

# NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, REGIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND CONSTANT BORDER CLOSURES

Chukwuemeka Enyiazu, PhD <sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

*Colonialism destroyed Africa's long-standing intra-African trade. Hence, at independence there was a move for regional integration to diversify Africa's economy. Nigeria had been at the driving seat of Africa's regional integration. In West Africa, Nigeria pioneered the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. Though Africa has 21.2% of the global landmass and 13.7% of world population, its share of global economic activities is a meagre 2.6%. Its intra-trade is 12%, paralleled to an average of 53.5% in other regions of the world. However, Nigeria over time has engaged in anti-trade policies like border closure, the latest being on 20 August 2019, three months after signing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). This has caused ripples within Nigeria, West Africa and Africa at large. This study interrogates Nigeria's constant border closures, with questions on whether it is in Nigeria's national interest and if its objective were achieved? The study uses the Regional Leader Role framework of analysis, a sub-set of National Role theory (NRC). The study is a qualitative and non-experimental study and is based on the single case ex-post-facto (after-the-fact) design. Documentary method of data collection is used. The study concludes that Nigeria with over 1,499 illegal land routes into the country, cannot even 'close' its border; hence border closure is a lose-lose policy for Nigeria and recommends collaborative actions with her neighbours, the strengthening of border and ports infrastructures as the way forward.*

**Keywords:** Intra-African Trade, National Role theory, Nigeria's Border Closure, Tariffs, Regional obligations.

## Introduction

Nigeria has been a famous advocate of African integration. However, three months after signing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), precisely, on 20 August, 2019, Nigeria closed her borders with Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon; it had previously done same in 1984, 1985, 1987, 2003 and 2014 (Ani, Baajon and Samuila 2020; and Aniuoku,

---

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Enyiazu is of the Department of Political Science, Abia State University, Uturu

2020). This is contrary to the spirit and letters of AfCFTA, which has the objectives of initiating a single market, deepening the economic integration of the continent with the establishment of a liberalised market, promoting the movement of capital and people in Africa among others (Africa Union cited in Mlambo, et al 2022, p. 92). And the protocols of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), like the Common External Tariff (CET), which adopted in October 2013, to take effect from 11 April, 2015 with bands at the instance of Nigeria to protect her industries, trade defence mechanism that neutralises unfair practices (Uexkull, 2012; Ogah, 2015; Karaki and Verhaeghe, 2017).

Traditionally, trade is connected to national interchange, invention, economic development, regional assimilation, and open-up cultures. Africa's global landmass and population is 21.2% and 13.7% respectively. However its economic undertakings is a meagre 2.6%, which comprise of an intra-trade of 12%, paralleled to 47% in North America, 53% in Asia, and 69% in Europe (Olneyy, 2020).

Prior to colonialism, Akyeampong (2017, pp.16-17) asserted that Trans-Saharan (TS) trade was a harmonised intra and inter-continental trade, in West Africa trade was so entrenched that the Portuguese in the fifteen century found it difficult to fit into its trade-linkages. Clothes like Lanbens and Aljaravais came from North Africa and the blue cloths and beads from the kingdom of Benin. During this period, Africa intra-international trade stimulated cultural cross-fertilization, and served as an incubator of new technologies (ibid.). There were intra-African trades' linkages from Mali to the Akan forest in blacksmiths in West Africa. Trade also crisscrossed Southern Africa. In the Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo copper had dominated trade since 1000CE. Unlike, contemporary African trade, then trade was based on the exchange of ecologically specialized goods and not the production of similar goods and Africa was self-sufficing in material production (Akyeampong, 2017).

Indeed, Africa's trade were interconnected and controlled by Africans. However, the 1873-1896 world recession triggered competition between African traders and their European counterpart, which was among the factors that gave rise to colonialism (Akyeampong, 2017). This rivalry also led to the banishment of King Jaja of Opobo in 1891 and the British buying off Nigeria from George Goldie's Royal Niger Company at the rate of £865,000 in 1899 (Obikeze & Anthony, 2003, pp.25-27).

The advent of colonialism disrupted intra-African trade and made Africa a mono-product economy (Akyeampong, 2017). They prioritised cash crops over food crops, changed the existing money system and imposed taxes on Africans, which forced Africans to change their production lines that led to the relegation of intra-African trade, and advantaged outside trade (Akyeampong, 2017). Hence, at independent in the 1960s the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) encouraged African countries to form regional organisation to enhance Africa integration; because the arbitrarily created African states cannot be a strong actor in the global economy, both as producers and markets (ibid.). In the efforts toward integration and intra-African trade, Nigeria has demonstrated an unparalleled zeal toward these, by her roles in the formation of Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), signing of AfCFTA agreement and the fight against colonialism in Africa and Apartheid in South Africa.

In the international system, it is through states foreign policies that states relates, whether in defences, trade or consular relations. Foreign policy has been defined differently by diverse scholars. For instance, Okolie, (2015, p.6), defined it as “the totality of the acts, strategies and manipulations by a given state in her process of internationalising her domestic resolves.” This definition brings to the fore the interactions between the domestic and the international in foreign policy making. This is further established by Nigeria’s 1999 constitution, which in Section (19, b, c, d & e) spelt out Nigeria foreign policy objectives, which is geared toward African unity, integration and portrays Nigeria foreign policy as Afro-centric.

According to Essessinou, et al (2020) the objectives of Nigeria’s border closure was to stop all illegal exchange of goods, protect and stimulate Nigerian production etc. This action breached the aims of AfCFTA, ECOWAS’ CET etc. on free flow of goods and services, which is one of the cores of international relations, as stated by Aniukwu (2020, p.4) “... the exchange of capital, goods and services across international borders and territories which represent a significant part of the gross domestic product of most countries.” And Nigeria is a player in this international system. The border closure has generated mixed reactions. Some scholars and policy makers are of the opinion that it achieved its objectives. President Muhammad Buhari noted that “we have saved millions of dollars; we have realised 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” (cited Okorie & Enwere 2020, p. 211). Some other scholars continued in the same vein declaring that it raised

government revenue to a record 9.2 billion naira a day, that demand for locally produced rice increased etc. (Ani, et al 2020; Okorie and Enwere, 2020; Ugwuja & Chukwukere 2021). Ashaver also posited that the border closure is in tandem with the Concentricism of Nigeria's foreign policy (Ashaver cited in Okorie and Enwere 2020).

Conversely, other scholars are of the view that the policy did not achieve its objectives, rather, it had some adverse effects. For example, it led to inflation, the trade subdivision of the economy contracted, smuggling of goods persisted, unemployment increased, criminal activities spiked-up, local manufacturing companies lost over N1.29 trillion and trucks with goods and raw materials got rotted away at the border regions. Furthermore, it infringed on the fundamental rights of genuine business people, undermined Nigeria's leadership in West Africa/Africa and the spirit and letters of the AfCFTA; Ghana even retaliated by punishing Nigerians doing business in Ghana (Ani, Baajon, & Samuila 2020; Aniukwu, 2020; Essessinou, Degla & Hounsa, 2020; Okorie, & Enwere, 2020 and Abiodun, 2021). For scholars like Aniukwu (2020) Africa being the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign, entails that Nigeria's international interactions will be viewed through the binocular of her interaction within Africa and among African states and that border closure does not gelled with that binocular.

Consequently, this study problematized Nigeria's border closures and its implication on Nigeria leadership position in Africa. It poses the following research questions:

- i. Was the border closure in Nigeria's national interest?
- ii. Did the border closure achieve its objectives?

This is accompanied with corresponding hypotheses:

- i. The border closure was not in Nigeria's national interest
- ii. The border closure did not achieve its objectives.

The study, apart from introduction and conclusion, has the following sections: methodology; framework of analysis; conceptual analysis, and the interaction of Nigeria foreign policy, National Role Conception and border closure.

## **1. Methodology**

The core of this study is Nigeria's constant border closure vis-à-vis its regional obligations. Nigeria is a leading power in Africa, in size,

it is the most populous state in Africa and has the largest economy (Ani, et al, 2020; Okorie and Enwere, 2020). Her leadership in Africa is not merely rhetoric; Nigeria has pragmatically demonstrated this leadership in many ways, such as the formation of OAU, which later metamorphose to AU, and ECOWAS, fight against colonialism and Apartheid in Africa, especially South Africa and in taking firm stand in all matters that concern Africans and the Black race in general. The period of the study is 2019-2022.

The study uses qualitative research method. The data are already in existence and are collected by reviewing existing documents, like the Nigeria constitution, books, journal articles, conference papers, foreign policy papers, pronouncement by Nigerian leaders in commercial records, or state archives and others that relate to Nigeria's foreign policy, national interest, regional roles and border closure, these will be used to investigate, categorise, interpret, and identify limitations of physical sources.

This method suits this study because data required for the study are already out there and require refinement, interpretation and evaluation in line with the research questions. To analyse the data collected, content analysis, which is rooted on systematic logical deduction is used to systematically reduce data collected to a coherent, logical and meaningful construal in order to give answers the research questions.

## **Framework of Analysis**

Frameworks of analysis are lens through which a research is observed. In this study, the National Conception Theory (NCT) is used as the framework of analysis. Holsti (1970, p.245), conceptualised NCT as “the general foreign policy behaviour of governments. It includes patterns of attitudes, decisions, responses, functions and commitments toward other states.” This encompasses, nationally decision makers' perception of obligations, rubrics and activities that suits their state in her interactions within the international system, and externally, the charters and treaties that their country entered into that encumbered them with obligations to certain behaviour in the international arena (p.307).

National roles ascribed to a state are revealed nationally in a state's rule books, foreign policy objective, national interest and statements by their leaders over time etc. Holsti (1970, pp.255-258), before mapping out the typologies of NRC studied speeches and declarations of top-most policy

makers like presidents, prime minister, foreign ministers etc., hence for any state to be assigned a role, Holsti studies at least ten of their top-most leaders' speeches and declarations. Likewise, before assigning a role to Nigeria in this study, the researcher reviewed speeches and declarations of Nigeria's top-most policy makers, as shown by table 1, below:

**Table 1 Speeches of Nigerian Leaders that Support Nigeria's Regional Leader Role**

S/NO	Information	Institution/Person	Sources
1	Support for Africa integration and Unity; respect for international law.	Constitution	Section 19, 1999, Nigeria constitution.
2	Promoting and protecting Nigeria's national interest and promoting African integration and support for African unity.	Number 1 and 2 of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives.	Fawole, (2003).
3	Nigeria will work for the progress of Africa, Nigeria's first concern is what affects her immediate neighbourhood.	PM Belawa's inaugural speech at UN in 1960.	Lawala and Aluko, (2016).
4	National interest is determined by a state's decision makers. And Nigeria leaders determine at all times what Nigeria national interest will be.	Mr. Wachuku, Nigeria first indigenous Foreign Minister.	Omenma (2015).
5	Nigeria's foreign policy was constructed in concentric circles with Africa in the centre."	Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Gowon's foreign Minister	Kia, Nwigbo and Abang (2016, p. 25)
6	"Africa remains the cornerstone of Nigeria's Foreign Policy... Nigeria stands for African unity."	President Shagari.	Sinclair (1983, p.9).
7	Support of African unity through O.A.U and ECOWAS; peace and stability by obligation to values of OAU charter; backing for legitimate right of people for self-determination and freedom from colonialism; untiring support to every effort to extinguish apartheid in South Africa and racial chauvinism globally; solidification of ECOWAS economic collaboration; seeking African answers to Africa problem and boosting pluralism and democracy in Africa.	A study Commissioned by major-General Nwachukwu (rtd) minister of External Affairs, summary of Nigeria FP from 1975-1985 and a guide for 1985-1993. Seven out the ten themes are on Africa.	Barika, (2014).
8	Creation a new Ministry of Co-operation and Integration in Africa within the presidency.	President Obasanjo	Tieku (2015)
9	A progression of: Nigeria, immediate neighbours, West-Africa, African and the rest of the world.	President Buhari foreign policy.	Gambari (2022)

Source: Compilation by the Researcher from several literatures

Consequently, after the review as shown in table 1, the specificity of NCT is counted appropriate and thus assigned to Nigeria for this study is what Holsti called Regional Leader. Nigeria has perfectly fitted the role of Regional Leader, right from independent. Nigeria was at the fore-front at the formation of OAU to its transformation to AU, Nigeria, literally formed and financed ECOWAS, Nigeria deployed resources (manpower and finance) for the eradication of colonialism and Apartheid in Africa.

NCT has been criticised for being only suited to the Cold-War-Era; hence it is no longer suitable of analysis in this post-Cold-War-Era (Adigbuo, 2007). This researcher disagrees with this assertion, because though colonialism and apartheid no longer exist in Africa; Africa is still economically dominated, the least developed region of the world and Africans are still discriminated against all over the world. Africa is still. Therefore, NCT is still relevant as a framework of analysis and since the end of the Cold-War, Nigeria's Regional Leadership has not declined, rather it has been on the rise in Africa. Thus NCT is germane to this study.

## Conceptual Analysis

### *Nigeria Foreign Policy and National Interest*

Foreign policy has been defined differently by diverse scholars, however, this study adopts the definition given by Okolie (2015, p.6) as, "the totality of the acts, strategies and manipulations of a given state in her process of internationalising domestic resolves". Inherent in this definition is that foreign policy is a means of projecting and pushing through national agreements in the anarchical international system in relationships with fellow states, international organisations and various other international actors. These national agreements are always showcase in a state's foreign policy objectives, which in Nigeria's case are the following:

Promoting and protecting Nigeria's national interest, promoting African integration and support African unity, promoting international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and also eliminating discrimination of all sorts. It also includes respect for international law and treaties obligations, the peaceful settlement of international disputes via negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication and also to promote a just world economic order (Ezirim, cited in Enyiazuo, 2020, p. cdx).

Little and Smith described national interest as "...a common goal of national society...the discrete object of value over which states bargain

in world politics” (cited in Okolie, 2015, p.12). Folarin (2011), was of the view that Nigeria has no coherent and well defined national interest and further opined that national interest ought to be well documented, from which government actions should be judged. He lamented that what Nigeria has as national interest “are the outline of national leaders which change from time to time, and what the 1999 Constitution sets out as the foreign policy of the country”. Contrary to Folarin argument, in 1976 the Professor Adenoye Adedeji Committee documented the following as Nigeria’s national interest:

- i. The protection of our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity;
- ii. Engendering the right political environments in Africa and the world at large that would smoothen the defence of Nigeria’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity;
- iii. The establishment of the essential economic and political atmospheres in Africa and the rest of the world that will guarantee Nigeria’s national self-reliance and speedy economic development;
- iv. The attainment of joint self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing countries;
- v. The advancement and protection of social justice and respect for human dignity and
- vi. The advancement and defence of world peace (cited in Nwanolue, 2015, p.110).

As a result, integral in Nigeria’s foreign policy objectives and national interest is the turning around of the fortune of Africa in the global comity of nations. Hence Africa is the centre-piece of Nigeria foreign policy. And Nigeria has shown pragmatism in this regard in the formation of regional organisations, elimination of colonialism and apartheid; bringing stability in West Africa, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone. There have been arguments for and against Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria foreign policy, to delve into that debate is not within the scope of this study.

However the researcher is in support of the continuation of Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria foreign policy, because Africa is still peripheral in world affairs; Africans are still discriminated against global and Blacks everywhere still have to prove their humanity. And except bad leadership, Nigeria is endowed materially, humanly, financially, intellectually and otherwise to continue to shoulder this responsibility.



### *Trade in Africa*

Indeed, the first disruption of Africa's diverse and intra-trade was the Trans-Atlantic slave trade: a trade in Africans, not of goods (Akyeampong, 2017). Before this period, slave trade had existed and traded in Africa via the Sahara to the Arab world, but the over three hundred years Trans-Atlantic slave trade brought on its heels an ubiquitously insecure African society, a damaging machineries-firearms, the neglect of African crafts, and tens of million able-bodied Africans were lost (ibid.), which effects like colonialism are still felt in Africa today. Though scholars like Akyeampong (2017), also noted that it brought new crops like maize, cassava (manioc), sweet potatoes and groundnuts (peanuts) to Africa. When, the Atlantic slavery was abolished in the first decade of the nineteen century, the Europeans started trading with Africans on products like: palm oil, groundnuts, gold, and ivory, but after the Berlin conference of 1884-5; Africa was formally colonised by the West.

Colonial interregnum in Africa 'homogenized' Africa economies, to produce only raw materials for Western economies, which relegated intra-African trade and gave advantage to trade with the West. Before colonialism, Africa was self-sufficient in material production and trade as exemplified in the TS trade that produced both intra and international trade in Africa, which led to growth and regional integration. According to Akyeampong, (2017, p.9):

The Sahara was noted for rock salt...the south of the Sahara was rich in livestock...the Sahel also exported leather products. The Savannah to the south of the Sahel was the breadbasket of West Africa, and this region produced cereals and fish for long-distance markets. The Niger River and its tributaries provided fish, and the middle Niger was the site for the domestication of African rice. Cereals and dried fish were transported along the river. The forest to the south produced two important products for the long-distance markets, kola nuts and gold.... The Khoisan in the southwestern part of South Africa exchanged their cattle, sheep and hunting produce for the iron and copper from the Batswana to the north, and then traded some of these metals to the Xhosa in the southeast for dagga and tobacco....Central Africa the Luba and the Lunda kingdoms. Local and regional trade in this area revolved around fish, salt, iron and copper....Regional and long-distance trade played an instrumental role in cultural exchange, in the introduction of new technologies and regional integration. Mande traders and blacksmiths from medieval Mali incorporated the Akan forest into trans-Saharan trade networks, introduced to the Akan the technology of deep-level mining (nkoron), and bequeathed to the Akan language several Mande loan words associated with trade, transport, and social categories – asra (snuff), tawa (tobacco),

samina (soap), krataa (paper), ponko (horse), yoma (camel), okoroo (boat), and kramo (Muslim).

These were ecologically based merchandises, not similar goods' production, they enhanced the survival and growth of African societies. Conversely, colonialism prohibited colonies in Africa from trading among themselves; thus reversed the tetrarchy system that stimulates intra-African trade to a hierarchical one in favour of outside trade that firmly incorporated Africa into the global trade, but as mere market for raw materials.

The attainment of independence in the 1960s heralded the quest to diversify African economy and re-establish intra-African trade that was identified as a key driver of economic growth on the continent (Kimenyi, Lewis and Routman, 2016). To accomplish this, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) recommended regional integration for African states, for individually African states were weak, small and mono-producers to be strong players in the global economy (Akyeampong, 2017). Prior to independent in Africa, France and Britain practiced integration in Africa. France had the federation of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa headquartered at Dakar and Brazzaville; paradoxically toward independence, France balkanized, the two federations, replacing them with small and weak states before independent (ibid.) Britain, on the other hand created a Customs Union between Kenya and Uganda in 1917. In West Africa, there were also lots of umbrella organizations, created by the British, one of the surviving ones today is West African Examination Council (WAEC).

In 1963, Nigeria was at the fore-front for the formation of OAU. In the 1970s several sub-regional organisations were formed. Despite these efforts, as at 2019, Africa's global trade was still a mere 2.8 per cent and intra-regional trade 14.4 % (Mlambo, Thusi, Zubane and Mlambo, 2022). To encourage trade, regional economic communities were established to eradicate trade tariffs and nontariff barriers (Mlambo, et al 2022), which have hindered intra-African trade. Thus, Africa had enunciated a number of policies to achieve this, like the Abuja Treaty, an offshoot of the Lagos Plan of Action, which stressed the need to nurture "the social, economic, and cultural development of the African continent through the integration of the economies of the various countries." (Mlambo, et al 2022, p.87). In the formation these platforms, Nigeria played a leading role and because these have not achieved the desired intra-African trade envisioned, the African Union (AU) in line with its Agenda 2063 of economic integration on the African continent, established AfCFTA, which endorses an action

plan to improve intra-African trade. AfCFTA's objectives are the following:

- Initiating a single market;
- Deepening the economic integration of the continent establish a liberalised market through multiple rounds of negotiations;
- Promoting the movement of capital and people;
- Facilitating investment;
- Moving towards the establishment of a future continental customs union;
- Achieving sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development;
- Encouraging gender equality and structural transformations within member states;
- Enhancing competitiveness of member states within Africa and in the global market;
- Encouraging industrial development through diversification and regional value chain
- Development, and
- Enabling agricultural development and food security and resolve challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships (Africa Union cited in Mlambo, et al 2022, p. 92).

AfCFTA was agreed upon in May 2019 and launched in July 2019 and is reputed to be a market of more than 1.2 billion people, the largest free-trade area in the world. In its first five years, 90% tariffs on goods is expected to be eradicated. With this leap (AfCFTA) toward regional integration on the continent, transformation seems to be on the horizon (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2021). Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa, however, its ranking on regional integration in Africa is abysmal, contributory to this abysmal standing is the constant closure of her border, the latest being three months after signing the AfCFTA agreement on 20 August 2019 (Ani, et al, 2020). In a study by AfDB on Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII) that measures the degree of integration by African countries, based on met commitments on pan-African integration agendas, like: Agenda 2063 and the Abuja Treaty, Nigeria was in the low performer category (No. 39 out of 55), while South Africa and Kenya came first and second, Egypt number 6, Senegal 7 and number One in West Africa, whereas Ghana was 8 and second in West Africa (AfDB, 2021).

### *West Africa*

The idea and founding of ECOWAS in 1975 was at the behest of Nigeria, which had two prone objectives: first, was to provide vast market for Nigeria's products and a source of raw materials for her industries, in

the West African sub-region; thus trade was the key motivator for the establishment. Second, was to equipoise France influence in West Africa (Karaki and Verhaeghe, 2017). Though these are the first two steps, the strategic goal is political integration. In 2010, ECOWAS agreed to a collective industrial policy, with the aim of increasing intra-regional trade to 40% in 2030, to enable it be globally competitive and improve the living standard of their people. Other institutions and frameworks established to facilitate the realisation of these goals are the ECOWAS Commission, Community Parliament, Court of Justice, and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development. In the area of trade, the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) was adopted in October 2013, to take effect from 11 April, 2015 with a five year learning window. Its tariff bands are set at 0%, 5%, 10%, 20% and 35%, the fifth (35%) band was at the instance of Nigeria to protect her industries. The CET also, has trade defence mechanism: Supplementary Protection Measures (SPM), to neutralise unfair practices. Nigeria was among the first ten countries that signed into it (Uexkull, 2012; Ogah, 2015; Karaki and Verhaeghe, 2017).

Contrary to Nigeria's zeal in the formulation and signing of ECOWAS frameworks, Nigeria has not shown same zeal in practice and implementation of same. Nigeria and Guinea are the only countries in WA that have single digit share of trade within WA, while countries like Togo, Burkina Faso and Senegal share are 59, 55 and 46 per cent, respectively (Uexkull, 2012). Karaki and Verhaeghe (2017, p.14) have rhetorically asked is "Nigeria - a force or a constraint to trade regional integration?" they noted that though "whenever Nigeria sneezes, West Africa catches a cold", with over 50% West African population and 60% of its economy." and single-handedly included the 35% tariff at CET. Over 200 of Nigeria products are on the CET exceptions list and yet her activities seem to be constraining ECOWAS progress in terms of trade regional integration. Also, there is the Economic Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) with the objective of liberalising trade within the region that was established in 1980 and expanded in 1990 at the beehives of Nigeria and Ghana. Still, Nigeria has the lowest rate of execution of the ETLS in West Africa (Hulse, 2016) and had routinely closed its border, the latest being on 20 August, 2019 (Ani et al, 2020).

This has prompted reaction from other regional countries. Former Ghanaian President John Mahama accused "Nigeria of being a 'protectionist bully,' acting as a barrier to regional trade and development" (Udoh 2015, p. 34), which forced Ghana to pass a law (Nigerians were targeted) that compelled foreign traders to have a minimum Capital of \$300,000 to be

able to invest in Ghana (Karaki and Verhaeghe, 2017).

Indeed, In an ADBP study on African Regional Integration Index (ARII) based on trade, productivity, macro-economic and infrastructural integrations, South Africa came top with 0.625, 34.36% higher than Senegal (404) the highest in West Africa and 46.7% higher than Nigeria's (0.292). Thus because of Nigeria's dereliction of her national role in Africa and West Africa; trade integration in West Africa is the least as shown by the table below and among the leading economies in Africa (Kenya [444, 2nd] Rwanda [434, 3rd]; Morocco [430, 4th]; Mauritius [424, 5th] and Egypt [422, 6th], while Nigeria, the largest economy in Africa, is number 37 out of 54 African countries, with a paltry 292 (ADBP, 2021) and number 14 out of 15 West African countries as table 2 shows.

**Table 2: Standing of West African (WA) States on Regional Integration in Africa**

Country	Standing-WA	Africa	Description	Score
Senegal	01	07	High Performer	0404
Ghana	02	08	✓✓	0403
Togo	03	09	✓✓	0399
Burkina Faso	04	16	✓✓	0370
Cote d'Ivoire	05	17	✓✓	0357
Mali	06	18	✓✓	0352
Gambia	07	19	✓✓	0351
Benin	08	21	✓✓	0347
Cape Verde	09	22	✓✓	0344
Chad	10	32	Average	0303
Guinea	11	33	✓✓	0303
Guinea-Bissau	12	35	✓✓	0301
Niger	13	37	✓✓	0299
Nigeria	14	39	✓✓	0292
Liberia	15	48	✓✓	0244

Source: Compilation by the researcher from AfDB (2021).

## Border Closure: Pluses and Minuses

Nigeria neighbours and most African countries were shocked and surprised by the sudden closure of Nigeria borders, that straddled over Nigeria's 923,768 square kilometre land space, shared with Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad and Niger and directly over seventeen Nigerian states in August 2019 (Ani, et al, 2020; Okorie and Enwere, 2020). The Nigeria government stated that the objectives were to stop trading of all goods, except oil; to tackle smuggling activities, including sophisticated arms and weapons that are used by Boko Haram and other terrorists; illegal crossing of border by undocumented immigrants, abuse of international trade and others (Okorie and Enwere, 2020; Abiodun, 2021). Prior to the border closure, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had prohibited some items from importation by denying them access to forex (Ani, et al, 2020), this could be seen to be within the ECOWAS SPM framework, which should be invoked to neutralise unfair trade practices.

Consequently, debates have ensued concerning the appropriateness or not of the border closure; given Nigeria's leadership position in ECOWAS and her expected leadership role toward the success of AfCFTA. Some policy makers have argued also that the border closure be kept until 2023; supporting their argument that countries like North Korea, Hungary, Macedonia, the China's Ming dynasty, which they said closed it border in the 15th century (cited in Ani et al, 2020). Thus, that Nigeria should emulate them. This argument is opaque, because none of these examples are or were models of prosperity. China developed only when it opened her economy and North Korea is still an economic 'hermit' state that no progressive country will want to emulate. They further defended the border closure as being in tention with the concentric circles foreign policy thesis, which says, "Nigeria's national interest must come first, followed by West Africa, the rest of Africa, and finally the other parts of the world.", thus they supported border closure as being in Nigeria's national interest (p.211).

To Aniuoku (2020, p. 2), border closure is an isolationist policy, which inhibits the movement of goods amongst diverse jurisdictions. While open border is reputed to stimulate growth, which is exemplified by the developed nations of the world, likewise, it has been argued that closed border is a two-edged sword that mostly harms economic growth with examples that in the 1950s and 1960s, governments of many countries in Africa and Latin America erected trade barriers, which with lack of competition, their "industries became inefficient and fell behind the rest of the world."

Aniukwu concluded that border closure does not reflect Nigeria's foreign policy and that it has not solved its stated objectives; but that it was in tention of the provisions of Section 14(2) (b) of Nigeria's 1999 constitution, which states that "The security and welfare of the Nigerian people is the primary purpose of the government" Ani et al (2020) stated that the border closure was devoid of Nigeria's polygonal obligations to ECOWAS and AfCFTA, which made her a disrupter of trade integration in Africa. They additionally cautioned that previous border closures in 1984, 1987, 2003 and 2019, never achieved their objectives, rather that the reverse has been the case. An example was given of the ban on barley, which led to sacking of thousands of workers in Nigeria's beer industry and the taking of the beer industry by foreigners. They concluded that Nigeria should use the institutional mechanism of ECOWAS and AFCFTA, with that of Nigeria to find solutions to her "dysfunctional economic policies."(p.31).

Correspondingly, Essessinou, et al (2020) viewed the border closure by Nigeria as a mark of inconsistency with her expected role within ECOWAS's Common External Tariff. For Okorie and Enwere (2020) it showed lack of civility on the part of Nigeria, which worries African leaders on Nigeria's commitment to her bilateral and multilateral obligations. Indeed, the Chairman of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, epitomised this worry, when he stated that "the Nigerian land border closure posed much danger to ECOWAS and threatens to undermine all the gains so far recorded by the community." Other African leaders echoed same "the unilateral closure of borders goes against all the trade and free movement treaties signed by Nigeria within the framework of ECOWAS," which is "capable of affecting the very foundations of ECOWAS, namely the free movement of people and goods" (Africanews, Cited in *ibid.* p.214). Omale, Olorunfemi, and Aiyegbajeje cited in Ugwuja and Chukwukere, (2021, p.81) who researched on the legal effects of border closure in Nigeria– 1984, 2003, and 2019, stated that its gains "increased revenues, numerous seizures of illegal materials, and encouragement of local production of rice...."are not a compensation to its "breach of the fundamental rights of genuine business persons."

For Omotuyi (2022, p.16), "apart from undermining the Nigerian putative regional hegemonic leadership in Africa broadly and West Africa specifically...have failed to have the much desired impact on the fight against criminalities in Nigeria", that border closure was not enforced in the North-East and North West, rather than crime decreasing, the reality is the increase of criminal activities that "between 2019 and 2020 alone, Nigeria recorded 169% increase in abduction by bandits" (*ibid.* p.2).

However, this study queries the rational of Nigeria's border closure; given that Nigeria has only 84 officially recognised entry points, while there are over "1,499 illegal land routes into the country, many of which are either mountainous or in the jungle" (Abba Moro cited in Okorie and Enwere, 2020, p.213).

**Table 3 and 4, show at a glance the positives and negatives effects of the border closure.**

S/No	Effects	Sources
1	Rice production and the entire rice value chain increased.	Ani et al (2020).
2	Cost of petrol subsidy fell because, its sell fell by 12.7%, government saving over13.5 billion naira (\$37 million) monthly and 162.1 billion naira annually.	Essessinou, et al. (2020).
3	Tax revenues improved due to more goods belted at Nigerian ports, this increased Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) revenue, and in day in September 2019 they recorded 9.2 billion naira (\$ 25 million).	Essessinou, et al. (2020).
4	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 2.28%, in the third quarter of 2019, an increase of 0.17%.	Essessinou, et al. (2020).
5	There was drastic reduction in the volume of petrol consumed in the country.	(NNPC cited in Omotuyi, (2022).
6	95% of influx of arms and ammunition to Boko Haram, kidnapers, herdsmen, and armed robbers stopped, including the influx of illegal immigrants and cross-border criminals into the country.	(Nigeria government cited in Omotuyi, 2022).

Source: Compilation of the Researcher.

**Table 4 Negative Effects of Nigeria's Border Closure**

No	Effects	Sources
1.	Nigerian exporters experienced rejection of their goods in retaliation and Nigeria export within ECOWAS decreased.	Ani et al (2020).
2.	The inventory of unsold finished manufactured goods, precipitate unemployment and poor credit rating in Nigeria.	Ogunmade, O. (2020).
3.	Ghanaians shut and closed almost 70 businesses owned by Nigerians.	Ogunmade, O. (2020).
4.	The price of rice increased from nine naira to twenty-two naira, almost the total monthly earning of a Nigerian who lives in an excruciating poverty (an estimated 87 million in the country.) Inflation rose in October to 11.6 percent, driven by food prices that jumped 14.1 percent in the same period to an 18-month high.	NBS cited in ibid. Ugwuja and Chukwukere, (2021).
5	It worsened Nigeria's Ease of Doing Business across borders, Nigeria ranks 182 out of 190 countries, thus negate Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).	Ugwuja and Chukwukere, (2021).
6	The informal sector that commands over 50 percent of West Africa's combined GDP, was negatively effect, because many of them lost their means of income.	NBS cited in Ogunmade, O. (2020).
7	Rice and other goods smuggling became big business, Nigerian	Essessinou, et



	markets were flooded with imported rice, wheat, frozen chicken and turkey parts; with the discovery of about 1000 illegal routes into the country.	al (2020); Aniuoku, (2020).
8	The border closure and its severe conditions were worrisome to other African countries, and sent a harmful sign to the world that African states are not committed to boosting intra-African trade activities and AfCFTA.	Ani et al (2020).
9	It worsened unemployment in the informal sector as it adversely impacted the means of livelihood of many Nigerians and others involved in small-scale trading in textile, footwear, drinks and other goods along the borders. Over 3 million were made jobless.	Okorie and Enwere, (2020); Abiodun, (2021).
10	The trade sector of Nigeria economy shrank by 1.45% in the third quarter of 2019 from 0.25% in the preceding quarter.	NBS cited in Anukwu, (2020).
11	Nigeria's border closure is a breach of the fundamental rights of genuine Nigeria business persons.	Okorie and Enwere, (2020).
12	Manufacturing companies like Cadbury Plc, Dangote Group, among several others lost more than N1.29 trillion and above 2,200 trucks with goods and raw materials were trapped and rotted away at the border areas.	Abiodun, (2021).
13	Illegal avenues were "opened" for those all sorts of illegal trades; smugglers engaged the services of the corrupt security operatives to lead their back-up having been massively bribed.	Abiodun, (2021).
14	Between 2019 and 2020 alone, Nigeria recorded a 169% increase in abduction by bandits.	Omotuyi, (2022).

Source: Compilation of the Researcher.

## The Verification of Nigeria's National Role vis-a-vis Border Closure

Table 1, shows that the role prescriptions by Nigeria's leaders over time endorsed for Nigeria a regional leadership role in Africa, hence Nigeria foreign policy has been Afri-centric. And Nigeria has discharged its regional leadership creditably in the formation of OAU/AU, fight against colonialism and apartheid in Africa; and in the ECOWAS, which was established at the behest of Nigeria and her leadership within the sub-region is well documented in Liberia, Sierra Leone etc.

Nevertheless, the 20th August, 2019 Nigeria's border closure was inconsistent with Nigeria's Africa-centred foreign policy. Perhaps, it was because of some unseen breaches of Nigeria's national interest. Thus, the study's first research question: was the border closure in Nigeria's national

interest? National interest is sub-divided into primary and secondary interest, the first “The defence of our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity” (Nwanolue, 2015, p.110), and the second deals with citizens’ welfares, relations with the outside world among others. This study having systematically and logical deduced data on the positives and negatives of the border closure as shown in table 3 and 4; thus, the study unequivocally affirm that the border closure was not in Nigeria’s National interest, which conforms the first hypothesis. Nigeria was not under any existential threat and the policy negatively impacted on Nigerians and was completely at variance with Nigeria’s avowed Afro-centric foreign policy.

Also, table 4 clearly shows the negative impacts of the border closure which overwhelmingly out-numbered the positive impacts as shown in table 3; thus when juxtaposed with the second research question: did the border closure achieve its objectives? It becomes clear that the border closure did not achieve its objectives. Even a committee the government constituted and mandated to do a comprehensive review of the border closure policy, similarly noted that it was counter-productive, stating thus:

Despite the significant benefits of the partial border closure in helping to curb the activities of smugglers, irregular migrants and other forms of criminality, among other benefits; the committee’s findings revealed that the policy was potentially detrimental to Nigeria’s overall immediate and long term economic, security, diplomatic and social interests (Ogunmade 2020, p.1).

Therefore, the border closure did not achieve its objectives, which proved the second hypothesis.

Indeed, the border closure by Nigeria is ab initio does not align with the stride to improve citizens’ welfares, her national interest nor foreign policy objectives. A government that had confirmed that it has “84 officially recognised entry points, while there are over “1,499 illegal land routes into the country, many of which are either mountainous or in the jungle” (Abba Moro cited in Okorie and Enwere, 2020, p.213). Additionally, Nigeria’ s chief of defence staff, General Lucky Irabor, recently said that “137 out of about 261 borders in the north-east and north-west regions of the country are unguarded.”(The Cable, 25 August, 2022), thus, which borders were closed? Borders that majority of, are unmanned? And most of the businesses it intended to curb are not legitimate businesses, like arms smuggling: a business that can only be done illegally. Indeed, as stated by Omale, et al, border closures “breach of the fundamental rights

of genuine business persons.” And “apart from undermining the Nigerian putative regional hegemonic leadership in Africa broadly and West-Africa specifically” (Omotuyi 2022, p.16), it inflicted gargantuan suffering on Nigerians.

## Conclusion

Indeed, Nigeria has kept on doing the same thing over and over again and expects to get a different result. Border closures had neither worked nor achieved its objectives in Nigeria. It infringed on the rights of genuine business people in Nigeria. It was completely at variance with Nigeria’s foreign policy objectives, national interest and leadership role in Africa. The irony is that Nigeria being the biggest economy in Africa; that her neighbours should be the one slamming their border close on Nigeria.

Finally, this study concludes that Nigeria should improve her Ease of Doing Business by uplifting its poor infrastructure, eliminating multiple exchange rates, taxations, policy discrepancies, paucity of foreign exchange, adverse port tariffs, provide security and useful incentives for businesses. This will make it easier for businesses to use legitimate channels for their businesses, rather than resorting to illegitimate means like smuggling.

On Nigeria’s porous border, Nigeria should be innovative by:

- i. Employing and deploying technology for border surveillance, to enable her man all entry points to the country and
- ii. Insisting and liaising with the neighbouring countries to ensure that illegitimate activities against Nigeria do not thrive in their countries or come to Nigeria through their countries.

## References

Abiodun, T. F. (2021). Untold Impacts Of Nigeria’s Land Borders Closure Policy on Border Communities, Economy, and Security in West African Sub-Region. *International Journal of Research in Education and Sustainable Development*, 1 (1), pp. 10-30. <https://doi.org/10.46654/IJRES.D.117125>.

Adigbuo, R. (2007). Beyond IR theories: the case for national role conceptions. *Politikon*, 34:1, 83-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589340701336286>.

- African Development Bank Groups (2021). Africa Regional Integration Index. Retrieved from <https://www.integrate-africa.org/rankings/all-africa/>.
- Akyeampong, E. (2017). History of African Trade/Transforming Africa's Trade. *Commissioned by the African Export-Import Bank (2015)*. Retrieved from <https://elibrary.acbfact.org/acbf/collect/acbf/index/assoc/HASH0100/039e055d/606b9c4a/9550.dir/History-of-African-Trade.pdf>.
- Ani, E. C., Baajon, M. A. & Samuila, A. A. (2020). Border Closure: Implication on Nigerian Economy. *Journal of Economics and Finance*; 11, (3), pp. 21 - 32. <https://doi.org/10.9790/5933-1103072132>.
- Aniukwu, C. (2020). Nigeria's Border Closure Policy: Appraising Its Impacts and Prospects. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349723199>.
- Barika, N. L. (2014). Nigerian Foreign Policy From 1960-2003 "Implications for Present and Future Leaders". *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19 (8), pp. 52-58. [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org).
- Enyiazu, C. (2020). Anti-Corruption Rhetoric of the Buhari Administration and Nigeria's International Image. *Studies in Politics and Society*; 9 (1&2), pp.331 - 372.
- Essessinou, R. A., Degla, G & Hounsa, L. M. (2020). Effects of the Nigeria Land Borders Closure on Benin: Economy Measured from an Input-Output Model. *American Journal of Economics*, 10 (2), pp.69-81. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.economics.20201002>.
- Fawole, A. W. (2003). *Nigeria's External Relations and Foreign Policy under Military Rule 1966-1999*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Folarin, S. F. (2011). The politics of international visibility and relevance: an overview of Nigeria's role conceptions in world politics. *African Studies Review*. Retrieved from <http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/3260/1/Folarin%2023.pdf>.

- Gambari, I. (2022, August 15). Gambari explains Buhari's foreign policy mindset. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/548864-gambari-explains-buharis-foreign-policy-mindset.html>
- Holsti, K. J (1970). National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy. *International Studies Quarterly*, 14 (3) (Sep., 1970), pp. 233 - 309. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3013584>.
- Hulse, M. (2016). Regional powers and leadership in regional institutions: Nigeria in ECOWAS and South Africa in SADC. *KFG Working Paper*, Series 76, Berlin.
- Kia, B. Nwigbo, T. S. & Ojie, P. A. (2016). Foreign Policy Strategy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1960-2012: The Missing Link. *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy*; 4 (1), pp. 21-38. <https://doi.org/10.15640/jirfp.v4n1a2>.
- Irabor, L. (2022, August 25). 137 borders in Nigeria are unguarded. *The Cable*. Retrieved from <HTTPS://WWW.THECABLE.NG/INSECURITY-137-BORDERS-IN-NIGERIA-ARE-UNGUARDED-SAYS-IRABOR/AMP>.
- Kimenyi, M. S., Lewis, Z. A. & Routman, B. (2016, July 1). Introduction: Intra-African Trade in Context. *Brookings Africa Growth Initiative*. Retrieve from [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/01\\_intro\\_intra\\_african\\_trade.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/01_intro_intra_african_trade.pdf).
- Lawala, E. E & Aluko, O. I. (2016). Nigerian Foreign Policy: a Fourth Republic Diplomatic Escapade. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences*, (4), pp. 708-721. <https://doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-2016-9-4-708-721>.
- Mlambo, V. H., Thusi, X., Zubane, S. P. & Mlambo, D. N. (2022). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Challenges and Possible Successes. *Latin American Journal of Trade Policy*. DOI: 10.5354/0719-9368.2022.64897.
- Nigeria Constitution (1999). Chpt. II, Section 19. Amendment 2011.
- Nwanolue, B. (2015). State and National Interest: the Nigerian Question. In A. M. Okolie, (Ed.), *Contemporary Readings on Nigeria's*

- External Relations: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges*, pp.103-130. Abakaliki, Nigeria: WillRose & Applesseed.
- Obikeze, O. S. & Anthony, O. E. (2003). *Government and Politics of Nigeria: the Struggle of Power in an African State*. Onitsha: Bookponit.
- Ogah, D (2015, April 14). 16 ECOWAS countries begin uniform tariff regime for imports. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/7268-16-ecowas-countries-begin-uniform-tariff-regime-for-imports.html>.
- Ogunmade, O. (2020, December 21). Revealed: Negative Impact of Closures Forced Buhari to Reopen Borders. *Thisday*. Retrieved from <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/12/21/revealed-negative-impact-of-closures-forced-buhari-to-reopen-borders/>
- Okolie, A. M. (2015). Fundamental issues in foreign policy making and implementation in Nigeria. In A. M. Okolie, (Ed.), *Contemporary Readings on Nigeria's External Relations: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges*, pp.3-20. Abakaliki, Nigeria: WillRose & Applesseed.
- Okorie, E. J & Enwere, C.(2020). National Border Closure as Paradigm Shift in Sustainable Foreign Policy Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Management Studies and Social Science Research*. Retrieved from [www.ijmsssr.org](http://www.ijmsssr.org).
- Olneyy, W. W. (2020). Intra-African Trade. Retrieved from [https://web.williams.edu/Economics/wp/Olney\\_African\\_Trade062020.pdf](https://web.williams.edu/Economics/wp/Olney_African_Trade062020.pdf).
- Omenma, D. A. (2015). Nigeria Foreign Policy: Trends and Transformations. In A. M. Okolie, (Ed.), *Contemporary Readings on Nigeria's External Relations: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges*, pp.44-79. Abakaliki, Nigeria: WillRose & Applesseed.
- Omotuyi, S. (2022). The Burden of Borders: Reassessing the Impacts of Nigeria's Border Closure on the National Security. *African Security*, DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2022.2081764.
- Udoh, E. O. (2015). Integration and Politics among West African States. *The Nigerian Experience in Humanities* 1 (1), pp. 30–41.

- Uexkull, E. V. (2012). Regional Trade and Employment in ECOWAS. *International Labour Office, Employment Sector Employment Working Paper No. 114*. Retrieved from [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms175415.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms175415.pdf).
- Ugwuja, A. A. & Chukwukere, C. (2021). Trade Protectionism and Border Closure in Nigeria: The Rice Economy in Perspective. *UJAH*, 22 (1), pp.79-106. <http://dx.doi./org/10.4314/ujah.v22i1.4>.
- Sinclair, M. (1983). An Analysis of Nigerian Foreign Policy: the Evolution of Political Paranoia. *The South African Institute of International Affairs*.
- Tieku, T. K. (2015). Explaining the Clash and Accomodation of Interest of Malor Actors in the Creation of the African Union. In T. Young, *Readings in the International Relations of Africa (Ed.)*, pp.275-283. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.