building of walls or barriers has a historical origin from the ancient history of man on earth. The earliest civilization erected defensive walls to protect their territories against invaders. The traditions have defied changes that come with scientific and industrial revolutions and still in the 21st century, nation-states still construct frontier walls for both migration and security reasons. Statistics have shown that after the attack on some strategic places in the United States of America on 11th September 2001, there were about thirty countries built defense walls for security reasons [11]. Similarly, the researcher identified five reasons why countries build defensive walls. These are: protecting the country against smugglers of contraband goods, protecting the country against the importation of illegal weapons and pharmaceutical products, checking the flow of immigrants and unregistered labour force, prevent the influx of terrorists and diseases.

Empirical evidence has revealed that from 1989 when the Wall of Berlin was destroyed, there are about forty countries in the world that erected defense walls to protect their citizens against security threats. Morocco has built a security fence of 2,700 kilometers which separated it from Western Sahara and it is one of the longest active defense fences in the world. It took the Moroccan Government seven years to complete the construction of the defense wall, that is, from 1980 to 1987 [11].

Similarly, the Spanish Government has erected a perimeter security fence that separated Ceuta and Malilla from Morocco. The 20 kilometers wall was built in the year 2000 to prevent irregular migrants from entering Spanish cities situated at the border with Morocco. The Spanish authorities had installed Closed Circuit Camera in addition to barbed wires, and motion and noise sensors to detect any attempt to penetrate or destroy the fence by migrants and criminals [11].

In East Africa, the fear of attacks from a terrorist group, Al-Shabab has led the Kenyan Government 2015 to embark on the construction of Seven Hundred Kilometers of defensive fences. The fence aims to protect the two coastal cities of Manderu and Kiunga which serve as a route for the Al-Shabab terrorists to enter Kenya from Somalia [11].

However, apart from security purposes or reasons, some countries built security fences to prevent their countries from disease. That is, it is for the health of the citizens and some for the livestock. This is the reason for the electrified fence put in place by the Government of Botswana to prevent the influx of livestock disease from Zimbabwe. The 480 Kilometers and 2.50 meters high fence was erected to prevent animals from Zimbabwe to spread foot and mouth disease to Botswana. South Africa has also erected an electrified fence base at its border with Zimbabwe for the safety and migration of wildlife at Kruger Park. A 137 kilometers wall or fence was built between South Africa and Mozambique to prevent fighters of the African National Congress (ANC) who have an operational base in the Mozambican territories to enter South Africa. The fence also covered some parts of the border between South Africa and Swaziland, at Jeppe Reef Mbuzine [11].

The Spanish city of Cadiz is known for its fortified or defensive wall. The city is covered with three defensive walls with an ocean on the fourth side. This made the city of Cadiz the most protected city in the history of Spain. An empirical study found that in 1578, King Felipe II of Spain decided to fortify the City of Cadiz as a result of threats of attacks from other Empires in Europe, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. In response to the King's decision, the construction of the fortified walls was handled by an Italian Engineer Captain Fratin. The city of Cadiz remained the only Spanish city that was not attacked at the time of the peninsular war with France [1].

Another has examined the impact of the Spanish defensive wall in Manila, in present-day Philippines. In 1571, Spain approved the construction of defensive walls in their colonies in Asia. As a result of King Philip II, Manila was fortified for security reasons. Historical evidence has shown that Spain erected 14 defensive walls in their former colonies for protection and Manila, is among them. This indicated the importance and use of a defensive wall to protect a city or the country against invaders [13].

Similarly, it was found that defensive fences and walls are from an economic perspective. They stated that for millennia, humans on all continents have been erecting walls. The primary reason for their early construction was to protect city-states against armies of undesired nomadic neighbors. A massive physical barrier also served as a symbol of political authority, riches, and strength, a claim to territory, and a way to determine who belonged within and who was kept out. Walls have ranged in size from small barriers between communities to gigantic fortresses between kingdoms throughout history [14].

As ancient towns spread over the world, so did their walls. In 3000 BC, a 9-kilometer wall surrounded the world's greatest metropolis, the Sumerian city of Uruk in modern Iraq, which had a population of 80,000 people. Around 2030 BC, the Sumerians built a gigantic 160 km defensive barrier across their realm to keep the Amorite nomadic tribes out. It was successful for a few years until invaders either smashed through the wall or just walked around it to destroy Sumerian settlements. Around 460 BC, the ancient Greeks built a variety of fortifications, including the siege-proof long walls of Athens. During a conflict with Sparta, the fortifications extended from the city to the harbor, but the city surrendered after its Navy was crushed at sea.

The Roman Empire fortified its boundaries with a variety of wall-and-ditch fortifications built of turf and stone known as limes between 83 and 260 AD. Limes were employed as customs checkpoints for the passage of goods and people, as well as to keep barbarian tribes out of the Roman Empire. Among the most well-known limes are Scotland's 118 km Hadrian's Wall and 60 km Antonine Wall, a 750 km wall in North Africa, and Germany's 568 km Limes Germanicus. The Roman Empire significantly invested in its military, and its military conquests provided a stable supply of slave labor to service the walls for a time. Expansion slowed over time, as pressure from neighboring barbarians grew. Overspending on the military and walls caused a financial crisis and a slew of negative consequences, including harsh taxation and inflation, widespread tax evasion, and a widening gap between rich and poor, predicting the country's eventual demise. Although Roman Limes provided a good defense against unorganized thieves from Britain to the Arab World, they did not defend the empire from the better-organized barbarian armies of Vandals, Alans, and Goths.

From as early as 2000 BC, almost all cities in Northern China had defensive walls. Larger cities with increased economic activity had longer walls, whereas frontier cities with a larger risk of attack had stronger walls. The defensive role of the walls may have contributed to a perceived sense of security, attracting more people and businesses to the walled cities, which still have a higher population and job densities today.

Around the year 1200, the little Mayan city of Tulum in Mexico was enclosed on three sides by a 740-meter-long wall for defense against larger city-states. In 1281, Japan constructed the Genko Borui stonewall against a Mongol invasion, which is considered to have contributed to the invaders' downfall. Between 1500 and 1800, the Russian empire defended its southern frontiers with felled wood barricades with ditches and earth mounds, palisades, watch towers, and forts, gradually shifting the barriers south as the empire expanded. These fortifications were safeguarded against Tatars and other nomads who were active participants in the slave trade, capturing and selling thousands of Eurasians into slavery to the Ottoman Empire. They also stopped domestic runaway serfs from fleeing and established additional peasant farming land.

Furthermore, with the increased need to protect citizens against terrorists in the 21st century, different countries facing threats from terrorists started erecting a defensive wall. This is evident when the ISIS insurgency began to threaten regional stability in the Middle East, fifteen new security walls and fences were built to the map around the region between 2002 and 2010. Israel erected security walls between itself and the West Bank and Egypt. Egypt constructed an over-and-underground wall with Gaza. Saudi Arabia constructed an 885-kilometer security wall with Iraq, as well as barriers with the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Jordan, and Yemen. The United Arab Emirates built barriers along its borders with Saudi Arabia and Oman (migration, smuggling, security). Jordan constructed fences with Syria and Iraq. Iran has surrounded Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (security, smuggling). According to Israel Defense Forces, the Israeli-Egyptian fence was effective in curbing the influx of illegal migrants from Africa [14].

Outside the Middle East, eight new walls were built: between Brunei and Malaysia (smuggling and migration), Myanmar and Bangladesh (security), Lithuania and Belarus (smuggling), Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (smuggling), and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (smuggling) (smuggling). Russia erected a barbed wire fence along its border with Georgia (conflict). In Africa, Botswana erected a border fence with Zimbabwe in response to a rush of refugee migrants accused of stealing employment, committing crimes, and spreading HIV. For security purposes, some European countries decided to fortify their international borders. This was done to prevent irregular migrants from having access to their countries. For example, there were seven migration fences were built in Europe in response to the massive migration of Middle Eastern and North African refugees to the EU between 2011 and 2018. Macedonia erected a border fence with Greece. On their borders with Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria have erected barbed wire fences. Hungary built a 175-kilometer fence along its border with Serbia and a 350-kilometer fence along its border with Croatia. Slovakia built a border fence with Croatia, and Austria built one with Slovenia. The United Kingdom funded a 13-foot-high barrier in the French port city of Calais to keep refugees and migrants out of the country [14].

Additionally, Oman/Yemen, Turkmenistan/Afghanistan, and Pakistan/Afghanistan are among the nine new security fences built in the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey and Syria, Turkey and Iran, Israel and Jordan, Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Tunisia and Libya, and Algeria and Morocco. Seven additional fences were built in Eastern Europe and Asia as a result of regional conflicts and land disputes: Azerbaijan/Armenia, Ukraine/Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania built barriers with the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, Kyrgyzstan/Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan, and China/North Korea [14].

Estonia/Russia, Latvia/Belarus, Poland/Belarus, Poland/Ukraine, Hungary/Romania, Turkey/Iraq, India/Bhutan, Malaysia/Brunei, Malaysia/Indonesia, Russia (Crimea)/Ukraine, and Algeria/Libya have all announced future fence construction. Smuggling, territorial claims, and animal disease control appear to be the primary motivators. Except for those erected by the US between Guantanamo and Cuba, Latin America is devoid of border barriers [14].

### **3.2. Defensive walls in Nigeria: A neglected security strategy**

From around the year 800, several fortifications were built in Nigeria spanning several centuries. Benin-city was possibly the world's greatest urban planning project at the time, a web of 16,000 km of walls that encircled an entire kingdom made up of hundreds of interconnected cities and villages. Europeans demolished Benin's walls in 1897. Sungbo Eredo, the other great wall in the area, was a 160 km wall and ditch earthworks financed by a wealthy queen about the year 1000, meant for defense, unification, and as a shrine for spirit worship.

The Benin earthwork, which can reach heights of up to 18 meters, depicts an intricate design comprised of a series of inner and outer interconnected circles, as well as an impressive architectural combination of ramparts and moats. The outer walls were made of earthen embankments, which were supplemented by ditches that

served a dual purpose: in addition to being an integral part of the walls, they also served as a quarry, storing material used to expand the walls. The exterior barricade was essentially made of earth excavated from ditches dug to create inner moats.

There are notable cities in Nigeria apart from the Benin Kingdom discussed above that were fortified before the coming of European colonialists arrived in Nigeria. These cities include Kano, Zaria, Sokoto, Katsina, Lafia and Gombe as well as Bauchi. There are also smaller towns in Northern Nigeria that were fortified such as Bichi and Tsanyawa in Kano State, and Keffi in Nasarawa State. There were walls erected during the period of Islamic revival by Usmanu Danfodiyo and some, were built by Kings and Rulers for the protection of their throne and subjects against enemies. At different times, rulers of these cities fortified their areas of jurisdiction with fences constructed with mud mixed with stones. The fortified cities and towns in Nigeria were relatively safe for the inhabitants because the existence of the defensive walls ensured that the movement of people in and out of the cities or towns was under the watch of the guards stationed at all city or town gates. This is the reason why to date (2023), in cities such as Zaria, Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Bichi, Rano, Hadejia, Bauchi, and Lafia, there exist gates of doors named after people or historic events. In most cases, the residential areas around the city gates bear the name of the gates.

The building of defensive walls of fortification of cities or towns before colonialism in Nigeria, particularly in Northern Nigeria is a testimony of how traditional rulers in pre-colonial Nigeria developed an effective strategy to protect their throne, wealth and people against threats from other rulers and kingdoms.

With the arrival of European colonialists to protectorates named in 1914 as Nigeria, Britain destroyed the existing system of governance in Northern, Southern and Eastern Protectorates. The colonial government took the administrative and security aspects from the traditional rulers. This marked the end of the construction or building of defensive walls in different parts of Nigeria. Communities resorted to formal security operatives for protection instead of the traditional fighters and police under the leadership of the Emir or King, depending on the area. When cities and towns were fortified, the guards at the gates have techniques of identifying their members and outsiders with the use of language, physique and unique facial and body marks. Apart from the guards checking the commuters, there was well-armed personnel stationed at each gate, battle-ready to repel any attempt by invading enemies or criminals.

#### **4. Research methodology**

The researcher utilized secondary data from documented materials, both academic and organizational in this research. The idea is to use documented historical works on fortification or defense walls in different parts of the world to have an in-depth understanding of how they were used in the past and how such defense walls can be useful in Nigeria, particularly in areas that are besieged by terrorists and different armed groups. In this regard, the historical research design is the appropriate design for this research. This is because historical research design describes and explains past events (in this case, historical use of defense walls) to understand the present (to examine the positive impact of defense wall in securing the life and property of the citizens) and anticipate the future effects (to examine how the building of defense walls will assist security personnel in fighting terrorists and criminals).

#### **5. Results and discussion**

The defense history of defensive walls or fortification of cities is replete with positive success. The defensive walls mapped out in this study using social mapping have buttressed the effectiveness of fortification of towns and cities against enemies or criminals. States or Local Government Areas in Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna and Niger are vulnerable to attacks because different armed groups and non-state actors living in forests on the outskirts of those areas easily enter and attack the residents at will because of the non-existence of any walls or fence that will compel them to enter the town or city through gates. The findings of this study from the documented evidence revealed that kidnapping and ransacking a fortified city or town is difficult because each gate has guards and standing armies. The resistance that kidnappers or bandits will face at the gate will enable those at the city centre to take emergency measures or send reinforcement of fighters. Additionally, the chances of armed criminals entering the city and community to steal livestock and kidnap people and escape will be minimal because the residents and armies will block gates that invaders will follow to go out of the community. The findings of [3] have validated the findings in Nigeria where Kingdoms and Emirates adopted the fortification of their towns and cities as an effective security measure. An effort was made to improve fortresses' defensive qualities during the Linid and Fimid periods. This came about as a

result of various conflicts, particularly those in which the Fimids were involved. These conflicts included those with the Byzantines, who launched several campaigns to retake former Christian lands, with independent rulers who had settled particularly in Syria, and with the Seljuks, who in the eleventh century conquered Iraq, a sizable portion of Syria, and Palestine. However, the latter's coastal regions were dominated by the Fimids, who put a lot of effort into building defenses there. From Ascalon in the south to Jabla in the north, along with certain inland towns like Jerusalem and Tiberias, they all had their defenses updated [3].

The use of defensive walls in Nigeria before colonialism in the 18th century had served as a veritable security measure that shielded different communities against different forms of criminals within and outside. This correlated with the findings which explained how in Cyprus, the city of Nicosia was fortified and such fortification gave the city maximum protection against domestic and external enemies [7]. It was concluded that the lower portion of the walls, which were solely buttressed by stone, was constructed of mud-brick. The walls at Nicosia were restored by the Ottomans, who also covered the upper portion with stones. The Famagusta Walls were renowned across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa for having been built over many centuries as the city expanded, underwent political upheaval, and adopted new military equipment. They provide a vital record of military design and adaptation to evolving rulers and technology.

### **5.1 Impact of defensive walls on Nigeria's security**

It could be deduced from the above findings that the use of defensive walls or fortification of communities that are facing incessant attacks from armed groups in Nigeria would provide a modicum of protection. This is because when the communities are fortified, the armed groups would not have access to the residential areas at will, without following restricted gates or routes which have stationed guards and armed security personnel. However, building defensive walls has its disadvantages, ranging from the cost of building, maintenance and sustainability of the policy as a security strategy in Nigeria where most of the new government introduces new policy and discard the existing ones.

Despite the huge cost of installing sound sensors, cameras and electrification of the bricks fence or in the case of barbed wire fence. The fortification of communities will enable the security operatives to carry out mass surveillance and reconnaissance surveillance with efficiency. The use of old methods of stop and search by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) would be effective when the areas are cordoned-off with fences. Similarly, another aspect that the benefit of a defensive wall outweighed the cost is in conducting mass surveillance. The security operatives such as undercover cops known in Nigeria Department of State Security Services (DSSS), NPF and the military will track and monitor the movement of people both innocents and suspects within an area surrounded by a fence or wall. This measure was adopted by the Israeli Government to prevent the infiltration of the Jihadists from Palestinian territories to Israel. The barriers had kept in check the movement of people in and out of the West Bank and Gaza as well as Jerusalem. The barriers have contributed to the success of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in preventing and intercepting suicide bombers from entering Israeli territories. With the barriers, the Israeli Government under Ariel Sharon, Ehud Barak and Benjamin Netanyahu used the barriers to achieve both security and political objectives. In this sense, with the return of defensive walls to Nigeria, the government will achieve both security and political goals, protecting the citizens against kidnapers, cattle rustlers and armed bandits will increase the legitimacy of the government and the popularity of the leaders who implemented the policy.

## **6. Conclusions**

Fortification of cities or towns from the ancient to the modern era has proved to be an effective security strategy adopted by different countries in the world. Nigeria, some countries which erected defensive walls had practiced the fortification of cities and towns before the arrival of the European colonialists in the 18th century. With the change of administration during colonialism from the traditional style of leadership to the colonial style, the British colonial administration in Nigeria abandoned the idea of building defensive walls to protect the inhabitants. The current security challenges in Nigeria which are manifested in the form of hostage-taking for ransom, and rustling of livestock have exposed how unprotected towns or cities are in Nigeria. The population of security operatives in Nigeria is insufficient to be present in all villages, towns, or cities and this gives the criminals a free hand to operate and launch successful attacks and kidnappings of people. The extant literature examined in this paper has shown how effective defensive walls are, in protecting the target population. The defensive walls or fortifications often simplify internal security management wherever they are erected. Therefore, the revival of and construction of new defensive walls in Nigeria will

enable the citizens and security personnel to effectively monitor the designated entrance and exit to towns and cities hence achieving the goals of mass surveillance in the time of heightened security challenges in 2023.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no any known financial or non-financial competing interests in any material discussed in this paper.

### Funding information

No funding was received from any financial organization to conduct this research.

### Acknowledgments

Dr. Ibrahim Sani Kankara, Department of History, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria.

Dr. Nuhu Alamuna, Department of Nigerian Languages, Kaduna State University, Nigeria.

### References

- [1] C. R. Bellido, P.G. Pérez. R. L. Panti6n, "The future of fortifications in the city of C6diz: opportunities and strategies for an urban regeneration", *WIT Transactions on The Built Environment*, vol. 123, pp. 135-147, 2012.
- [2] A. A. Burke, *The Architecture of Defense: fortified settlements of the Levant during the middle bronze age*, Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the division of the Humanities, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the University of Chicago, 2004.
- [3] K. D'hulster, K., J. Van Steenberghe, U. Vermeulen, "Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk eras", *VIII. Proceedings of the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd International Colloquium Organized at Ghent University in May 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 2016.
- [4] W. Gauß, *Kolonna on Aigina: The development of a fortified late middle and early late bronze age settlement*, Austrian Archaeological Institute, Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2021.
- [5] J. Hudec, M. Āerný, E. Fulajt6r, K. Fareed, M. Nour El-Din, "Discoveries on fortifications at Tell El-Retaba", *Asian & African Studies*, vol. 27, no 1, 2018.
- [6] A. Jabbour, *The evolution of defensive elements in the Syrian cities and kingdoms during the Bronze Age: Syrian Jazirah, Euphrates region, Northern Levant, Between the Early and Middle Bronze Age*, PhD Dissertation, Department of Ancient Sciences Near Eastern Archaeology, Sapienza University of Rome, 2020.
- [7] Z. 6ng6l, "Historical development of Nicosia fortifications and its texture along with the fortification walls", *Defensive Architecture of the Mediterranean XV to XVIII Centuries*, 2016.
- [8] S. Saddiki, "The fortification of the Arab states' borders in the sub-regional contexts", *Paix et S6curit6 Internationales - Journal of International Law and International Relations*, No 6, 2018.
- [9] A. M. Salama, "Doha: between making an instant city and skirmishing globalization", *MEI-Viewpoints of the Middle East Institute*, pp. 42-45, 2008.
- [10] X. Simou, V. Klotsa, G. Koutropoulos, "Observations on the architecture of Thermisi fortification in Argolid from 15th to 18th century", *Proceedings of the International Conference on Modern Age Fortifications of the Mediterranean Coast*, Editorial Publicacions Universitat d'Alacant, 2017.
- [11] J. A. M. Tebas, *African frontiers: walls to face threats*, Document Analysis, Instituto Espaol de Estudios Estrat6gicos, jan. 2016.
- [12] UNESCO Citadel, ancient city and fortress buildings of Derbent, Commission of the Russian Federation for City of Derbent Administration Russian Committee of ICOMOS, 2001.

- [13] J. J. Verdejo, J. M. Cabeza-Lainez, J. A. Pulido-Arcas, C. Rubio-Bellido, "Spanish fortifications in Asia: A case study of Intramuros District in Manila - current situation and future prospects", *WIT Transactions on the Built Environment*, No 143, pp. 387-398, 2014.
- [14] V. Vernon, K. F. Zimmermann, *Walls and Fences: A Journey through History and Economics*, In the Economic Geography of Cross-Border Migration. Springer, Cham, 2021.