

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF NIGERIA'S BORDER CLOSURE ON NEIGHBOURING WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES, 2019 – 2021

KABIR AHMED RUFAL, AISHA USMAN GUMI & RILWAN ABDULLAHI ALIYU

Department of Political Science and International Studies, Faculty of Social Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
alkhamees.abu.edu.ng@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study assesses the Impact of Nigeria's Border closure on Neighboring West African Countries 2019-2021. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the reasons for Nigerian border closure with Neighboring West African Countries, to find out the benefits of Nigeria's border closure with Neighboring West African Countries, to find out the implications of Nigerian border closure with Neighboring West African Countries, to find out how Nigeria border closure with Neighboring West African Countries affect Nigeria socio-economic relations. The medium used for collecting data was the used of secondary data using comparative advantage theory as basis for analysis. The result shows that, Nigeria which share boundaries with Benin, Niger and closed all of its land borders in order to ensure total control over what comes into the country. The result also shows that border closure boosted the government's revenue as more duties were collected on the increased volume of goods that entered the country legally through the ports, but the fall in supply of rice led to food price inflation that impacted strongly negatively on Nigerian consumers. The result of the study also shows that Nigerian border closure has impacted on trade and businesses in and outside the country. The result also shows that inflation rate has increase, unemployment among the border communities and rural farmers, small scale businesses are nowhere to be found. The study shows that in various nooks and crannies of Nigeria, the price of one (1) bag of 50 Kg of rice has skyrocketed from less than Ten thousand naira (N10, 000) to Thirty thousand naira (N30, 000) roughly more than the entire monthly salary of Nigerian who receives the minimum wage of N18, 000 and those living in extreme poverty in Nigeria were estimated to 87 million people. Form the data analyzed, it was also revealed that the general inflation especially on food stuff was recorded to be increased to 13.51 % following the land border closure through which majority of the food stuff, items and grains were being imported to Nigeria via Niger and Benin Republics. The study recommends that policy of border closure should always consider the poor people who are the majority in country and became subjects of hardship following the closure land border.

1.1 Introduction

Border closure has a significant impact on Nigeria economy and her immediate neighbors, Nigeria has remained one of the key importers for decades. Management of borders in Nigeria has changed from traditional perspectives to international (universal) with colonial acquisition of territories and independence of modern African states. Babatula (2014) asserts that Border relations, migration, inter-state relations and border trading in Africa however did not result into any major crisis until various Governments of independent African States began to deal with issues related to boundary management, claims and counterclaims over national territories in the determination of crossing lines or borderlines in frontiers of new African states.

Regional trade has played a significant role in the development of Nigeria economy and attracts domestic and foreign direct investment in the country. Therefore, the government recently closed Nigeria-Benin republic borders in order to boost her economy. On October 2019, the Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Customs Service, rtd Col Hameed Ali, told newsmen in Abuja that Nigeria had closed its land borders to all movement of goods, giving no timeline for re-opening them (Vanguard, 2019).

Nigeria's economy is unparalleled in Africa for its complexity and dynamism. It is potentially the engine of growth for an entire region, both as a centre of production and as a consumer of neighbouring countries' exports. On account of its size and its location between Central and West Africa, the country is at the core of the economic transformation of the sub-Saharan region. Nigeria is several times the size of Benin and even the other countries bordering her, which makes Nigeria the most likely destination for the rice imported by Benin. This, however, does not reflect in Nigeria's import figures which provide further credence to the fact that such import was mostly smuggled into the country from Benin.

A large volume of goods from around the world enters Nigeria across these borders. These volumes of goods are mostly unrecorded, untaxed, informal and difficult to regulate, as are the flows of money that finance them. One of the most vital border regions in West Africa is the frontier between Nigeria and Benin. Both economies depend to a large extent on their cross-border trade, illegal and legal. As an essential part of the Abidjan-Lagos transport and migration corridor, it also represents a key transport vein in the ECOWAS region.

The Seme border is named after the Nigerian border town that links Nigeria to other West African countries via Benin. It is seen as an important channel for better regional integration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is because of the prominence of Nigeria, which, with its immense and steadily growing national consumer market, is becoming an attractive trade partner for neighbouring countries (Blum, 2014). Additionally, major road transit routes crossing this border provide the most direct (and in some cases the only) road transport connection between the capitals of countries in the ECOWAS region (Akpan, 2014). The Seme border also is the starting point for roads connecting some landlocked countries in the hinterland, such as Burkina Faso, to ports. Most of these countries generate the bulk of their foreign exchange through transit and re-export (Golub, 2012), thereby creating a large and lucrative market. For Nigerian traders, on the other hand, the Seme border provides access to regional markets to trade agricultural products and locally made fabrics, among other products (Njikam and Tchouassi, 2011).

Closing Border in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon as each regime will come along with its policy on Trade (Cross Border

Trade inclusive) and contraband which either led to Land Border Closure or classifying certain goods as contraband. Sometimes the government overlooked the consequences of such closure on the economy and the citizenry who engaged in the cross-border trading.

According to Emmanuel, (2020) indicated that the border closure was in breach of the protocol on the free movement of goods, services and people, established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to which Nigeria is a member and in which it wields significant political and economic weight. This action also came just two months after the country signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Unah, 2019) and one of the rationales for ECOWAS is trade, encourage regional integration and promote economic activities within member states.

Although it was not the first time that Nigeria moved to check the activities of smugglers at her borders, this time the Federal Government had deemed it necessary to act in order to boost local production of food items and manufactured goods (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2019). The recent border closure of Nigeria neighboring West African states according to CBN has boasted local rice production, rural communities are now

engaged in local rice production to support the economy. However, the government border closure is not a prolong one, but before the border can be reopen, there must be concrete engagement with Benin Republic that are involve in using their ports as landing port for bringing in goods that are smuggle into Nigeria. Therefore, the study seeks to investigate the impact of Nigeria's border closure on Neighboring West African Countries 2019-2021

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

It is undeniable fact that the recent Nigerian border closure was totally for economic reason in order to boost local agricultural production in the country. The continued closure of Nigeria's border with her closest Benin Republic neighbor has continued to generate reactions within and outside the country. From this policy of border closure by Nigerian government, it is a clear violation of ECOWAS treaty of gradual abolition of customs duties and free movement of goods and services among member states. According to Ghins and Heinrigs (2019) Nigeria authorities has justified the fundamental reasons upon which it closed the land borders of the country. The government need to support the domestic agricultural sector and to accelerate the

National Productivity Growth thereby reducing the smuggling rate for goods and to fundamentally curb illegal inflows of foreign products. However, the informal trading activities at the border communities have grossly undermined Nigeria economy. Nigeria close it border with Benin, extended the ban on land trade with the major objective of curbing smuggling of agricultural produce particularly rice in the country. Therefore, the study seeks to investigate impact of Nigeria's border closure on Neighboring West African Countries 2019-2021

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study is to investigate the impact of Nigeria's border closure on neighboring West African Countries 2019-2021

Specifically, this work has the following objectives;

- i. To ascertain the reasons for Nigerian border closure with neighbouring West African Countries.
- ii. To find out the benefits of Nigeria's border closure with neighbouring West African Countries.
- iii. To find out the implications of Nigerian border closure with neighbouring West African Countries.

- iv. To find out how Nigeria border closure with neighbouring West African Countries affect Nigeria socio-economic relations.

1.4 Nature of Land Borders in Nigeria

As earlier noted, a country's borders are internationally recognized demarcations that separate it from one another. Osimen (2017) opined that "international borders are a security issue for the government." Thus, this may explain why almost every authority of nation-states across the globe, and indeed Nigeria often take drastic measures around their international boundaries whenever they perceived security threat emanating from trans-border movements. Nation-states are recognized under international law by their capability to maintain their boundaries, secure their territories and protect their citizens. According to Maigari, A. M., Dantani, U., Yelwa, M. M., & Aliyu, A. (2020, p. 1-25), border represents the physical manifestation of a nation's sovereignty. States are responsible for managing their internal affairs, which implies that they exercise control over the flows of illicit drugs and people who migrate through illegal routes and contraband goods into and out of their countries. This means that in most cases, smugglers or migrants usually engage

in illegal activities (economic and security wise) which tend to undermine borders integrity and jeopardize the economy of a country.

For this reason, Omodunbi et al. (2022, p. 200-210) observed that Nigeria has porous borders and these routes keep increasing every day because of the clandestine illicit activities; while efforts to curtail these had witnessed the cropping up of new ones around the porous borders. These transnational crimes carried out across Nigeria borders have greatly affected the country's economic and national security. Nigeria's land borders with other countries cut across several local governments in the country. In other words, many States (16) in Nigeria share land borders with 4 African countries (Quadri, 2022 Aug. 26; Britannica, Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2017 Aug. 3; Babatola, 2015). Many studies have reported that Nigeria borders had been described as porous such that all kinds of trans-border criminal activities like human trafficking, drugs trafficking, arm robbery, illegal arms smuggling resulting to proliferation of SALW (Akinyemi, 2013; Olomu et al., 2019; Uche & Nwkorobia, 2021, p. 63-86; Omodunbi, 2022, 200-210). It is important to note that Nigeria as a sovereign state has a landmass of 923,768 km² and is bounded by

Republic of Benin (773 km), Cameroon (1690 km), Chad Republic (87 km) and Republic of Niger (1497 km) land borders from the west, east, northeast and northwest of Nigeria, respectively. Similarly, apart from Benin Republic and Cameroon, Nigeria also shares maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea, Ghana and São Tomé and Príncipe (Babatola, 2015; Osimen et al., 2017; Okoye, 2021; Quadri, 2022; Falola, Ajayi, Ade et al., 2022).

Nigeria lies between latitudes 4° and 14°N and longitudes 2° and 15°E. Nigeria is attributed as possessing a total area of 923,768 km² (356,669 sq mi) (Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1978), making it the world's 32nd-largest country. It shares a 4,047 kilometres (2,515 mi) border with Benin (773 km), Niger (1497 km), Chad (87 km), Cameroon (1690 km), and has a coastline of at least 853 km. Nigeria's claim to territorial sea (offshore space) rose from 3 miles of continental shelf and about 200 miles on exclusive fishing zones from 1958 to 1978 as a country signatory to conventions on continental shelf despite its inability to determine its extent of claim.

Nigeria's claim to a 200-mile-wide exclusive economic zone in October, 1978 is part of reaction to UNCLOS Conventions on jurisdictional zones and claims to the

territorial sea, continental shelf and exclusive fishing zones (Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1978) (Asiwaju, 1989). Reference to Nigerian borders with her neighbours - Benin Republic, Niger Republic, Chad and Cameroons indicated the main bi-national links and official gateways to and from Nigeria through the sets of existing local authority areas (Asiwaju, 1989).

Border closure is a protectionist mechanism which nation-states deployed to prevent the movement of unwanted persons and goods from other territorial jurisdiction into its territory. Nation-states have adjudged several reasons for embarking on various border closures in the past, depending on the prevailing circumstances which have negative effects on national interest. Border closure can also be restrictions or ban on the importation and/or exportation of some "essential" goods or articles by the state of government. The history of border closure in Nigerian can be traced back to the era of military governance in 1979 where regulative measures were imposed on some items that found their way into the country (Adepoju, 1986, p. 21 –24; Afolayan, 1988, p. 4-27; Adebusaye, 1995, p. 435-467). According to Obi-Egbedi et al. (2013, p. 1-21), within the period which was sustained by Shagari's

regime, restrictive measures such as the use of import licenses and quotas were used to curb the influx of rice importation into Nigeria. Only a few individuals and government agencies were issued licenses at no tariff charge (Adepoju, 1983, 1986; Obi-Egbedi, 2013). In fact, the government of Shagari went as far as expelling many African migrants, especially Ghanaians, Chadians who had found haven in Nigeria. Similarly, during the military regime of General Muhammadu Buhari of 1985, borders were closed as a measure against acute smuggling of drugs, agricultural produce, human trafficking, prostitution, child labour, insurgency, etc. (Adepoju, 1984, 1986; Afolayan, 1988). Equally, the democratic government of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2003 ordered the partial closure of borders due to an alarming increase in crime rate along the nation's borders. It is pertinent to emphasize that border closures, basically, as justified consistently by various regimes in Nigeria was enforced on the interest of national security and socioeconomic challenges. This might be the *raison d'être* which prompted Aniukwu (2020, p. 1-18) to opine that "border closure in Nigeria has had similar reasons of economy and security development."

In the same vein, in the wake of the last quarter of 2019, the FGN closed all its land borders connecting it with other African neighbouring countries in an exercise codenamed Swift Response in furtherance of its aim to address the growing spade of insecurity in the country as well as to achieve the policy of diversification of the economy and to promote local contents (Olomu et al., 2019; Punch, 2020 Aug. 17; The Guardian, 2020 Dec. 31; The Cable, 2021 Sept. 22; Omodunbi et al., 2022, p. 1-32). It is another history making in attempt to establish control over the economy and curb concealment of arms and ammunition that has become a hallmark of West African states which is commonly associated with trans-border movement was relatively free due to ECOWAS protocol on free trade zone among member states. Ugwuja and Chukwukere (2021, p. 78-106) reported that on August 20, 2019, the federal government of Nigeria issued an executive order for the closure of its land borders against all imports, especially rice and cars as well as manage security situations associated with transborder movements. This singular pronouncement had generated international concerned and heated debates among public analyst on the impact of such policy on the economy of Nigeria and the vision for integration of the

region considering Nigeria posture in West African subregion and Africa in general as a whole. It is imperative to note that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with an estimate of over 200 million people that cut across ages and sex (Falola et al., 2022). The country is unarguably endowed with so many economic potentials such as abundant natural resources, large population which translates into large market for almost all sorts economic exchanges that attracts both legitimate and illegitimate merchants, illegal migrants, criminal syndicates, including the “merchants of death”, etc. In addition, several Nigerians (skilled and unskilled) have also migrated out of the country for reasons associated with insecurity, economic uncertainty/hardship, etc. while others engage themselves in illicit transactions across the borders linking Nigeria with other states.

1.5 Conceptual Review

1.5.1 Concept of Border

Border generally refers to a marker or line indicating a boundary between separate communities, culture and administrative units. Definitions on border share similarities among scholars that have defined the term at various times. To Bradley J. Parker, borders

are "linear dividing lines, fixed in a particular space, meant to mark the division between political and/or administrative units"(Drek, 1991). Parker’s view, like many others, on border illustrates the demarcation of peoples, culture, even nations. For instance, border reveals the boundary line between Nigeria and Benin Republic, Germany and France, Turkey and Syria, USA and Mexico or Portugal and Spain. Borders as demarcating lines between two states are as old as the human civilization. However, it became prominent with the emergence of the modern state in 1648.

Since this year, borders all over the world became crucial elements in a new, increasingly global system of states. Thus, borders became sacred among states, especially, European states in which several wars were fought to either expand one's territory or annex that of a weaker state. Border relations among states all over the world have been either collaborative or conflictual. The experiences of Europe, until the second half of the twentieth century, and that of Africa in the post-independence era attest, to this fact. In Europe, the territorial adjustment that emerged after the Treaties of Westphalia (1648), Utrecht (1713), Vienna (1815) and Versailles (1919) created border acrimony among neighboring states (Simon,

1994). A shift in European border relations emerged, after the devastating effect of World War II on the continent. European leaders rechanneled their efforts toward promoting collaborative and integrative agenda through cross border relations.

On the other hand, post-independence African states driven by their colonial experience, pursued the policy of irredentism, particularly in countries where ethnic nationalities sharing common ancestry, separated by boundary demarcation created by the colonial masters.

One of the major consequences of this development is that it has resulted in conflicting relations between some African countries, namely: Togo Ghana, Djibouti Somalia, Ethiopia Somalia and many others (Alan, 1982). In recent times, the discovery of mineral resources located between the borders of neighboring states in Africa has furthered heightened border relations in the continent. The Bakassi Crisis between Nigeria and Cameroon illustrates this fact (Bonchuk, 2014). Added to this is the Libya Chad and Burkina Faso Mali border conflict provoked by aggressive international litigations over stretches of shared boundaries suspected to be rich in solid minerals (Alan, 1982).

Scholars in border studies linked some of the causes of border dispute to the Westphalia state system. The Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 articulated the features of the modern state. Among other things, this Treaty considered the respect of the territorial boundary and integrity of sovereign states in the international system (Blum, 1966). This particular feature has become sacred and likewise, incorporated into the national interest of every sovereign state, in which they are ready to pay the supreme surprise at whatever cost, including a possible outbreak of war.

Ironically, a unique feature of borderlands is that despite the conflicting relations between states sharing border, the border communities in the opposite direction of the border maintained cordial relations. An understanding of the dynamics, nature and pattern of interactions among border communities –are better appreciated through interdisciplinary and comparative studies of borders of modern states, which are offshoots of the Westphalia system. This has led to their broad categorization into ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ border.

Traditional border studies focused on a state centric vision of the border that emphasis on defending the territorial integrity of state boundary, with little or no

recourse to cooperation with immediate neighbours. This was the state of European border relations until the post Second World War era. Again, traditional border studies explored the frameworks of such established disciplines as History, Geography, Political Science, Economics and Law (Asiwaju, 2011). Raimondo Strassoldo, a leading scholar and pioneer of border studies in Europe, comment on the interest of modern border studies. He avers that:

Modern border study focuses on the socioeconomic aspects of border communities as well as integrative rather than conflicting processes, and on problems of border people instead of the nation states; instigated by local authorities and European organisations rather than national governments... more than the traditional ones' policy oriented' (Asiwaju, 2011).

In the post1945 era, following the ugly experience of the European continent after two devastating World Wars that almost ruined her economically and politically, the leaders decided to channel their attention to cooperation by exploring cross border.

Relations (Urwin, 1991). Europe, after the Second World War, ceased to view border as an outlet for war through the defense of their territories. It began to see it as a bridge to promote socio-cultural and

economic cooperation, through cross border Relations (Asiwaju, 1999).

African states since the 1960s have tried to experiment with cross border relations through regional integration. However, their degree of success comparatively with Europe has been low. In Africa, the concept of border was institutionalized in the nineteenth century at the Berlin Conference of 1884/85. At the conference, contending European powers seeking territories in Africa agreed on the boundary or borders of their respective "sphere of influence," thereby separating one European colonial territory from another. As indicated already, the concept of border or boundary lines may sound strange to Africans during the colonial period. This, however, did not erase the fact that people were knowledgeable in demarcating the boundaries of their respective territories. In post-independence Africa, border relations within the continent have not been fruitful. Instead, it has followed the Westphalian model that has to do with defending the territorial boundary at any provocation, by neighboring states. This has resulted in several border disputes across the length and breadth of the continent, especially contiguous states. In Africa, as well as in Europe and other parts of the world where

border demarcation had taken place, it has succeeded in separating people with lived experiences spanning several centuries, through natural and manmade (artificial) borderlines (Asiwaju, 1999).

1.6 Empirical Review

1.6.1 Reasons for Nigeria Border Closure with West African Neighboring Countries

According to Ghins and Heinrigs (2019) the Nigeria Authorities has justified the fundamental reasons upon which it closed the land borders of the country. Basically, there is the need to support the domestic Agricultural sector and to accelerate the National Productivity Growth thereby reducing the smuggling rate for goods and to fundamentally curb illegal inflows of foreign rice. In addition to this, the government as part of her justification for the border closure include preventing the exporting the subsidised fuel to Niger Republic, Benin and Cameroon. Hence, the need for border closure as enforced by government of Nigeria.

Trade data from the International Monetary Fund show that Nigeria accounts for only about 5 per cent of Benin's recorded exports (i.e. formal trade). Most of this trade does not originate in Benin but consists of

imported goods that transit through the port of Cotonou and then the Seme border. However, Benin's informal exports to Nigeria are substantial. Data on informal trade do not exist, so we have to rely on indirect estimates. Geourjon, Chambas, and Laporte (2008) note that about half of formal imports via the port of Cotonou to Benin have the Nigerian market as their final destination. This provides an initial indication of the importance of informal trade. Golub (2012) uses a comparison between formal imports into Benin and Togo to make inferences about informal exports from Benin to Nigeria. The author starts by noting that the economies and populations of Togo and Benin are similar, so domestic demand in the two countries is therefore comparable. He then compares formal imports into Benin and Togo of commodities subject to either an import ban or high import tariffs in Nigeria. Until 2015, rice, the main food consumption item in Nigerian households, was among the items whose imports were banned. Despite the recent lifting of the ban, official rice traders still need to pay a 10 per cent import duty plus a 60 per cent levy for imports through a land border. Rice millers with a valid quota, who are a second type of official importers, pay a 10 per cent import duty and a 20 per cent levy. Treichel V, Hoppe M,

Cadot O, and Gourdon J (2012) noted the impact of these trade policy measures by calculating that Nigerian consumers pay 77 per cent more for the same products than consumers in African countries that do not impose bans.

The above trade policy measures aimed at preventing or restricting imports, together with institutional issues at the border such as informal payments to customs officers, explain why food and household items are frequently imported into Nigeria through informal channels and why informal trading and smuggling remain a lucrative venture for the Nigerian population, including women (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012). As a matter of fact, women constitute the majority (about 60 per cent) of the traders who trade across the Seme border, especially those involved in informal trading (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012).

Nigeria which shares boundaries with Benin, Niger, and Cameroon closed all of its land borders in order to ensure total control over what comes into the country in October 2019 (Olatunji, 2019), though that was not the first instance. The cause of this action in the view of the government was the smuggling of rice and other illicit exports of cheaper, subsidised petrol from Nigeria to its neighbours, as 10 to 20 per cent of Nigerian

fuel was smuggled abroad. Statistics show that there is probably very little to worry about since the volume of intra-African trade is low and most of the trade by African countries is done with countries outside the continent. Intra- African trade was about 16.6 per cent of total African exports in 2017 which was low compared to 68.1 per cent with European countries and 59.4 per cent with Asian countries (UNCTAD, 2019) (Olatunji, 2019).

In the various discourse, it is becoming apparent that Nigeria's land border appears to be the pivot of international trade in West Africa and nay Africa. Furthermore, because of the vastness of her border, pervasive dumping of goods and illegal trade with her neighbors had become a norm, notwithstanding the detrimental effect on Nigerian Economy (Boulon, 2019).

Nigeria's recent announcement confirming that it is closing its borders to prevent movement of all goods has been met with harsh criticism from neighbors and regional integration advocates. The government has justified the decision as a tactic to curb smuggling of goods of which the country wants to internally increase production, such as rice. The border closure will have particularly negative consequences for trade especially informal ones, along the

Benin-Nigeria border, as the two economies are closely intertwining. Indeed, this informal trade generates substantial income and employment in Benin, and Benin's government collects substantial revenues on entrepôt trade—goods imported legally and either legally re-exported to Nigeria, or illegally diverted into Nigeria through smuggling.

The informal sector throughout West Africa, and particularly in Benin, represents approximately 50 percent of GDP (70 percent in Benin, in fact) and 90 percent of employment. Unsurprisingly, informal cross-border trade (ICBT) is pervasive and has a long history given the region's artificial and often porous borders, a long history of regional trade, weak border enforcement, corruption, and, perhaps most importantly, lack of coordination of economic policies among neighbouring countries. Notably, ICBT takes several forms, not all of which are illegal: For example, trade in traditional agricultural products and livestock in bordering countries may involve little or no intent to deceive the authorities, as peasants and herders ignore artificial and un-policed borders (Abia, 2019).

The economic relationship between the two countries, both members of the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS), is already asymmetric, with Nigeria exerting much more influence on Benin than vice versa. Given Nigeria's larger population, economy, and natural resource wealth, Benin has adopted a strategy centered on being —entrepôt state i.e., serving as a trading hub, importing goods and re-exporting them legally but most often illegally to Nigeria, thus profiting from distortions in Nigeria's economy. Benin's dependence on Nigeria is not apparent from official trade statistics, as Benin's reported trade with Nigeria accounted for only about 6 percent of Benin's exports and 2 percent of Benin's imports in 2015-17. These official statistics are very misleading, however, as they do not reflect the vast informal trade along the border.

Nigeria's heavy dependence on oil and many dysfunctional economic policies have created an environment for ICBT between it and its neighbours, mainly Benin and Togo, to flourish. The wide gap between the official and black-market rates of the naira; Nigeria's subsidized fuel prices; import barriers, poor trade facilitation, and Benin's poor business climate have incentivized local traders to turn to the informal cross-border trade (Anjorin, 2019).

1.6.2 Impact of Nigeria Border Closure on West African Neighboring Countries

The closure of Nigeria border thus boosted the government's revenue as more duties were collected on the increased volume of goods that entered the country legally through the ports, but the fall in the supply of rice led to food price inflation, which impacted strongly negatively on Nigerian consumers (Abia, 2019). The closure also led to shortages of materials imported from Nigeria in neighbouring countries hence, the worry about its consequences for trade liberalisation in Africa. This closure was in breach of the protocol on the free movement of goods, services and people, established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to which Nigeria is a member and in which it wields significant political and economic weight. This action also came just two months after the country signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Unah, 2019) which aims to remove barriers to trade and promote the free flow of goods, services and people across the continent. Thus Nigeria border closure was inconsistent with the country's multilateral commitments, including ECOWAS and AfCFTA, and was seen as a major disruption to Nigeria and the entire Africa in terms of their international trade relations.

Evidence seen by AFP suggests that any benefits are at the macro level — and the country's many poor are likely to be among the losers. The two main commodities being smuggled were petrol and rice. Petrol was being sneaked out from Nigeria, where subsidies make the fuel half as cheap as in its neighbours, and resold. Rice, on the other hand, was being brought into Nigeria, where consumers favour imported Asian-grown varieties over the locally grown competitor, from Benin via its port in Cotonou (Emmanuel, Mamman, Asauten, 2020)

The most visible winner from the closure is the Nigerian treasury, which has benefited from the falling cost of petrol subsidies and from a rise in customs receipts. Sales of gasoline in Nigeria fell by 12.7% after the border closure, which indicates that millions of subsidised litres are being secretly taken abroad for resale. The reduction in consumption, if sustained, could lead to subsidy savings of around 13.5 billion naira (\$37 million) monthly and 162.1 billion naira annually (Emmanuel, Mamman, Asauten, 2020).

As for rice, the country's agriculture lobby is loudly supporting the border closure. Investment in Nigerian agriculture was being hamstrung by the rice trafficking, which is estimated to reach two million tonnes a year.

The biggest rice-growing business in Nigeria, owning 13 000 hectares (30 000 acres) of cultivable land of which only 4 500 hectares are being used because the sector is not profitable in the face of competition from Asian rice, but since the border closure, locally-milled rice has started selling, and the entire rice value chain has been positively impacted by the closure (Emmanuel, Mamman, Asauten, 2020).

But if the border closure is a boost for domestic growers, it has led to price increases for consumers. The price of a 50-kilo (110-pound) bag has more than doubled to 20 000 naira, roughly the entire monthly income of a Nigerian living in extreme poverty — of whom there are an estimated 87 million in the country. Traders in Lagos Island, a vast market of Made in China textiles and gadgets, say the closure of the borders had crimped supplies via Benin's Cotonou. Because of the situation, the annual inflation rate has edged up to 11.24 per cent, while inflation ran at 13.51 per cent in September, 2019 (Rasheed, 2020).

1.6.3 Challenges of Nigerian Border Closure on West African Neighboring Countries

The bulk of the non-food items that come through the border — such as clothing (especially second-hand) and household

goods — constitute the next highest expenditure for rural households, while for the urban households, clothing and other services (such as information technology, insurance, and personal goods) are among their next highest expenditures. Since Nigerian households spend a considerable share of their budget on items that flow through the border (e.g. cereals, clothing, fruits and vegetables), it is most likely that they will be affected by improved border access (Uchenna, 2016).

Thus, when a border is closed many individuals will lose their jobs. For instance, closing the Nigeria – Niger Border will cause about one Million people to lose their jobs. In addition to the above, Gordon, Moore, Park and Richardson (2009) observed that, the closure of border disrupts international trade with specific reference to Cross Border Trade and Travel across border. Thus, closing border is an extreme policy that might create threat to so many individuals especially the border communities. Not only that, the economy suffered and experiences backwardness.

On the other hand, Adeola and Oluyemi (2012) stressed that, in the interest of National security, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria embarked on the Policy of Border Closure. That, movement of

goods and people between Nigeria and her neighbours such as Niger Republic, Benin, Chad and Cameroon tends to be informal whereby temporary clandestine workers, traders, Cross Borders workers, Professionals and refugees are always moving from one country to another though intra-regional movement within West African sub region is permitted without Visa due to the existing principles and provision of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This made Cross Border Movement between Nigeria and her neighbours to be less monitored and did not attract the attention and intervention of governments. However, it is gradually becoming an issue now that needs state policy as modern mobility contributes to impact dangerously on the security of the Nation (Nigeria). This propels external aggression and criminality which grows across border. Hence, the Nigeria Government adopted the Policy of Border Closure.

In response to Nigerian border closure, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has started declining Nigerian products possibly in retaliation to the country's border closure. Nigeria has the largest economy on the African continent, and it became the latest

African nation to close its borders, following similar actions by Kenya, Rwanda and Sudan around the period of its action. For some experts, the border closures of Nigeria were a slap in the face for the continent's integration efforts. It is likely to damage the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AFCFTA), which has the potential to be the world's largest free trade zone, even surpassing the World Trade Organization, established in 1995.

Foreign exporters in the region experienced losses as countries within the ECOWAS sub-region started rejecting Nigerian goods. According to the exporters, the move gradually crippled their businesses. Consequently, Nigerian exports within the ECOWAS region decreased due to retaliation to its border closure by other countries both in the ECOWAS sub region and the continent of Africa at large. Such retaliatory measures definitely impacted negatively on the economy of both countries as the exports done within the ECOWAS region and other neighbouring countries in the continent are now in decrease. These countries that benefited from the open border, because of Nigeria border closure, no longer do so. Nigeria doesn't expect to get the level of cooperation that it was getting before, because it has been hit hard by these closed

borders in retaliation to its action (Ogunwusi et al, 2019).

As Nigeria closed its land borders, Ghanaians shut down Nigerian-owned businesses in their country and went as far as closing almost 70 businesses belonging to Nigerians. Ghanaians claim that foreign retailers (referring to Nigerians) violated section 27 of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act 865, which stipulates that —the sale of goods or provision of services in a market, petty trading or hawking or selling of goods in a stall at any placel, must be reserved only for Ghanaian citizens. However, many believe that the action by the Ghana Union of Traders’ Associations (GUTA) was a response to the decision by the Nigerian government to close its borders. GUTA stated that the closure of Nigeria’s trade borders with its neighbours is against the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) treaties (CNBC Africa, 2020).

1.7 Theoretical Framework: Comparative Advantage Theory

Theory is an assumption or set of assumptions, accepted principles, and rules of procedures based on limited information or knowledge, devices to analyze, predict or

otherwise explain the nature or behavior of specified set of phenomena; abstract reasoning (Encarta, 2009). Theories are sets of facts, propositions or principles analyzed in their relation to one another, and used especially in science and social sciences to explain phenomena. It is also the body of rules, ideas, principles and techniques that apply to a subject, especially when seen as distinct from usual practiced Thus, theory is used as a framework of analysis in this study within which context the justification for the review of existing knowledge is established. Theoretical frameworks help to provide answers to the unanswered questions and pointing to the gaps of the research.

For analytical purposes, the theory opted for this study is comparative advantage theory. Comparative advantage theory was first propounded by David Ricardo (1772-1823). Other proponents who immensely contributed to the development of the theory are James Mill (1773 - 1836) and Robert Torrens (1780 - 1864). For instance, Ricardo considered the example of two countries like Nigeria and Benin Republic, whereby Nigeria produces some certain goods and services or commodities at a cheaper rate using higher specialization and cost whereby Benin Republic may equally be specialised in the production of other goods and services

which Nigeria does not produce. This brings the two countries together for international trade probably Cross Border Trade since Nigeria and Benin Republic share boundary together. Therefore, the above description brings two countries together for trade agreement. These trade agreements thus, provide the background policies and programme that will promote and foster economic prosperity when it's been handled effectively without any breach. It is however, important to understand that international trade centered around comparative advantage.

However, when it is stated that, international trade depends on the differences in comparative advantage one may explore not absolute cost of production in the two countries. The theory posit that it is very important for countries to import goods or commodities from countries that produces those commodities with less cost and specialization than it would produce at home. When the cost of producing a particular commodity is high at home, it is better and more economic for that country to import such commodity from countries that produce it with less cost and at cheaper rate. Therefore, this will render the importation more profitable. For example, Benin Republic might be able to assemble

automobile at one-half of the price of labor and abstinence needed in Nigeria. Therefore, this will not render it profitable for Nigeria to supply automobile from Benin republic. On this note, it is good for a country to import commodities from another country where the cost of production of those commodities cost less than it would be at home. Therefore, by doing this pattern of trade, and relating with one country by another perhaps Nigeria and Niger Republic. Whereas closing the border between countries will disconnect one from the other. Ricardo cited an instance that;

Two men can both make shoes and hats and one is superior to the other in both employments but in making hats, he can only have exceeded his competitor by one-fifth or 20% and in making shoes he can excel him by one-third or 33%: will it not be in the interest of both that the superior man should employ himself exclusively in making shoes and the inferior man in making hats? (Ruffin, 2002).

1.7.1 Relevance of the theory

The study seeks to relate comparative advantage theory to Nigeria socio-economic relations with its immediate neighbors: A case study of Nigeria's border closure on Benin Republic. The theory can be applied between countries or among nation-states.

When such model was adopted between Nigeria and Benin republic, international trade or Cross Border Trade will benefit both countries, increases the revenue generation through tariffs and allow the import of commodities and other goods at a cheaper rate as well as provides employment to so many people in both countries. Consequently, the aforementioned benefits and advantages will be lost when a country like Nigeria closed its entire borderland with her neighbouring countries, in the sense that, whenever a border is closed, Government's revenue generation will drastically be reduced, cost of goods or commodities be very high, unemployment rate will persist as those involved in the Cross Border Trade will lost their jobs, farmers who cultivate vegetables other perishable fruits meant for Cross Border Trade will automatically incur serious loss and damages, drivers who carry goods on their vehicles across border will be jobless and the labourers who load goods and offload such commodities from trucks will also run out of jobs. The comparative advantage theory arose in order to encourage the international trade and integration of social institutions as collective means to meet states means. Border closure follows a functional process of analyzing issues, particular as they affect foreign trade, cost of

commodities, violations of ECOWAS trade agreement, and abolition of custom duties and free movement of goods and services. Arising from the above analyses, border closure has been captured in assessing Nigeria socio-economic relations with its immediate neighbors.

1.7.2 Criticisms of the Theory

As no theory is free from criticism comparative advantage theory has been criticized for being static and unable to account for change. By allowing the importation of cheap commodities from another country, this will pave way for the exportation of another commodity to pay for it. It makes a country to specialize in produce one commodity or the other and importation on another commodity. The theory is also criticized for being perfectly symmetrical. The theory has also been criticized for being in support of status quo. In any case, the theory has remained the best in explaining international trade and has become a building ground were social scientist theorize and frame their analysis.

1.8 Research Methodology

This explains the justification, method and materials used in data collection, presentation and analysis. The study utilized the

secondary source of data. Data is the bedrock of any research study. The researcher used secondary sources of data to obtain the requisite information for the study. Secondary data involves the use of books, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, internet materials, speeches, periodicals and reports through the method of systematic content analysis. This is because data collection, analysis and interpretation will be based on the interpretation of statements, comments and observations and not based on quantitative variables. This reasons for the use of secondary method of data collection is save time and resources. The secondary method of data collection will derive ideas from history, economic, social interactions and demography. Descriptive method of data analysis will be used in this study, as data would be summarized from observations. This will involve the analysis of accumulated data collected from reports and reliable sources. Therefore, in analyzing the collected data, content analysis will be employed to analyze, categorize as well as interpret the information gathered from the secondary sources of this study.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

1.9 Reasons for Nigeria's Border Closure with Neighboring West African Countries

Recent data have shown that, Nigeria's economy is performing below expectation with high unemployment rate in the country. It is very clear data as a result of border closure, many jobs were lost and there is high rate of inflation for many commodities. According to NBS (2016) Nigeria's economy declined and shrank by 1.6 percent in 2015 compared to the previous year, according to the IMF. The worldwide drop in crude oil prices in 2014 massively affected the country as crude oil accounts for more than 95 percent of Nigeria's total exports and 90 percent of its foreign exchange earnings. Foreign direct investment inflows to Nigeria decreased significantly by 55 percent. Also Nigeria's currency, the naira, slumped 30 percent against the dollar triggering a shortage of foreign exchange. As the crude oil accounts revealed, it seemed Nigeria neglected other sectors of the economy forcing it to diversify and restructure. Attention to the agriculture sector increased, which had been neglected by Nigeria since the late 1960s.

In 2017, Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan revealed the aim

of deepening investments and increasing the sector's share in economic growth from 5 percent to 8.4 percent by 2020. The idea came to the fore in order to revive domestic farming and save on food imports which account for over \$22 billion a year. As a result, the plan accelerated the border closure process in which the Nigerian government wants to protect domestic farmers from the cheap importation of foodstuff. Nigerian rice farmers were happy about the decision, but there were genuine concerns about whether domestic production can meet with domestic demand.

In 2017 the demand for rice in Nigeria reached 6.7 million tons, nearly double the 3.7 million tons produced domestically. Since the border closure, the price of 50 kilograms of rice increased from 9,000 naira (\$24) to 22000 naira (\$61). So while the move may be welcomed by farmers, consumers will bear the brunt of the cost (NBS, 2017). Similar actions were taken by the country in 1984 and 2003 when it closed its border with Benin in order to prevent smuggling of goods into the country. Besides, in 1987, the Military government at the time banned importation of barley with the intention to arrest the value of the country's currency, reduce foreign exchange reserve depletion and spur economic growth.

1.10 Benefits of Nigeria's Border Closure with Neighboring West African Countries

The economic impact of the closure of Nigeria's borders is enormous and it is obvious that the loss overweigh the gain. It is argued that the trend of border closure globally is that each time a border is closed, the economy of the country is negatively impacted. According to This Day Newspaper, (2019) shows the fact available has it that Benin imports 1.2 million metric tons of rice annually, against its population of about 11 million people. Cameroon imported 728,443 metric tons of rice according to National Statistics Institute (INS) in 2017, against a population of about 24 million. That same year Niger imported rice worth \$53.9 million, about 135 metric tons of rice for a population of 21 million. Nigeria on the other hand imported 1.3 million metric tons in 2017 for a population of over 190 million people. It means massive loads of rice have found their way to Nigeria with paltry duty accruing to the federal government. This trend is threatening Nigeria's domestic rice production.

The agreement among the ECOWAS member states on goods coming into the country states that, the goods must be containerized and taken through the border where they can be assessed and attested that

they are not smuggled items. The border closure was therefore as a result of the failure of the neighboring countries to fulfill their obligations. Hameed Ali asserted that:

“what we have discovered is that most of those cargoes that used to go to Benin Republic, shipped to Benin, and then discharged and smuggled into Nigeria, now that we have closed the border they are forced to bring their goods to either Apapa or Tin Can Island and we have to collect duty on them... as a matter of fact, our revenue has not reduced , it is increasing as a result of closing the border." He added that the agency has been making between N4.7 billion to N5.8 billion daily more than the agency used to generate before the closure”(Hallmarknews.com. Aug 16, 2020).

According to a study by Emmanuel, Mamman, Andekujwo ., & Anderibom ,(2020) Evidence seen by AFP suggests that any benefits are at the macro level and the country’s many poor are likely to be among

the losers. The two main commodities being smuggled were petrol and rice. Petrol was being sneaked out from Nigeria, where subsidies make the fuel half as cheap as in its neighbours, and resold. Rice, on the other hand, was being brought into Nigeria, where consumers favour imported Asian-grown varieties over the locally grown competitor, from Benin via its port in Cotonou.

The most visible winner from the closure is the Nigerian treasury, which has benefited from the falling cost of petrol subsidies and from a rise in customs receipts. Sales of gasoline in Nigeria fell by 12.7% after the border closure, which indicates that millions of subsidised litres are being secretly taken abroad for resale. The reduction in consumption, if sustained, could lead to subsidy savings of around 13.5 billion naira (\$37 million) monthly and 162.1 billion naira annually (Emmanuel, 2020).

As for rice, the country’s agriculture lobby is loudly supporting the border closure. Investment in Nigerian agriculture was being hamstrung by the rice trafficking, which is estimated to reach two million tonnes a year. The biggest rice-growing business in Nigeria, owning 13 000 hectares (30 000 acres) of cultivable land of which only 4 500 hectares are being used because the sector is not profitable in the face of competition from

Asian rice, but since the border closure, locally milled rice has started selling, and the entire rice value chain has been positively impacted by the closure (Emmanuel, 2020). But if the border closure is a boost for domestic growers, it has led to price increases for consumers. The price of a 50-kilo (110-pound) bag has more than doubled to 20 000 naira, roughly the entire monthly income of a Nigerian living in extreme poverty — of whom there are an estimated 87 million in the country. Traders in Lagos Island, a vast market of Made in China textiles and gadgets, say the closure of the borders had crimped supplies via Benin's Cotonou. Because of the situation, the annual inflation rate has edged up to 11.24 per cent, while inflation ran at 13.51 per cent in September, 2019 (Rasheed, 2020).

Nigeria's industrial sector, which is already struggling with the country's notoriously poor transport system and electricity shortages, is equally affected by the border closure. Trade with neighbours is essential. The intention of stopping smuggling is praiseworthy but the point is that measures have an impact on the sector as the measure affects investors who specialise in the import and export of manufactured goods. Between 10 and 20% of Nigerian manufactured goods are sold to other

countries in West Africa, with many of these items, such as pasta and cosmetics, exported through informal routes, mainly through small sellers who travel around the region.

There is need for direct investments; there is need for industries to create jobs in this country. Just before the border closure, new measures were introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) amongst which was the prohibition of some imported items for accessing the official foreign exchange market. Whilst this was ongoing the government closed the land borders with her neighbours, all of which are mostly members of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), except Cameroon who is not a member. The border closure has generated public discourse by all, the reason being that Nigeria is a major stakeholder in ECOWAS and also a strategic nation for the success of the African Continental Trade Agreement (Bouillon, 2019). In the various discourse, it is becoming apparent that Nigeria's land border appears to be the pivot of international trade in West Africa and nay Africa. Furthermore, because of the vastness of her border, pervasive dumping of goods and illegal trade with her neighbours had become a norm, notwithstanding the detrimental effect on Nigerian Economy (see Bouillon, 2019). Nigeria's recent

announcement confirming that it is closing its borders to prevent movement of all goods has been met with harsh criticism from neighbours and regional integration advocates. The government has justified the decision as a tactic to curb smuggling of goods of which the country wants to internally increase production, such as rice (Emmanuel et al., 2020)

The border closure will have particularly negative consequences for trade especially informal ones, along the Benin-Nigeria border, as the two economies are closely intertwining. Indeed, this informal trade generates substantial income and employment in Benin, and Benin's government collects substantial revenues on entrepôt trade—goods imported legally and either legally re-exported to Nigeria, or illegally diverted into Nigeria through smuggling. The informal sector throughout West Africa, and particularly in Benin, represents approximately 50 percent of GDP (70 percent in Benin, in fact) and 90 percent of employment.

Unsurprisingly, informal cross-border trade (ICBT) is pervasive and has a long history given the region's artificial and often porous borders, a long history of regional trade, weak border enforcement, corruption, and, perhaps most importantly,

lack of coordination of economic policies among neighbouring countries. Notably, ICBT takes several forms, not all of which are illegal: For example, trade in traditional agricultural products and livestock in bordering countries may involve little or no intent to deceive the authorities, as peasants and herders ignore artificial and un-policed borders (Abia, 2019).

The economic relationship between the two countries, both members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is already asymmetric, with Nigeria exerting much more influence on Benin than vice versa. Given Nigeria's larger population, economy, and natural resource wealth, Benin has adopted a strategy centered on being —entrepôt state, i.e., serving as a trading hub, importing goods and re-exporting them legally but most often illegally to Nigeria, thus profiting from distortions in Nigeria's economy. Benin's dependence on Nigeria is not apparent from official trade statistics, as Benin's reported trade with Nigeria accounted for only about 6 percent of Benin's exports and 2 percent of Benin's imports in 2015-17. These official statistics are very misleading, however, as they do not reflect the vast informal trade along the border.

1.11 Implication of Nigeria’s Border Closure with Neighbouring West African Countries

Nigeria’s heavy dependence on oil and many dysfunctional economic policies have created an environment for ICBT between it and its neighbours, mainly Benin and Togo, to flourish.

As Nigeria closed its land borders, Ghanaians shut down Nigerian-owned businesses in their country and went as far as closing almost 70 businesses belonging to Nigerians. Ghanaians claim that foreign retailers (referring to Nigerians) violated section 27 of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act 865, which stipulates that —the sale of goods or provision of services in a market, petty trading or hawking or selling of goods in a stall at any placel, must be reserved only for Ghanaian citizens. However, many believe that the action by the Ghana Union of Traders’ Associations (GUTA) was a response to the decision by the Nigerian government to close its borders. GUTA stated that the closure of Nigeria’s trade borders with its neighbours is against the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) treaties (CNBC Africa, 2020).

For some experts, the border closures of Nigeria are a slap in the face for the

continent’s integration efforts. It is likely to damage the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which has the potential to be the world's largest free trade zone, even surpassing the World Trade Organization, established in 1995. Foreign exporters in the region are counting their losses as countries within the ECOWAS sub-region have started rejecting Nigerian goods. According to the exporters, the move is gradually crippling their businesses. During an interview with Vanguard Maritime Report, Chief Executive Officer of Multi-mix Academy, an export-orientated institution, Dr Obiora Madu, disclosed that Nigerian exports within the ECOWAS region are decreasing due to the border closure. He said: “It is definitely impacting negatively on the economy as the exports done within the ECOWAS region and our neighboring countries are now in decrease. These countries that benefit from the open border, since we have closed it, even though we used to export to them before, you don’t expect to get the level of cooperation that we are getting before because they are hit hard by these closed borders.”

Nigeria’s import barriers on selected products, import tax rates (%), and import bans, 2015-2020

Items	2015	2020

Beer	Banned	Banned (45%)
Poultry meat	Banned	Banned
Rice	(50%)	Banned
Sugar	(60%)	(70%)
Vegetable oil	Banned	Banned
Used cars	(70%)	Banned

Sources: Nigerian customs data provided by the World Bank, Nigerian import prohibition list <https://www.customs.gov.ng/ProhibitionList/import.php>, online reports, World Trade Organization Nigeria Trade Policy Review 2020.

The border closure has spiked food prices, causing inflation to increase to 11.24 percent, the highest level since June 2019, and it is expected to rise even higher if continued. Presently, Nigeria produces about 6.9 million metric tons of rice annually, but the country has to import rice worth \$4 billion USD to meet the rising consumer demand.

At the beginning of this government, one of its major goals was to improve the growth of the agricultural sector to decrease dependency on the oil sector, enacting a policy to restrict the Nigerian Central Bank from distributing funds to facilitate the importation of food, especially rice. Additionally, the border closure was expected to further decrease Nigeria's ability to attract foreign direct investment. The World Bank ranked Nigeria as one of the

worst countries in the world when it comes to ease of trading across borders, ranking 182 out of 190 countries. As expected, Benin was heavily hit by the closure because of its informal trade dependence on Nigeria, which accounted for 70 percent of Benin's GDP. However, it is important to note that apart from the formal importation of petroleum from Nigeria, Benin also imports poultry, rice and vegetable oil accounting for about \$100 million USD in revenue to Nigeria's GDP. Nigeria stands to lose this significant source of revenue should it continue to close its borders to Benin and other African countries. Most African countries are impatient with the border closure, due to the negative economic consequences on their economies, which could result in potential political tensions among them. Nigeria could stand to lose about \$300 million USD in export revenue from these countries. For instance, if Ghana retaliates by imposing similar trade restrictions on Nigeria. Ghana depends on the Abidjan-Lagos Highway for overland access to markets in West Africa, which was closed due to the Nigerian-Benin border closure. The Ghana Union Traders Association (GUTA) petitioned to the government of Ghana to also close its trade borders in retaliation to what they call, —unfair treatment from Nigeria.

Nigeria is a key regional player in the economic growth of West Africa and facilitates the growth of informal trade across the region. The border closure affected the informal sector which represents about 50 percent of West Africa's combined GDP. Nigeria during the period of border closure announced a list of strict conditions that all ECOWAS members must meet in order to be accepted as Nigeria's trade partners. This was vexing to other African countries. The border closure and the list of strict conditions sent a negative signal to the world and other African governments about Africa's commitment to boost intra-African trade activities by at least 53 percent through AfCFTA. The treaties intend to facilitate smooth intra-regional trade to ensure regional growth, but Nigeria's trade restrictions if not halted, constitute a stumbling block to achieve it. Indeed, Nigeria's policy of food import substitution, a form of industrial policy, is often at odds with the idea of regional integration...The AfCFTA will only succeed if member countries make the regional strategy part of their national policy and proactively address the tensions that arise between the two. Countries should find the sweet spot that reinforces national economic goals and ensures maximum gains from increased

integration, looking beyond a static assessment of their priorities.

1.12 How Nigeria Border Closure with Neighbouring West African Countries affect Nigeria Socio-Economic relations

From time immemorial, ingredients of humanity have always been separated and also connected by a network of borders at all territorial levels. Common interdependence among nation-states for socioeconomic, political and security interests have made border occupy a strategic place in global, continental and regional or sub-regional politics (Paul & Daniel, 2020).

Aniukwu (2020) observed that Nigeria's trans-border trade relations with its neighbouring friends within the West African sub-region has been mutually reinforced by the concept of international trade as expounded in the principle of comparative advantage attributed to the works of great economists like Adams Smith, John Stuart Mill and David Ricardo. Another challenging aspect of concern is the ECOWAS Protocols on free movement of persons and trades within its member countries as well as African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement which aimed at removing all barriers to trades and promote the free flow of persons, goods and services across the

continent and Nigeria is a signatory to both the ECOWAS Protocols and AfCFTA. This may explain why ECOWAS Countries Reject Nigerian Goods as in response to Nigeria's land border closure of 2019 (African Review, 2020; Kwarkye & Matongbada, 2021). The implication is that any [long-term] cross-border restriction on free movements contrary to these agreements may amount to unfavourable trade relations against Nigeria by other [African] countries. This argument corroborates that of Abdulrasheed Isah (2020) who asserts that the policy is prone to attract retaliation from Nigerian neighbouring countries in the future, in that they might erect trade barriers to thwart import from Nigeria and thus deny its producers the opportunity to access larger African markets. Furthermore, the negative impacts of the land border closure further exposed the country's extremely deficient number of productive industries and poor economic infrastructures which have very low capacity to feed the ever-increasing teeming population. Therefore, the sudden land border closure is tantamount to creating an environment of policy uncertainty among businesses as well as breeds or encouraging/condoning corruption among public officials who want to make profits from economic rents as a result of the border

closure. In another development, the border closure led to scarcity of materials exported from Nigeria to neighbouring countries hence, the concern for its consequences for trade liberation in Africa. The closure was in breach of protocol on the free movement of persons, goods and services established by the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) in which Nigeria is a signatory that wields significant political and economic weight. According to scholars, this action also came just two months after the country signed the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCTA), which aimed at removing barriers to trades and promote the free flow of persons, goods and services across the continent (Ogunwusi 2019).

1.13 Discussion of Findings

From the data presented and analyzed above, the following findings/deduction can be drawn.

Research objective 1: Reasons for Nigerian border closure with Neighboring West African Countries.

The study investigates the impact of Nigeria's border closure on Neighboring West African Countries 2019-2021. The findings of the research shows that Nigeria is

the fastest economy in Africa and performing much better than South Africa, but, however, Nigeria's economy is performing below expectation with high unemployment rate in the country. It is very clear data as a result of border closure, many jobs were lost and there is high rate of inflation for many commodities. The research also found out that, to revive domestic economic activities and farming to save food imports which account for billions of naira each year, border closure process was imitated by the Nigerian government to protect domestic trades and investment from cheap importation of food items.

Research objective 2: Benefits of Nigeria's border closure with Neighboring West African Countries

From the forgoing data analysis, the finding of the research shows that since the incident of border closure serious efforts were put in place by Nigerian government through several strategies. Border closure has boost domestic economic most especially in the agricultural sector which suffered years of importation of rice and other grains into the country. Domestic growers of agricultural produce have double their profit margin. Nigerian customs services have been performing in revenue generation to the

government. The study also found out that the biggest rice-growing business in Nigeria, owning 13 000 hectares (30 000 acres) of cultivable land of which only 4 500 hectares are being used because the sector is not profitable in the face of competition from Asian rice, but since the border closure, locally-milled rice has started selling, and the entire rice value chain has been positively impacted by the closure. This is in line with assumption two as posited in chapter one "Border closure with neighbouring West African Countries has significantly improved the economy of Nigeria".

Research objective 3: Implications of Nigerian border closure with Neighboring West African Countries

The findings of the research show that the border closure will have particularly negative consequences for trade especially informal ones, along the Benin-Nigeria border, as the two economies are closely intertwining. Indeed, this informal trade generates substantial income and employment in Benin, and Benin's government collects substantial revenues on entrepôt trade—goods imported legally and either legally re-exported to Nigeria, or illegally diverted into Nigeria through smuggling. The informal sector throughout

West Africa, and particularly in Benin, represents approximately 50 percent of GDP (70 percent in Benin, in fact) and 90 percent of employment.

It was found out in the data analyzed, that Nigerian border closure has impacted several trades and businesses in and outside the country. The continuous border closure and the recent corona virus pandemic has crippled Nigerian economy. Inflation rate has increased, unemployment among the border communities and rural farmers, small scale businesses are nowhere to be found. This is in line with assumption three as posited in chapter one “Nigerian border closure has negatively impacted on her socio-economic relations with Neighboring West African Countries”.

Research objective 4: How Nigeria’s border closure with Neighboring West African Countries affect Nigeria socio-economic relations.

The findings of the research show that, West African countries have been separated and also interconnected with several networks of land borders. Interdependence among nation-states for socioeconomic, political and security interests have remained very important. The study also found out that asserts that the

policy of border closure is prone to attract retaliation from Nigerian neighbouring countries in the future, in that they might erect trade barriers to thwart import from Nigeria and thus deny its producers the opportunity to access larger African markets. This is in line with assumption four as posited in chapter one “Nigeria border closure have affected trade with other countries in West Africa and raised the prices of imported products, especially basic necessities

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.14 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusion is made. The findings of this research discovered that, Nigeria is inconsistent with regards to the Policy of Import Regulations which dictates and determines the Border Closure. The present border closure has received several criticisms considering the impact it has on the economy. It is important to note that, the present administration has put all effort in order to increase local agricultural production through different programmes handled by central bank of Nigeria. However, this has not yielded any positive result. The border closure is primarily to increase and

encourage local manufacturers but the economy is still facing serious challenges ranging from high unemployment rate and inflation. Additionally, despite the intensified effort put in place to ban local rice and other essential commodities, corruption among customs and immigration authority is sabotaging the efforts. Imported goods are still coming into the country. Bribery and corruption is very common along the borders and major routes into the country. Unfortunately, Lagos Port became congested and operates very slow to clear imported goods. Therefore, one has to pay too many bribes to get his or her goods out in good time. However, it contradicts the effort of the government of the President Muhammadu Buhari, which claimed to be fighting corruption.

1.15 Recommendations

Based on the findings of research study, the following recommendations are hereby made by the researcher on ways to improve the situation:

- i. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should engage the Policy Expert right from the inception of the Policy Formulation, Implementation analysis of the outcomes of the policy and

Evaluation before its adoption. This will prevent the enactment and implementation of the disruptive policy which repercussion affects both citizens and the economy.

- ii. The Policy of Border closure should always consider the poor people who are about 87 Million in Nigeria and became subjects of hardship following the closure of Cross Border Trade. Thus, such policy should be pro poor citizens.
- iii. The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) should engage its officers and men of service rigorous Training, Seminars and workshop both domestically and internationally on the tricks of manning or handling border with modern gadgets and sophisticated equipment to the international best practice. This will drastically reduce the perennial smuggling across Nigeria's border.
- iv. That, whenever the government of the federation intends to close the borders, it should provide alternative jobs for over one Million people who earn their living through Cross Border Trading and related activities across borders.

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