

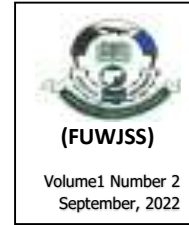
# POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NIGERIA'S LAND BORDERS CLOSURE

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines how the ban on movements of persons and goods across Nigeria's land borders impacts on internal domestic political and economic issues. The paper employs the historical research design which reviewed and content analyzed secondary data from textbooks, periodicals, journal articles, newspapers, seminar/conference papers and magazines. Data analysis was anchored on Push and Pull Theory and Economic Nationalism. Major findings revealed that smuggling activities have not been stopped in Nigeria due to the porous nature of Nigeria's land borders; consequently, insecurity and inflation have been on the increase since the closure of Nigeria's land borders in 2019. The paper concludes that despite the Nigerian federal government's acclaimed success for closure of the nation's land borders, this closure has not yielded any significant long-term success to address daunting political and economic challenges bedeviling the country. The paper recommends the modernization of customs/immigration operations alongside other related border security agencies, wherein these agencies use more advanced information technology management procedures that enhance accountability and transparency. Similarly, concerted realistic policies with robust security synergy between Nigeria and other neighbouring countries in the fight against trans-border crimes should be intensify, instead of resorting to land borders closure which has negative effects on the politics and economy of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Security, economy, border closure, inflation, standard of living

## Introduction

Globally, borders are indispensable components of human lives and at the same time they are components of interactions between individuals and societies sections (Akinyemi, 2013; Osimen, Anegbode, Akande & Oyewole, 2017). From time immemorial, ingredients of humanity have always been separated and also connected by a network of borders at all territorial levels (Kolossof, 2012). Common interdependence among nation-states for socioeconomic, political and security interests have made border occupy a strategic place in global, continental and regional or subregional politics (Paul & Daniel, 2020). Thus, international border remains a contour through which national aspirations are achieved internationally by sovereign states in extensive mutual interactions especially on economic, sociopolitical and security spheres (Kolossof, 2012). Emmanuel, Mamman and Anderibom (2020) argued that interactions, cooperation and interdependence among nation-states is generally to provide nations with the services or commodities it lacks or not produce enough quantity of them in exchange for those that it produces in abundance.

In view of the above, 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 Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and David Ricardo. These politico-economic philosophers who advocate the principle of comparative advantage believed that it is when countries specialized in the production of goods in which they have greater advantages of lower cost than others, that there will be increase in economic welfare (Aniukwu, 2020). The rationale for this principle is premised on the fact that different countries are endowed with different raw materials or natural resources, human and infrastructural capacities and thus may produce the same goods more efficiently and sell them cheaper than others. This implies that countries of the world will have to exchange (import-export) raw materials or finished goods with others. In view of the above, Adeyinka asserts that Nigerian merchants import lots of cereals and grains, vegetables, tubers and livestock from other countries like Benin Republic, Chad, Niger Republic to make up for the shortfalls in

Nigeria (Abiodun, 2021). Abiodun (2021) further argued that manufactured household products, building materials and crude oil or its products are exported from Nigeria to these countries and others. No doubt, trade exchange of such between/among countries globally fashioned a significant part of their respective economy and development. The realization of this was responsible for the formation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Abiodun, 2021). In other words, ECOWAS was formed primarily to promote economic prosperity within the region which subsequently upholding its Treaty on the free movement of persons and goods within/among member states in West Africa region.

Similarly, Hoffmann and Melly (2015) observed that a large volume of goods from around the world enters Nigeria across its porous borders; and such trade movements, as well as those in the opposite direction, are mostly unrecorded, untaxed, informal and difficult to regulate, as well as the flows of money that finance them. This also has security implication across the land borders, especially in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria, notably Boko Haram insurgence and other militant groups who masquerade themselves as business entrepreneurs just to source money and supply weapons to their fighters in the West African sub-region. Sometimes, terrorist groups engage the services of other deprived individuals to provide them with useful information. Cantens and Raballand (2017) maintain that terrorist groups also pay traders for intelligence to enable them to slip across borders. This seems to be the case in Northern Nigeria where Boko Haram has regularly engaged the services of some unskilled youths, women and even children as agents and informants. This may explained why different scholars argued that the porous nature of Nigeria's border has served as outlet for importation of contraband goods, smuggling of arms, migrants and others transnational criminalities which negate national security architecture, purpose and efforts. Indeed, smuggling of goods and persons into or out of the country has contributed to high loss of government revenue, threatened domestic and foreign direct investment, problem of unemployment, etc. (Akinyemi, 2013; Ering, 2011; Hoffmann & Melly, 2015; Babatola, 2015; Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016; Osimen *et al.*, 2017).

From the foregoing therefore, it is apposite to assert that Nigeria's trade interactions across her land boundaries over the years have

continued to witness different forms of criminalities that have undermined national interest. As a matter of fact, Nigeria in recent times has witnessed scourging surge of illegal trans-border movements of persons and goods or articles which generate into a rising new security concern, economic and political uncertainty that has characterized the country. Thus, Nigeria's borders are unstable and its integrity is systematically violated by a non-trivial subset of the population, which has produced negative internalities and externalities that has come to affect the economic development of the country.

Meanwhile, scholars have argued that border security is very essential for the actualization of consolidated statehood, enhancement of sovereignty and national security as well as socioeconomic wellbeing of a state and its citizens (Carter & Poast, 2015; Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016; Simmons & Shaffer, 2019). However, border security is an ascending state priority all over the world, due to rising new security concerns as well as economic and political uncertainty created by the trans-border movement of persons and goods (Ering, 2011; Simmons & Shaffer, 2019). Little wonder then African has been experiencing the problem of how to effectively secure its borders from all sort of transnational crimes which has become threat to national security within the continent. Besides, border as described by Carter and Poast (2015) is demarcations that the populations on both sides recognize and (for the most part) honour. A border, therefore, is unstable if its integrity is overtly or systematically violated by a non-trivial subset of the population, thereby producing negative externalities for states. Hence, border closure is a subtle political and economic measures occasionally adopted by nation-states to stem the surge of influx of unwanted persons, goods and services. It enables the country concerned to prevent the entry into its territory of illegal commodities or articles which it considers detrimental to the growth and development of its economy from other countries.

This prompted Maigari, Dantani, Yelwa and Aliyu (2020) to argue that sovereign states have rights over their frontier and the exercise of such rights affects security, political and economic activities of countries with which they share common boundaries. Thus, irrespective of the consequences border closure might produce on its external environment, national interest is the only language it understands and used in the international dealings by state actors.

With respect to national interest, it is worth noting that the realist school as exemplified by Hans Morgenthau (1948) regarded the state as rational being capable of making rational decisions for expanding, sustaining and consolidating their national interests defined in terms of power. By implication therefore, nation-states are more concerned with issues that can promote their national interests. No nation leaves its border at the mercy of people of other countries so that they can bring in goods without some measures of control. Thus, countries enact laws or policy measures to regulate interrelations between their citizens and those of other countries (Emmanuel *et al.*, 2020, p. 21-32).

In relation with the above, reports showed that daunting economic and developmental challenges as well as the rising spate of security threats to national cohesion occasioned (compelled) Nigerian government to close its land borders against its neighbouring African countries for over one year which commenced from August, 2019. In fact, there is consensus among scholars that the decision by the Nigerian government to shut down its land borders in the third quarter of 2019 was the desire to have a total management of her economy towards self-sufficiency and to curtail the influx of irregular migrants and arms which was perceived as responsible for national security question and collapse of the economy (Olomu, Alao & Adewumi, 2019, p. 10-19; Emmanuel *et al.*, 2020; Punch, 2020 Aug. 17; Abiodun, 2021, p. 10-30; Eselebor & Kehinde, 2021, p. 207-224; Uche & Nwkorobia, 2021, p. 63-86; TheCable, 2021 Sept. 22).

Thus, in an attempt to have a total control of movement of persons and goods across its frontier zones, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) closed its land borders with Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic which are situated at the southwest, southeast, northeast and northwestern parts of the country, respectively. The implementation of the FGN order was contained in the Nigeria Customs Service circular vides NCS/ENF/ABJ/058/S.24 dated 20th August, 2019 (Emmanuel *et al.* 2020, p. 21-32; Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020, p. 56-65; Omodunbi, Olawole & Mohammed *et al.*, 2022, p. 200-210). Specifically, the justification for this action in the view of the government was the incessant smuggling of rice, vegetable oil, tomatoes past, etc. from other countries as well as illegal exports of cheaper, subsidized petrol from Nigeria to its neighbouring states, which account for about 20% of Nigeria's fuel and other products

(Abdulrasheed Isah, 2020; The Guardian, 2020 Dec. 31; Omodunbi *et al.*, 2022). In other words, Nigeria's government shut down its land borders based on the need to shrink security challenges along the nation's external borders, most especially inflow of small arms, weapons and drugs into the country. The government also aimed at shrinking the upward unstable inflation rate to a minimal level in order to strengthen the naira currency which was fast losing its value both locally and internationally, as well as protecting local manufacturers and promoting the nation's agriculture industries by providing various forms of subsidies and soft loans to local farmers and small-medium scale entrepreneurs – a drive for a home grown stable economy and diversification. For example, Adesina (TheCable, 2021 Sept. 22) reported that the President said the decision to close the country's borders was to “encourage farmers, and eat what we grow...”

In view of the above therefore, the current study aimed to answer the following questions: Does ban on movements of persons and goods across Nigeria's land borders addressed domestic issues associated with security and the economy between August 2019 and 2022? Has government's enforcement of border closure in August 2019 – December 2020 effectively curb inflation and efficiently betters the populace's living standard between 2019 and 2022?

It is worth noting that several public affairs analysts, commentators, jurists and scholars from various academic fields/areas of studies such as political theory, public administration/policy science, political economy, international relations, law/legislative studies, economics, sociology, criminology, etc. have commented and/or written copiously on the current subject matter (Nnodim, 2019; Ebuka, 2019; Olomu *et al.*, 2019; Emmanuel *et al.*, 2020; Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020; The Guardian, 2020 Dec. 31; Eselebor & Kehinde, 2021; Omodele, 2021; Ugwuja & Chukwukere, 2021; Uche & Nwokorobia, 2021; Omodunbi, 2022). However, there is still paucity of literature that compactly evaluates the level of long-term achievement by the FGN in addressing domestic issues associated with security and the economy through its August 2019 trans-border restriction on movements of persons and goods as well as how the enforcement of the government's abrupt policy effectively curbs inflation and efficiently betters the populace's living standard between 2019 and 2022. Thus, effort is made to cover the gap in literature which formed the fulcrum of this paper.

### **Conceptual Illumination**

This section illuminates core concepts amenable to easy understanding and comprehension of the issue under investigation.

**Land border:** An area of land of a particular entity close to that of another entity. At the international level, such land areas connect two or more countries through which state actors as well as non-state actors relate or interact. Borderlands or land borders are both melting pots and security hot spots, often neglected in the development strategies of post-colonial states. Unfortunately, borders have also been the arena for trans-border crimes such as smuggling of goods, small arms, trafficking in humans, banditry, kidnapping, illegal migration, amongst others. They equally represent a dynamic place of historically fostered cultural and socioeconomic exchange at the same time thus, enhancing international economic and political relations between or among nation-states. In other words, interactions or activities by persons across the borders could be categorized as legitimate or illegal, depending on the laws, principles or bilateral agreements that bind the states concern.

**Closure:** The word closure implies temporal or permanent blockade, close up, ban, discontinue, shut down, etc. of something, be it land, road, bridge, school, hospital or anything as may be sanctioned/defined by a recognized authority, for a targeted objective. It also implies the stoppage of free movement of persons, goods or classified articles by a recognized authority for certain reasons. Thus, a nation-state might close its borders (land, water, airspace) with other state(s) for socioeconomic, political or security reasons as the case with Nigeria in 2019.

**Challenges:** This implies situations of being faced with something which requires efforts (mental and/or physical) in order to be done or deal with successfully. It also means difficulties or problems which impede achievement of one's plans or set objectives. In the context of the current study, Nigeria has been plagued with daunting security and economic challenges which many, especially the government attribute them to illegal activities (free movements of persons/articles) across its borderlines with neighboring African states. Others associated these challenges with poor operational capacity and lack of harmony of border controlling agencies, insufficient or lack of expertise and

professional cadre of officials, corruption among border officials, poor or lack of border infrastructures and modern equipment or none application (if any), and so forth.

**Inflation:** The general and continuous increase in prices of [consumer] goods and services for a long period within an economy. It is also an important indicator, which shows the rate at which the prices of goods increasingly or upwardly change in the country at a given point in time which is often due to devaluation of currency. In most cases, the closest approximation of what people intuitively understand by the inflation is the change in their cost living (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 1-8; Höflmayr, 2022, p. 1-12; Oyekanmi, 2022). Ibrahim (2019) identified three major types of inflation which include, demand pull, cost push and anticipated inflations, respectively.

**Standard of living:** The ability of an individual to afford social services which include but not limited to health, shelter, clothing, transportation as well as living within or above the UN's limit of \$1 per day. Fontinelle (2019, p. 1-3), Anonymous (n.d., p. 1-4) succinctly described the term as comparison tool which implies the level of wealth, comfort, material goods, and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class or geographic area. Factors such as safety, economic and political stability, cost of goods and services, life expectancy, level of income, affordability access to quality of healthcare, inflation rate, quality and availability of employment, class disparity, poverty rate, quality and affordability of housing, GDP and national economic growth, infrastructure, etc (Anonymous, n.d.; Fontinelle, 2019).

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Mbah (2014), a theoretical framework consists of the concepts, together with their definition and existing theory that is used for a particular study must demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic or study under investigation. Similarly, the essence of theoretical framework is to show that the relationships a researcher proposes are not based on his/her personal instincts or guesses, but that they are formed from facts obtained from an existing theory (Mbah, 2020). Therefore, this paper adopted Push and Pull theory and Economic Nationalism as its theoretical framework.



### **Push and Pull Theory of Cross-Border Movement**

Push and Pull Theory was pioneered by Everett Spurgeon Lee in 1966. It was actually drawn from his seminal work of 1965 titled, “*A Theory of Migration.*” The theory provides a scheme of the factors that could explain the volume and purpose for cross-border movement (i.e. migration) from origin to the receiving destination. He conceptualized the factors associated with the decision to migrate and the process of migration into the following categories (Lee, 1966, p. 47-57): factors associated with the area of origin; factors associated with the area of destination; intervening obstacles, and personal factors.

In their works, Lee (1966, p. 47-57), Kainth (2009, p. 82-116) explained that in each area, there are numerous factors which drive (push) away people or repel people from an area, or to hold the people in an area or to attract (pull) the people to a place. In this respect, there are significant differences between the factors associated with the area of origin and those associated with the area of destination (the sending and receiving countries). Cross-border movement (migration) may take place after both of these are properly weighed. On normal ground however, a person has a better and more realistic knowledge about the place of origin, while his knowledge about the place of destination is somewhat superficial and inexact.

Intervening obstacles factors also have to be overcome before migration finally takes place. These include distance between the two places, accessibility which relates to topography or physical barriers, transportation and immigration laws. Technological advances, however, have lessened their importance in modern times. Finally, the personal factors are of the utmost importance because, instead of the actual factors associated with the place of origin and destination, the individual’s perception of these factors is found to influence the actual act of illegal or legal migration (Lee, 1966, p. 47-57).

Now, push factors exist at the point of origin and force people to leave their home countries, resulting to emigration of citizens to other places with seemingly solution to such factors. Push factors include non-availability of enough livelihood opportunities, lack of economic opportunities, poverty, rapid population growth that surpasses available resources, “primitive” or poor living conditions, desertification, famines/droughts, fear of political persecution, poor healthcare, loss of wealth, natural disasters, education, etc.

On the other hand, pull factors are exactly the opposite of push factors and are present at the destination or receiving country which often attract immigration of migrants. They include job opportunities and better living conditions; availability of land for settling and agriculture, market where specific business thrive, political and/or religious freedom, superior education and welfare systems, better healthcare systems and stress-free environment attractive, security, etc. compare to the sending country. Push and pull factors are paired, that is, cross-border movement can occur if the reason for migrating (push) away from one's place (state or country) of origin has a solution (pull) in the receiving destination. In the context of labor migration, the push factors are often characterized by the lack of job opportunities in sending areas or countries; and the pull factors are job and economic opportunities available in the receiving areas. While in the case of illegal inflow or outflow of persons and goods or articles, the push and pull factors include [but not limited to] market for illicit businesses like SALW, narcotics/drugs, oil products, banned agricultural products (rice, beans, maize, tomatoes past, etc.), cars, used cloths/footwears, weak immigration laws, condoning environment, etc. in the receiving country.

### **Economic Nationalism**

According to Gilpin (1987), economic nationalism is an ideology that favours state interventionism over other market mechanisms, by imposing policies like domestic control of the economy, labour, tariffs, restrictions of movement of persons, goods and capital. It strongly believes that the economy should serve nationalist objectives. The policy advocates for self-sufficiency as well as uphold the principle of protectionism which favours local industries, labour, entrepreneurs, etc. (Gilpin, 1987; Helleiner, 2021).

Explicating nationalism further, Ebenstein William submits that;

Since the French Revolution at least, nationalism has been one of the driving forces of domestic, imperial, and international politics. Complex in its origins, it has developed along many, and often contradictory, lines. In its name some of the greatest acts of heroism and liberty have been committed, but also crimes of cruelty and fanaticism. In the first half of its existence – from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century – nationalism was essentially inspired by humanitarian, democratic ideas; this was the story of

early French, American, Czech, Italian, Irish, and Polish nationalism. In the last *eighty* years, on the other hand, nationalism has tended to ally itself with parochialism, intolerance, bigotry, persecution of minorities, racialism, and finally imperialism and aggression... (Asirvatham & Misra, 2005, p. 548)

Furthermore, scholars elucidate the character and effects of extreme nationalism as thus;

Nationalism is the organization of politics and commerce for selfish ends; an organized power for exploitation. Nationalism so embitters relations between countries that a systematic study of one another's culture and civilization becomes almost impossible... In the name of national rights, national honour, and national policy, millions of lives and billions of treasure have been wasted in recent times. Nationalism easily leads to hatred of the foreigner, and this aggressive kind of nationalism which is aptly described as 'wolf-pack' nationalism is the breeder of war... (Asirvatham & Misra, 2005, p. 549)

In view of the above, Asirvatham and Misra (2005, p. 548 – 549) opined that the extreme form of economic nationalism which is known as *autarchy* aimed at complete economic self-sufficiency. Beyond a certain point of such nationalism is a “fruitful cause” of hardships, economic instability within an economy and hostile international economic relations of a state toward others which tends to breed disharmony and distort international peace or goodwill. According to them, “it is like a *boomerang*, bringing infinite harm upon its own head” (p. 549).

### **Application of the Theories**

The Push and Pull theory aptly explains why individuals migrate from one environment to another. Base on the preceding assumption, the push factors such as bad governance, difficulty in finding work locally or non-availability of work corresponding to the aspiration of individuals, violation of fundamental human rights, inequalities, poverty, bad economy, internal conflicts, ethno-religious wars, political instability, natural disaster, unemployment and lack of other forms of economic opportunities associated with local environment often compel or force people out for greener pasture elsewhere. Unfortunately, almost all the above-mentioned indicators of push

factors of migration are a common feature of African countries; most especially the West African states and indeed, those countries sharing land borders with Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's peculiar challenges, most citizens of these countries see Nigeria as a saving place in which economic opportunities are available. In fact, Nigeria is seen as the "United States of America *in Africa*" where "milk and honey" seem to be flowing even on the streets of the country and thus some of them aspired to be in Nigeria in order to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. To them, Nigeria offers solution to their problems including relatively better economic opportunities. In other words, Nigeria possesses various indicators of pull factors which attracts them into the country. This reflects Lee's (1966, p. 47-57) assumption on personal factors category of migration, which states that "the individual's perception of these [pull] factors is found to influence the actual act of migration". In terms of intervening factors, the porous nature of Nigeria's land borders, poor management facilities, corruption and lack of sincere synergy among related law enforcement agencies coupled with ECOWAS' Protocols and AfCFTA agreements make irregular migration across Nigeria's borders possible. This implies that so long as these issues remain unaddressed, trans-border illicit activities will continue to thrive since there is relatively little or no obstacles against the perpetrators.

It is imperative to note that in African countries, especially West Africa conflict and human rights abuses associated with poor governance have become among the key factors impelling much current migration; and it is no coincidence that conflict-ridden countries as in Africa are often faced with severe economic difficulties. Richmond (1994) posits that such combinations of motivations create difficulties in maintaining a clear distinction between voluntary (pull) and forced (push) migration. This obviously implies that voluntary or involuntary migrants also have negative development implications on the destination areas because it often times involves the movements of legal and illegal persons, articles or goods and services. In fact, criminal elements tend to utilize every slightest opening to smuggled contraband items into the country which has negative impacts on the economy and security of the country. According to van Hear (1998) mass arrivals of asylum seekers and refugees who fled into neighbouring and far-flung states have short-term damaging effects, particularly in terms of strains on

resources hosts countries must provide. A practical example is that of the heavily presence and pressure of Ghanaian migrants (immigrants) on the Nigeria's economy in the 1970s and 80s which led to the stringent restriction on Ghanaians resulting to the nickname, "*Ghana must go*". The ban was aimed at easing the perceived negative impacts of their presence in Nigeria. Another similar example is that of the recent xenophobic attacks on, especially Nigerians in South Africa by its citizens.

Therefore, when a developing economy like Nigeria perceived that its economic and security woes are associated with illegal trans-border movements, it tends to adopt protectionist policies or economic nationalism in order to swiftly address the perceived problems. For example, the issues surrounding Nigeria's border closure in 2019 centred on two major aspects. The first one hinges on smuggling and insecurity while the second one was on agricultural-cum-industrial production which aimed at protecting and promoting local contents. Thus, the Nigerian government associated her internal economic and security problems of 2019 with irregular flows of migrants and other trans-border illicit activities. Hence, the government's justification for the temporary closure of the land borders with all her neighbouring countries in 2019 as a swift response to those threats.

### **Methodology**

Every type of design and method used in any research undertaking is determined substantially by the nature of the research problem and purpose of the study. Considering the nature of this study therefore, *Historical Research Design* is adopted. Remarkably, scholars described this strategy as a type of *qualitative* survey design that involves systematic and objective inquiry into events, developments and experiences of the past (Obasi, 1999; Aniche & Efanodor, 2018). According to them, "it is a non-experimental design that deals with determination, evaluation and explanation of past events which usually requires formulation of qualitative hypotheses (p. 318)." The design is also categorized as *qualitative research design* in which either primary or secondary sources of data or a combination of the two are used along with the application of qualitative method(s) of data analysis such as qualitative-descriptive method of analysis, narrative analysis, etc. in a study or investigation (Aniche & Efanodor, 2018).

This study employed documentary method of data collection in which relevant information were gathered from secondary sources. These sources are extant literature related to the subject matter which include print (hard) and soft electronic/internet materials such as textbooks, periodicals: journal articles, conference/seminar papers, newspapers, magazines, etc. Interestingly, documentary research method is popular in social science studies because of its flexibility and potency; it is an acceptable social research method that is also scientific and requires rigorous adherence to research ethics (Aniche & Efanodor, 2018; Okolie, 2019).

It is worth nothing that despite the problems, such as grappling with large volume of data associated with this method of data collection, the choice of employing this method for the present investigation is due to the surpassing advantages such as guarantee to availability of relevant materials, affordability and reliability of data that could not be gotten easily otherwise which eliminates “the research effect”. Therefore, employing the documentary method of data collection in this study is of great importance because of the interface it possesses between the accessibility to data source and the considerable time effectual provided by the method which relatively allow for easy collation of necessary data for analysis as evident in its application on the current study.

This study adopted *qualitative-descriptive* method of data analysis as explained by Lambert and Lambert (2012), Aniche & Efanodor (2018). This method is one of the approaches to the analysis of qualitative materials [in the social sciences]. The method is generally “characterized by simultaneous data collection and analysis” (Lambert & Lambert, 2012, p. 256; Aniche and Efanodor, 2018). In other words, this method allows for sifting through volumes of data from primary and/or secondary sources with relative ease in a systematic fashion. It is a useful technique that allows researchers to discover and describe the spotlight/focus or experience of individuals, groups, institutional or social situations. It also allows inferences to be made as well as corroboration of information from different sources (Nwanolue & Egbuchulam, 2018, p. 61-80; Okolie, 2019).

Apropos of the above, one can aptly assert that qualitative-descriptive method of analysis hinges upon the examination of available data and general information about a phenomenon under discussion from which fact is established and conclusion drawn.

Therefore, the choice of this method is informed by the fact that it allows for systematic collection and organization of data as well as simultaneous objective analysis or explanation of it with somewhat ease.

### **An Overview of Border Closure in Nigeria**

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; Adebusey, 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; TheCable, 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.

### **The Nature of Land Borders in Nigeria**

As earlier noted, a country's borders are internationally recognized demarcations that separate it from one another. Osimen *et al.* (2017, p. 17-27) 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 *et al.* (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 (see Table 1). In other words, many States (16) in Nigeria share land borders with 4 African countries as displayed in Table 1 (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 & Nwokorobia, 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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).

**Table 1: Some states in Nigeria that share land borders with other African countries**

S/N	States in Nigeria that border with other countries		African countries sharing land borders with Nigeria	
	Name of the State	Geopolitical Zone	African Country	Location in Africa
1.	Adamawa	North-east	Cameroon	Central Africa
2.	Benue	North-central	Cameroon	Central Africa
3.	Borno	North-east	Cameroon	Central Africa
			Chad	Central Africa
			Niger	West Africa
4.	Cross-River	South-south	Cameroon	Central Africa
5.	Jigawa	North-west	Niger	West Africa
6.	Katsina	North-west	Niger	West Africa
7.	Kebbi	North-west	Benin	West Africa
			Niger	West Africa
8.	Kwara	North-central	Benin	West Africa
9.	Lagos	South-west	Benin	West Africa
10.	Niger	North-central	Benin	West Africa
11.	Ogun	South-west	Benin	West Africa
12.	Oyo	South-west	Benin	West Africa
13.	Sokoto	North-west	Benin	West Africa
			Niger	West Africa
14.	Taraba	North-east	Cameroon	Central Africa
15.	Yobe	North-west	Niger	West Africa
16.	Zamfara	North-west	Niger	West Africa

**Source:** Authors' survey (2022)

**Table 2: Summary of legal and illegal routes around Nigeria's land borders**

S/N	Legitimacy	Route	Activity
1.	Legal	84	Majorly importation of goods and services (free market)
2.	Illegal	1,978	Majorly illegal entry, smuggling of cars, arms Smuggling, exportation of drugs and Human trafficking.

**Source:** Osimen *et al.* (2017, p. 21)

Remarkably, extant literature revealed that there are over 1,400 illegal routes along Nigeria's borders, 1,316 more than the approved number of border control post (see Table 2). Similarly, the Table shows that

the 84 approved border controls cover 4,047 km of total length of Nigeria's land border (Osimen *et al.*, 2017; Okoye, 2021, p. 1-5). These illegal routes and porosity of nation's borders are a threat to national security and boundary questions. Olomu *et al.* (2019, p. 10-19) in their study, x-rayed the nature and state of Nigeria's borders and measures deployed to address the challenges since independence. It revealed that the trans-border relations is beset with various security challenges and that the porous and large scale nature of the borders created different forms of national security problem for the country. It is interesting to note that stable political entity is responsible for galvanizing the economy for optimal output which translates to the living condition of the citizenry and this can be attainable only when the border security is achieved.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Land Border Closure in 2019 and the Economy of Nigeria: Gain or Loss?**

Literature on border closure and its associated impact has identified justifications by the Nigerian government to shut down all its land borders in the third quarter of 2019. Scholars such as Okhiria and Owoniyi (2019), Maigari (2020, p. 1-25), Okorie and Enmere (2020, p. 210-218), Abiodun (2021), have pointed out the effects of this border closure on the economy of Nigeria. Magaji *et al.* (2020, p. 1-25) argues that the Nigerian government has portrayed border closure as one of the best decisions to safeguard home industries and farmers from the importation of cheap goods. This was in respect to President Muhammadu Buhari's view in early 2020 that land border closure has impacted positively on Nigeria's economy where he was quoted as saying; "We have saved millions of dollars; we have realized that we don't have to import rice. We have achieved food security-we have curtailed the importation of drugs and proliferation of small arms which threaten our country" (African Review, 2020; Okorie & Enmere, 2020, p. 210-218). This statement attests to the facts that the nation has experienced economic prosperity within the period (last quarter) of 2019 as a result of land borders lockdown which is contrary to the critical view of the situation of the country. Besides, reports from Nigeria government officials indicated that the land border closure has achieved its main goals such as drastic reduction in widespread smuggling from neighbouring countries, increase in local rice

production and *instant* increase in earning at the ports by Nigerian Customs. Nigerian Customs Service maintains that in late 2019 its revenue from the ports had dramatically increased to an unprecedented level of about ₦6 billion per day, while trafficking in illegal arms and ammunition reduced. NNPC said there has been drastic reduction in the volume of petrol consumed in the country following the border closure (Agboluade, 2019; Nnodim, 2019). Be that as it may, most of this accrued revenue ended up in pulse of government officials through brazen corruption that has clouded the country by both civil servant and politicians alike.

Viewing from a perspective different from President Muhammadu Buhari and his government officials, Abiodun (2021, p. 10-30) indicated that the 2019 border closure has affected the economy of Nigeria. The constant border shut down is inimical to the nation's economy because several industries exporting products through the land borders have lose their market value in the West Africa sub-region. Many of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) formally operating at the frontier areas closed down and some relocated to Lagos or neighbouring countries for survival. The loss of market value and relocation of some of these businesses has hampered progress and development of Nigeria's economy. According to Aniukwu (2020, p. 1-18), blocking trade in the name of giving the local infant industries the privilege to grow as well as protect the citizens, hurt the economy severely. It specifically harms the country's long term economic prospect. Similarly, Kwarkye and Matongbada (2021) recalled that the objective for the closure of the land borders according to Nigerian officials "was to stem the smuggling of goods, particularly rice. Yet, the phenomenon hasn't stopped since the closure, raising questions about the measure's effectiveness and the actual reasons for the decision."

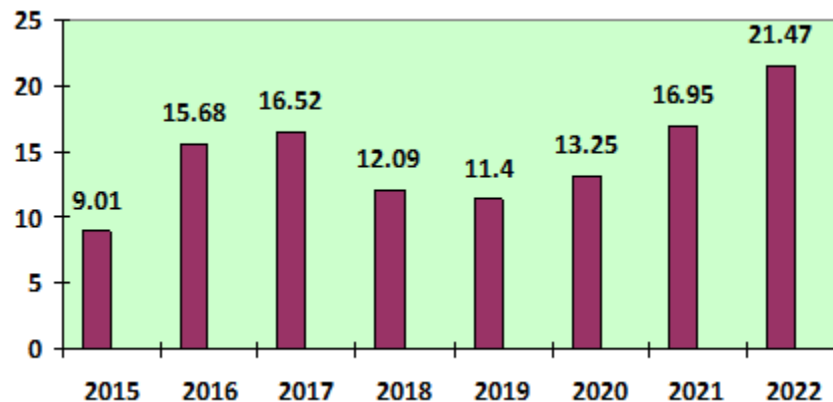
For example, Ojewale (in BusinessDay, 2022 December 31) reported that analysis of different data sets revealed that Nigeria not only lost out in making money from trade within the region, but also worsened insecurity; in that according to Council on Foreign Relations, there were 8,075 deaths due to violence in 2019 which the year borders were closed, but in 2020, the number of deaths increased to 9,663 while in 2021, the number shoot-up to 10,343. The report furthered that in trade, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that the nation's exports to other ECOWAS markets

declined from ₦2.24 trillion in 2019 to ₦841 billion in 2020 and ₦1.24 trillion in 2021, respectively. In the same vein, manufacturers claimed that large volumes of tomato paste in different forms were daily brought in illegally, even though the borders were supposed to be closed or at least, they were shut to legitimate trade. According to the report, Nigeria, which on the average imported about 300,000 metric tons of tomato paste annually, was losing about \$450 million in revenue accruable due to non-payment of the levy of \$1500 per ton and 50 percent duty on tomato paste. Moreover, different national dailies reported Nigeria's President [Muhammadu Buhari] lamented an increase in smuggling since the [partial] reopening" of the land borders (Punch Newspaper, 2020, August 17; TheCable, 2021, Sept. 22; Kwarkye & Matongbada, 2021; Egole, 2022). According to Kwarkye and Matongbada (2021), "the closure invokes memories of the same measure imposed in 1984 by then military ruler Buhari. It highlights a preference for protectionist economic policies as a way of boosting growth and reducing unemployment."

In view of the above, Paul and Daniel (2020) accepted that, many analysts have alluded to the fact that the land borders closure has had some negative undertone which has spelt doom for a developing economy like Nigeria. For instance, the border closure has led to food inflation as a result of the increase in the price of rice and other food items in the markets. Corroborating this line of thought, Okhiria and Owoniyi (2019) in analyzing the situation, pointed out that in the initial month of the closure – August (2019), inflation still took a downward turn to 11.02% with the actual effect of the border closure coming to play in September, resulting in a spike to 11.24%. Food inflation quickened to 14.1% from 13.5% in September (2020). A bag of imported rice which initially cost between ₦15,000 and ₦17,000, increased to cost over ₦22,000. Locally produced rice on the other hand sells for as high as ₦17,000 per bag. Abia (2019) was of the view that the fall in the supply of rice led to food price inflation which impacted negatively on the Nigerian consumers.

Similarly, literature revealed that the economic shock caused by the border closure is believed to have worsened unemployment in the informal sector as the government action adversely impacted the means of livelihood of many Nigerians. For instance, most people around the border areas are involved and depended on small-scale trading of textile, footwear, alcohol and other goods along the borders.

No doubt, the border closure has also been identified as a contributory factor in the rise in food prices. Following the border closure, the nation's annual inflation rate continued to climb steadily every month. In fact, investigation indicates that four months into the border closure (i.e., August – December, 2019), data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria's inflation rate rose year-on-year (Okorie and Enmere, 2020, p. 210-218). For instance, the inflation rate of 11.40% as at the last quarter of 2019 has consistently risen to 13.25% (December, 2020), 16.95% (December, 2021) and 21.47% (November, 2022), respectively as shown in Fig. 1 (Oyedemi, 2020; Premium Times, 2022 Sept. 15; Oyekanmi, 2022; Trading Economics, 2022 Dec. 15; WorldData.info, n.d.; Macrotrends, n.d.). This may explained why some scholars argued that border closures have had particularly negative consequences for traders, especially informal ones along the Benin-Nigeria corridor (Mbaye *et al.*, 2019; Ugwuja and Chukwukere, 2021).



**Source:** Authors' survey (2022)

**Fig. 1: Annual inflation rate between 2015 and November 2022**

From the Figure above, the least inflation rate of 11.40% was recorded in 2019 which was the within early period of the implementation/enforcement of the impromptu border closure policy. The Figure also shows that the inflation rate was below 10% during the first year (2015) of the administration and climbed to a peak level of 21.47% in 2022 which is the worse, the country had ever experienced (Fig. 1). It is imperative to note that the consistent rise in

inflation rate often translates negatively on the purchasing power of the masses. For example, Oyedemi (2020) asserts that before the border closure in 2019, a bowl of [local] raw rice for example was sold averagely below ₦500 but the price spontaneously went up such that in the subsequent years is being sold between ₦800 and ₦1,000 or higher than that. To worsen the situation, the cost of rice and other consumer goods have risen without a commensurate increase in the populace's average income. In view of the above, Oyedemi (2020) decried that the living standard of Nigerians is worse today compared to periods prior to the border closure. Furthermore, Oyekanmi (2022) posits that the rising cost of goods has been attributed to the surge in energy prices, depreciation of the local currency at the black market, increased cash in circulation, etc. Consequently, it has prompted the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to adjust the nation's monetary policy rate multiple times in recently in order to curb the rising inflation rate; yet to no avail. The CBN has further redesigned the higher denomination naira notes (i.e. ₦200, ₦500 and ₦1,000), effective December 15, 2022. Similarly, it has sets a maximum cash withdrawal limit between ₦100,000 and ₦500,000 weekly for individuals and organizations; while commercial banks were instructed to load only ₦200 notes and below in their respective ATMs, effective January 9, 2023 in pursuance of cashless policy.

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 (AfCFTA), which aimed at removing barriers to trades and promote the free flow of persons, goods and services across the continent (Ogunwusi *et al.*, 2019; Kwarkye & Matongbada, 2021; Omodunbi *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, Okhiria and Owoniyi (2019) believe that local manufacturer have been unable to export their products such as leather, cocoa to the West African markets via the land border, which constituted a severe challenge to the survival of these industries. Therefore, it is believed that the 2019 land borders closure has negatively affected the

economy of Nigeria. this argument is based on the fact that it was observed that no matter the unique economic gains and opportunities provided by the borders closure, the government acclaimed successes cannot commensurate with long-run economic hardship and other negative impact of the exercise on the lives of final consumers – that is, the “common citizens” as well as petty traders or small and medium-sizes entrepreneurialism (SME) in the country.

In view of the above, the paper believe that, in as much as there was increase in government accrue revenue, reduction in the volume of petrol consumption in the country as a result of the 2019 border closure which hitherto practiced was smuggling of the product to neighbouring countries, and the patronages enjoyed by local producers especially rice farmers, the paper observed that land border closure in 2019 was and is another exercise in futility which was further exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic that brought the world to a standstill. It failed in its drive for home grown economic development; likewise in huge influx of arms smuggling and illegal migrants which has jeopardize national security of the country. For instance, TheCable (2021, Sept. 22) reported that “months after the reopening [of the land borders], the President had expressed concern that the closure of the borders failed to stop arms smuggling into Nigeria.” Similarly, the country has witnessed the ever-highest inflation rate in its history which led to close down of many businesses, retrenchments of workers (especially in the private sector), creating more traffic jam of unemployment which has also renewed the activities of militant groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, secessionist movements, as well as subtle financial related atrocities of cybercrime.

The failed objective of border closure in Nigeria is occasioned by corruption, porous nature of the border, globalization, poor or absence of modern borderlines technological gadgets, near absence or lack of synergy among security agencies and above all, weak institutional mechanism to crave for robust economy rather depending on western world for charity and survival. Besides, studies have shown that there were over 1,900 illegal routes around Nigeria borders which are 20 times more than the legal ones (Osimen *et al.*, 2017 17-27). This implies that even if the government deploys a maximum and standby security surveillance, including modern technological gargets around the less than 100 legal routes of the borders without finding a lasting



solution to the outrageous illegal ones, no positive result may come out of such efforts. Moreover, different government regimes in Nigeria including the current administration had deployed a lot of efforts through its agencies responsible for borders security to curtail trans-border crimes; yet illicit border activities seemed to be on the increase – “influx and efflux” of illegal migrants alongside terrorists, smuggling-cum-proliferation of contraband goods/articles including small arms and light weapons (SALW), human trafficking, international organized robbery as well as other related crimes like armed banditry, Boko Haram and these had continued to aggravate unwanted security and economic situations of the country. Thus, it is apt to state that just like previous border closure in Nigeria had on the long-run been largely ineffective, the present one has nothing *tangible* to show that it was effective or actually achieve its primary aim because the exercise only reduced little illegal trans-border activities for a short while. In view of the above, Abdulrasheed Isah (2020) rightly observed that;

During his regime as a military dictator, Buhari closed Nigeria’s border with Benin Republic to thwart smuggling. The outcome was poor in reducing illegal trade between the two countries as smuggling activities sharply increased afterwards. And so, there is little evidence to prove that the current border closure will be effective..... The closing of official borders would, at best, reduce the magnitude of smuggling temporarily before new channels and mechanisms are created by the smugglers who are sophisticated and well-organized.

Corroborating this fact, some trade officials stated that the closure of the land borders had probably resulted in new smuggling routes as illicit dealers are determined to move their goods across borders. This is because it was noted that ban articles/products, including rice are likely to have been smuggled in smaller consignments given the difficulty of driving heavy duty trucks through alternate routes. Moreover, informal trading via unapproved routes is a long-standing economic practice associated with local communities in Nigeria that have close links with those of neighbouring countries. In fact, smuggling activities are aided by familial relations which further blur nationalities. More so, these border area communities are often faced with a near absence or weak presence of government and lack of

legitimate economic opportunities, making smuggling a thriving source of income, and indeed livelihood for the inhabitants (Kwarkye & Matongbada, 2021).

Needless to say, therefore, that the pivot reason for this ineffectiveness is due to the fact that Nigeria's land borders are porous and transcend contiguous communities with a deep history of trade and social relations which predates the colonial administration in Nigeria and indeed, Africa as a whole (Abdulasheed Isah, 2020; Kwarkye & Matongbada, 2021).

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 (Onwuka, 1982, p. 193 – 206; Omede, 2006, p. 7 – 17; Ebuka, 2019; African Review, 2020; Kwarkye & Matongbada, 2021; Omodunbi *et al.*, 2022, p. 200-210). 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 Abdulasheed 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.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has broadly examined the political economy of Nigeria's land border closure with primary focus on how the policy impacted on the economy. It evaluates various challenges associated with security and economy of the country between 2019 and 2022 with the view to ascertain whether the government's aim for shutting down the country's land borders was actually achieved or not, as well as how effectively has the government curb inflation and efficiently better the people's standard of living between 2019 and 2022. The study found that on the short-term basis, Nigeria experience increase in its accrued revenue but on the long-run, the closure impacted negatively on the populace more especially the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Specifically, the study observed that smuggling activities along Nigeria's transnational borders with her African neighbouring states have not been stopped due to the porous nature of the nation's borders, corruption among some border officials, ineffective or lack of strong objective surveillance mechanisms for cross-border security, poor or lack of heavy state's presence around border communities, etc. Insecurity, economic uncertainty, and indeed inflation have been on the increase – in fact, available data revealed that there were 8,075 recorded deaths of persons due to violence in 2019 which the year borders were closed, but in 2020, the number of deaths increased to 9,663 while in 2021, the number shoot-up to 10,343; whereas annual inflation rate rises from 11.40% (2019) through 13.25% (2020), 16.95% (2021) to 21.47% (November 2022), respectively. It also discovered that the nation's exports to other ECOWAS markets declined from ₦2.24 trillion in 2019 to ₦841 billion in 2020 and ₦1.24 trillion in 2021; while smuggling in different forms and volumes of restricted articles such as SALWs, rice, tomato paste, etc. were daily still taking place along the land borders, even though they were said to be closed or at least, shut to legitimate trade. For example, data also portrayed that Nigeria, which on the average imported about 300,000 metric tons of tomato paste annually, was losing about \$450 million in revenue accruable due to non-payment of the levy of \$1500 per ton and 50 percent duty on tomato paste, respectively.

From the foregoing therefore, the paper concludes that despite government's acclaimed success during the land borders closure of 2019 in Nigeria, it has not been able to concretely, on a long-term basis addressed the daunting domestic issues associated with security and the economy between 2019 and 2022; neither has the abruptly

interplay (intervention) of the state (political class) in the economy effectively curb inflation or efficiently better the populace's living standard between 2019 and 2022. Put differently, despite the shocks of land border closure of neighbouring African countries and other informal sector of the economy in Nigeria, the country on the interim experienced somewhat level of control over smugglings in persons/of restricted goods along the borders. Also, there was momentarily increase in its accrued revenue, especially from the custom, immigration, ports services including oil and gas sector. However, the negative impact was more significant on the populace, most especially the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In other words, the hastily and unexpected closure of the nation's land borders has done more harm than good to Nigerians, especially those at medium and bottom ladder of the economic class – the proletariat, petty traders and the low-income earners.

The paper recommends that in terms of cross-border movements, there should be concerted effort on modernization of customs, immigration cum other related border security agencies using more information technology and formal management/administrative procedures that enhance accountability and transparency. Similarly, concerted realistic policies with robust security synergy between Nigeria and her neighbouring countries in the fight against trans-border crimes should be intensify; regardless of the fact that the nature of African borders that were balkanized along cleavages by imperialist colonial powers which separated people of the same language and socio-cultural background makes border policing extremely difficult. Thus, as a matter of urgency and sincere commitment, governments of both sides of the borders should deploy adequate security personnel to these [legal and illegal] frontier zones for effective management; ensure the provision and proper use of modern technology such as drones and surveillance cameras, etc. in policing every entry and exit (all) border points of the country.

Economically, employment/utilization of better strategies such as improving socioeconomic life of local communities around trans-border areas, create legitimate economic opportunities for the inhabitants of these communities cum teeming under/unemployed population in the country, create/sustain policies with strong political will on drive towards diversification of the economy, as well as encourage local content from different perspectives rather than

resorting to ill-prepared border closure cum economic nationalism. Mechanisms such as reducing production costs by providing key infrastructure, removing financial constraints, while providing comprehensive agricultural extension services to local farmers, strengthen their capacity to adopt modern techniques and adapting to the effects of climate change as well as providing alternatives for addressing bumper harvest or otherwise. Locally produced good should be ensured that they meet international standard as well as meet local demands. These, couple with other relevant liberal economic policies will go a long way in addressing various economic challenges, including curbing upward growth of inflation rate to the beeriest minimum in the country.

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