



Review

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The federal government of Nigeria ordered the partial closure of all land borders with her neighbours such as Benin Republic, Cameroun, Chad and Niger on the 20th August, 2019. The decision by the Nigerian government was to curb smuggling of contra-band agro-allied products (especially rice and poultry products), petroleum products (especially premium motor spirit), reduce influx of illegal migrants, control proliferation of small arms and light weapons and, finally to strengthen internal security of the country. However, this government policy has resulted in increase in inflation rate to above 11.85 percent, closure of business by some manufacturing companies, loss of jobs, increase in security challenges, and also a breach of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocols and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) guidelines etc. The study aimed at identifying the factors responsible for border closure, the implications for the closure for national security in Nigeria, and solutions to address these problems. It adopted secondary method of data collection which included textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines and internet information. The study adopted frustration-aggression theory as its theoretical framework. The study adopted library research and documentary evidence as its instruments of data analysis. The findings of the study showed that border closure has resulted in inflationary pressure, increase in local rice production, unemployment due to lay-offs etc. The study recommended installation of security equipment /device that can track down illegal migrants and smugglers of contra-band goods, strict adherence to ECOWAS protocols and AfCFTA guidelines etc.

Key Words: Border closure, Neighbours, Nigeria and National security.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Nigerian State led by President Muhammadu Buhari ordered the partial closure of all Nigerian land borders with her neighbours such as Benin Republic, Cameroun, Chad and Niger. The land border closure was announced on the 20th August, 2019 and lasted for sixteen months. This policy on border closure was as a result of the federal government's growing concern over increase in smuggling of contra-band agro-allied products (especially rice and poultry products), petroleum products (especially premium motor spirit), influx of illegal migrants into the country, trafficking in human beings (especially women and children) and drugs, proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and the need to strengthen internal security. The closure of Nigeria's land borders with her neighbours was fully consolidated with further restrictions on import and export of goods through the land borders. As pointed out by the government, this policy was part of the efforts and measures to protect local industries (manufacturing and agricultural sectors), curb smuggling, boost local production and achieve food security, create jobs for the teeming unemployed Nigerians and guarantee national security. The Comptroller General of the Nigerian Customs Services, Hameed Ali, officially confirmed the total shutdown in trade across Nigeria's land borders, including goods that had been moving legally. Ali (2019) concludes that "All goods, for now are banned from being exported or imported through our land borders and that is to ensure we have total control over what comes in".

However, the land border closure by the federal government has elicited positive and negative reactions within and outside the country. Within the country, there are positive reactions over the land border closure. Particularly, the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN) has urged the federal government to sustain the closure of border which would help to boost the economy. The Chairman of Niger State chapter of the association, Idris Abini, said the closure has increased rice production in the state due to increased demand by marketers and consumers. Abini opines that "the border closure is a step in the right direction because it is already increasing wealth among farmers as consumers are beginning to patronize local rice" (Abini, 2019).

The land border closure has however elicited negative reactions. The National President, Council of Managing Directors of Licensed Customs Agents (NCMDLCA), Lucky Amiwero, said that by the provisions of section 15 of the Customs and Excise Management Act (CEMA), the Customs Boss does not have the power to issue a declaration on the restriction of the border. Besides, Amiwero stated that the restriction contradicts the continental trade protocols signed by Nigeria. Amiwero (2019) concludes that “In the ECOWAS protocol is the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement among others, which are being jeopardized as the case is”.

The traders especially the informal ones who are engaged in border business as a means of livelihood have frowned at the policy which they argued has forced them out of business and further impoverished them. The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), whose inputs and outputs pass through these borders have complained bitterly about the land closure to the extent that some of the companies have closed down. Thus, some of the manufacturers, such as cement manufacturers, have their trucks parked at the borders but could not cross because of the closure. Besides, some companies had their contracts terminated because of their inability to meet their contractual obligations. The leader of Manufacturers Association of Nigeria Export Group (MANEG), Ede Dafinone stated that:

A large number of exporters were, however, totally unable to engage in any export contracts during this period. During this period, their market share would have been taken over by products from other countries and the possibility of regaining our share of these markets is uncertain (Dafinone, 2020: 4).

Outside the country, the governments of the countries that share borders with Nigeria have appealed to the federal government to open up the borders in order to facilitate inter-state trade, and ensure free movement of persons, goods and services as contained in the ECOWAS protocols. Article Three of ECOWAS Protocol A/P.1/5/79 has stated that, relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, “any citizen of the Community who wishes to enter the territory of any other Member State shall be required to possess valid travel document and International Health Certificate”. It reads further that

“acitizen of the Community visiting any Member State for a period not exceeding ninety(90) days shall enter the territory of that Member State through the official entry point free of visa requirements. Such citizen shall, however, be required to obtain permission for an extension of stay from the appropriate authority if after such entry that citizen has cause to stay for more than 90 days”.

Article four, however, reads that “notwithstanding the provisions of Article Three above, Member States shall reserve the right to refuse admission into their territory any Community citizen who comes within the category of inadmissible immigrants under its laws”.

The President of Ghana, Nana Addo Akufo-Ado on Tuesday 29th October, 2019, described the action of Nigeria as a big blow to regional integration in West Africa. In other words, border closure could negatively affect regional integration agenda. Nana Akufo-Ado(2019) concludes that “We are about to enter a delicate period in the ECOWAS journey looking ahead of the possibility of a single currency and trying to forge greater integration among our economies and at same time have important security and other issues which confront us”. In October, 2019, the Ghana Union of Traders Association (GUTA) asked the citizens of the country to stop patronizing products that are imported from Nigeria. In November, 2019, apart from the boycott order, Nigerians were attacked physically and their shops were shut down as a way of retaliation on border closure. In order to justify the clampdown on Nigeria businesses in Ghana, GUTA cited section 27 of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act 865 which provides that a non-citizen or an enterprise not wholly owned by citizen shall not invest or participate in certain businesses. However, the sale of electronic and electrical products do not fall into this category, even though, the section was cited to justify the shutting down of 50 shops owned by Nigerians.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has supported the federal government’s policy on land border closure. The Director of the African Department at the IMF, Abebe Sellassie, said that although, free trade was critical to Africa’s economic growth and

development, it must be legal and in line with the agreements. Selassie stated that IMF understood the closure of border by the Nigerian government which was due to smuggling and other illegal trades. Besides, Selassie noted that the land border closure is already adversely affecting the economies of the neighbouring countries. Thus:

“We are very hopeful that discussions will resolve the challenges that this illegal trade is posing. If the border closure is to be sustained for a long time, it will definitely have impact on Benin and Niger, which of course, rely quite extensively on the big brother next door” (Selassie,2019:2).

However, the federal government has alleged that some Nigeria’s neighbours are not following the protocols of ECOWAS laid down rules instead they are taking advantage of the country to bring in substandard goods, and therefore dump these goods in Nigeria. Consequently, the federal government has maintained its position that land borders would be opened on the basis of conditions and criteria which Nigeria neighbours should be willing and ready to meet with. In other words, the borders will only re-open if the country’s neighbours properly enforce existing rules of origin within the regional trading bloc, the ECOWAS, which are designed to prevent the dumping of cheap western and Chinese goods (Onyeama, 2019).

The federal government re-opened the land borders on 16 December, 2020, which were shut down sixteen months ago following a recommendation by the Presidential Committee which was mandated to review and advise the President on the re-opening of land borders. These borders included Seme, Iela, Maigatari and Mfun. Thus, while Seme is located in the South-West, Mfun in the South-South, Iela and Maitagari borders are located in the North -West. However, the Minister of Finance, Zainab Ahmed stated that though the borders have been re-opened, the ban on imported rice , poultry products and other banned products were still in force and would be implemented by the border patrol team. The other land borders not mentioned were slated for reopening on 31st December, 2020(Ahmed, 2020).

However, this was not the first time Nigeria has closed her borders with her neighbours. During his regime as a military dictator between 1984 and 1985, Buhari closed Nigeria’s border

with Benin Republic to stop smuggling. The closure of the border had little or no impact because smuggling activities increased astronomically (Isah, 2020). Prior to Nigeria's closure of her borders with her neighbours, some other African countries had closed their borders with their neighbours at different periods of time. These countries included Sudan with Libya, Rwanda with Uganda, Kenya with Somalia and Ethiopia with Eritrea (Mumbere, 2019). Among the reasons adduced for the border closure by these countries included diplomatic disputes, security concerns, health precautions, economic considerations, human and narcotics trafficking (Mumbere, 2019). The federal government of Nigeria has closed her borders at different periods of Nigeria history including 1984, 2003 and 2019 respectively (Ugwuja and Chukwukere, 2021: 81).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increase in illegal activities on land borders between Nigeria and her neighbours constitutes a serious threat to national security in Nigeria. Worried by this trend, the Federal Government of Nigeria ordered a partial closure of land borders between Nigeria and her neighbours including Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad and Niger on 20th August, 2019. The land border closure was attributed to the inability of the Nigeria neighbours to adhere strictly to the rules and regulation contained in the ECOWAS Protocols on inter – state trading activities. The agreement among the ECOWAS member states on goods must be containerized and taken through the border where they can be assessed and attested to that they are not smuggled items.

Petrol and rice were the two commodities that were smuggled. Petrol was being sneaked out from Nigeria where subsidies make the price half as cheap as in its neighbours and resold. On the other hand, rice was being brought into Nigeria where consumers favour imported Asian grown varieties over the locally grown competitor, from Benin through its port in Cotonou. The National President of the Rice Millers Association of Nigeria (RIMAN), Peter Dama, raised an alarm over massive smuggling of foreign rice into the country, which endangers nation's economy and put Nigerians health at risk. Dama concludes that:

These foreign rice sellers and distributors in the markets are themselves economic saboteurs by accepting to market banned goods in the country, they should not be spared as they

are contributing to the destruction of our common wealth and our attempt to be self-sufficient in national food security (Dama, 2021:16).

Again, influx of illegal migrants into the country without proper records and documentation has contributed to the security challenges in Nigeria, as some of them have been alleged to engage in criminal activities such as armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, herder and farmer clashes, terrorism etc. Eze (2019) has stated that some of the boys riding Okada in Lagos are from Niger Republic. Some of them carry dangerous weapons and they are not hiding that they are from neighbouring countries. What then are our people manning the borders doing? These people are brought into the country in organized manner and there are some business men who are making so much money bringing them into the country.

Finally, proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) by criminals and hoodlums through the porous land borders has been used to tinker the security architecture of the country. The Director of United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), Olatokunbo Ige has stated that:

The illicit proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) had dramatic impact on peace and security in Africa threatening not only the existence of the state, but also the livelihoods of millions of people across the continent. Nigeria is one of the countries experiencing some of the most devastating effects of proliferation of SALW as a result of spillover effect of the recent crises in Libya and Mali, as well as unresolved internal conflicts in different parts of the country especially in the North-East, Niger Delta and South Regions (Ige, 2020: 4-5).

It is against this background that this study investigates the land border closure and its implications for national security in Nigeria.

The research questions for this study are:

- a. What are the factors responsible for the border closure in Nigeria?
- b. What are the implications of land border closure for national security in Nigeria?
- c. What are the solutions to address the problems of land border closure?

The objectives of this research are:

- a. To identify the factors responsible for the land border closure in Nigeria
- b. To examine the implications of land border closure for national security in Nigeria.
- c. To proffer solutions to address the problems of land border closure

1.3 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The study adopted secondary method of data collection as its main sources of data. These are textbooks, magazines, newspapers, articles, journals, colloquium, internet information etc. However, the study adopted library research and documentary evidence as its instruments for data analysis.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2.1 Border Closure

A closed border is one that prevents movement of people between different jurisdictions with limited or no exceptions associated with this movement. Border closure, however, is a serious decision taken by nations in extraordinary circumstances, especially when going to war or to protect the country's territorial integrity. Besides, border closure is a decision which is always informed by the need for a country to protect its national interest.

Article 41 of the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS makes allowances for quantitative restrictions on community goods by member states as its paragraph three (3) states thus: A member state may, after having given notice to the Executive Secretary and other member states of its intention to do so, introduce or continue to execute restrictions or prohibitions affecting:

- (a) The application of security laws and regulations;

- (b) The control of arms, ammunitions and other war equipment and military item;
- (c) The protection of human, animal or plant health or life, or the protection of public morality;
- (d) The transfer of gold, silver and precious and semi-precious stones;
- (e) The protection of national artistic and cultural property;

Thus, a member state can rightly introduce restrictions or prohibitions to trade with other member states provided it is done for reasons or to achieve the results stated in subparagraphs (a) to (e). However, a Member State cannot rely on the exceptions where its sole intent is to frustrate free movement of goods (Article 41, paragraph 5 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty). The exceptions include the following:

- (a) to require any contracting party to furnish any information the disclosure of which it considers contrary to its essential security interests; or
- (b) to prevent any contracting party from taking any action which it considers necessary for the protection of its essential security interests
- (i) relating to fissionable materials or the materials from which they are derived;
- (ii) relating to the traffic in arms, ammunition and implements of war and to such traffic in other goods and materials as is carried on directly or indirectly for the purpose of supplying a military establishment;
- (iii) taken in time of war or other emergency in international relations; or
- (iv) to prevent any contracting party from taking any action in pursuance of its obligations under the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Land border closure is usually a decision taken by a nation's government based on perceived threat to its existence as a nation in the international community. Though, the reasons may be diverse, it must take into consideration variables such as treaties, internal politics and pressures etc. that can be counterproductive in achieving the objective (s) of closing the border.

2.2 National Security

National security is an old phenomenon which was first introduced in the United States of America after the Second World War (Romm, 1993) and falls under the traditional school of thought which favours the maintenance of the Cold War conception of security. No wonder, Nwolise opines that the Cold War period (1945-1989) gave the high level domination to the conventional security doctrine to the extent that security rests on the belief that only a military system can efficiently deter attack and threat of force (Nwolise, 2008). Scholars, such as Morgethau conceived national security as the maintenance of the integrity of the national territory and its institutions (Morgethau, 1960). Similarly, Paleri (2008) perceived national security as:

The measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation state at any given time by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance that can be indexed by computations, empirically or otherwise, and is extendable to global security by variables external to it (Paleri, 2008:521).

For Nnoli, the concept of national security is not all about military strategies and defenses, but more importantly the entrenchment of democracy. He posits:

The conceptualization of national security in terms of external attack is largely ameliorant. It must be viewed from the point of view of democracy, how to create and consolidate democracy in Africa. In fact, there is general acceptance that national security must go beyond the narrow focus on external attack and the use of military to defeat it... National security is a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, groups of nation states, together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values. It denotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. Therefore, security in any

objective sense can be measured by the absence of threats, anxiety or danger. However, and more importantly, security has a subjective sense, which can be measured by the absence of fear that threat, anxiety or danger will materialize. In other words, it is value associated with confidence in physical safety and other most cherished values (Nnoli, 2006: 6 – 16).

Jega (2007) sees national security as:

Protection and defense of the country's territorial integrity, promotion of peaceful coexistence in the polity, eliminating threats to internal security, ensuring systemic stability and bringing about sustainable and equitable socio-economic development (Jega, 2007:194).

Nwolise (2012) stated that national security is the deliberate and conscious efforts to guarantee internal peace, security and togetherness, as well as the ability to forestall invasion and subjection of people to a state of despondency by foreign elements. Osamba (2016) opines that national security is not necessarily limited to military elements only, but also encompasses all other human endeavours and existentialists like economic, health, educational, technological and environmental factors among others. Elaigwu (2018) sees national security as “the protection of state (its citizens and territorial integrity) from internal and external threats to soft and hard forms of security. It involves protection of broad and strategic national interests”. Elaigwu further stated that hard form of security or physical security is designed to protect citizens and defend the sovereignty of the state, while soft forms of security essentially refer to food, environmental, economic, political, health etc.

In recent times, however, focus has shifted from national security to human security in realization of the importance of individuals and communities. In other words, security is human centered and no longer state centered. Annan (2000) insists that security has gone beyond state centered to individuals and communities. Once individuals and communities are taken care of, the tendency to engage in activities/actions that can threaten national security will no longer be

there. Hubert (1999) opines that human security is people centered and not state or government centered. In other words, individuals and communities should be the focus of government in order to forestall negative activities by individuals and communities that can undermine national security of the country.

National security is the ability of a leader to secure its territory from external threats, protect lives and property of the individuals and communities from being threatened by domestic insurgents/hoodlums, as well as avoid infliction of poverty, hunger, starvation and possibly death through obnoxious policies and programmes of government, maintain economic relations with the international community for the economic welfare and wellbeing of her citizens and the guarantee of food security in the country.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 The Frustration -Aggression Theory

The Frustration- Aggression theory is a theory proposed by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears in 1939. It was further developed by Miller, Mowrer and Sear in 1941 and Berkowitz in 1969. The theory says that aggression is the result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal (Friedman and Schustack, 1999). The theory developed by Dollard and colleagues says that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. For example, several riots and revolutions, conflicts and crises experienced in different parts of the world including Nigeria may be explained by this theory. Violence is usually carried out by poorer and more deprived sections of the society who probably express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence.

Taking a cue from proponents of this theory, the inability of the leadership at all levels in Nigeria to provide good governance has resulted in hoodlums and criminals leveraging on this failure by governments to engage in illegal activities such as smuggling of contraband imported rice and premium motor spirit, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, influx of illegal migrants into the country, trafficking in human beings and drugs that constitute serious threat to national security.

The choice of this theory provides the basis for the identification of political will that is not mustered by government officials and political actors to provide good governance which can forestall hoodlums/criminals from engaging in illegal activities that can undermine national security through our porous borders with our neighbours. However, there is little empirical support for the frustration-aggression theory even though researchers have studied the theory for more than sixty years (Whitley and Mary, 2010). Second, this theory suggests frustrated, prejudiced individuals should act more aggressively towards out groups they are prejudiced against, but studies have shown that they are more aggressive towards everyone. Lastly, this theory cannot say why some out groups are chosen to be scape goats and why others are not in the face of violence.

3.0 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR BORDER CLOSURE BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

The closure of Nigerian land borders with her neighbours can be attributed to the following factors.

a. Smuggling of Premium Motor Spirit and Imported Rice

Petrol was being sneaked out from Nigeria where subsidies make the fuel half as cheap as in its neighbours and resold. The smuggling of banned imported rice from Thailand and India through the illegal routes into the country is counterproductive to the federal government's policy to protect local industries (manufacturing and agricultural sectors), boost local production and achieve food security, create jobs for teeming unemployed Nigerians and guarantee national security. The National President of the Rice Millers Association of Nigeria (RIMAN), Peter Dama raised an alarm over massive smuggling of foreign rice into the country, which endangers nation's economy and puts Nigerians' health at risk.

These foreign rice sellers and distributors in the markets are themselves, economic saboteurs by accepting to market banned goods in the country, they should not be spared, as they are contributing to the destruction of our common wealth and our attempt to be self-sufficiency in national food security (Dama, 2021:16).

b. Illegal migrants into Nigeria

Nigeria does not have accurate data of other nationals living in the country. This can be attributed to the fact that some of them do not enter Nigeria through the right channel(s) for proper profiling and documentation about them. As a matter of fact, some of the illegal migrants come into the country through our porous land borders with our neighbours, hence there is no proper profiling and documentation about them. However, because of the country's inability to keep accurate data about other nationals who come into Nigeria, it becomes difficult to track down some of them who may engage in criminal activities such as banditry, armed robbery, herdsman/farmers conflict, insurgency etc. which affect the national security of Nigeria. Minister of Interior, Rauf Aregbesola, opines that many of Nigeria's borders are artificial and thus difficult to manage. Aregbesola (2020) concludes that: Let me be clear and remind us of the fact that our boundaries are artificial. I know of a particular village in Ogun state where the boundary between Nigeria and Benin Republic cuts the palace of the traditional ruler of that town into two (Aregbesola, 2020:1).

The International Organization of Migration (OIM) had stated that an estimated 240 million international migrants move to more destinations via complex and diverse routes, adopting a variety of strategies. Nigeria shares in these global migratory trends, more so being the largest economy in Africa and the commercial hub of the West African Sub-region. It is estimated that about 700 young uneducated and unskilled boys come into states in the South Western Nigeria every week and take up mainly menial jobs such as polishing of shoes, operating commercial motorcycles, hawking cheap goods and others (Eze, 2019).

c. Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

In recent years, Nigeria has faced serious security challenges such as insurgency, militancy, banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, herders/farmers clashes etc. that undermine our national security. Regrettably, successive regimes have not been able to unravel the sponsors and the means through which the hoodlums and criminals have access to the sophisticated arms and ammunition they use to carry out mayhem on their victims. These crimes illegally possess deadly weapons such as AK 47 rifles, improvised explosive devices etc. and enter the country through our porous borders. Thus, "we have closed our borders here for more than a year, but arms and

ammunition continued to flow illegally. As far as Libya remains unstable, so will the problem remain” (Buhari, 2021). The recent federal government partial closure of land borders with her neighbours was also aimed at reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country which were used to tinker the security architecture of the country.

d. Trafficking in human beings(especially women and children) and drugs

During the colonial period, slave trade flourished as a thriving business. However, since over 5 decades or more, it is now trafficking in human beings where by women and children are moved from one country to another to work as sex workers and or forced labour. The people who indulge in this illicit trade often times deceive their victims in a bid to make money. Besides, they move them outside Nigeria through our land borders hence, the border closure is expected to reduce the incidence of trafficking in human beings. Binder (2004) cited in Osimen et al (2017) opines that the International Organization for Migration (OIM) estimate roughly 700,000 women and children are trafficked across international borders annually.

3.1 The Implications of Land Border Closure for National Security

The land border closure has positive and negative implications. The positive implications included the following:

- a. The land border closure has boosted local production of rice by the rice farmers in Nigeria, and also increased their income due to increase in demand for the commodity.
- b. Thus, “since the border closure, locally milled rice has started selling, and the entire rice value chain has been positively impacted by the closure” (Adefeko, 2019).
- c. A corollary to the above was an increase in revenue to the federal government through taxation. More duties were collected on the increased volume of goods that entered the country legally through the ports. Ali observes that:

What we have discovered is that most of those cargoes that used to go to Benin Republic, shipped to Benin, and then discharged and smuggled into Nigeria, now that we have closed the border they are forced to bring their goods to either Apapa or Tin Can Island and we have to collect duty on them,... as a matter of fact, our revenue

has not reduced, it is increasing as a result of closing the border,... the agency has been making between N4.7 billion and N5.8billion daily more than the agency used to generate before the closure (Ali, 2019: 5).

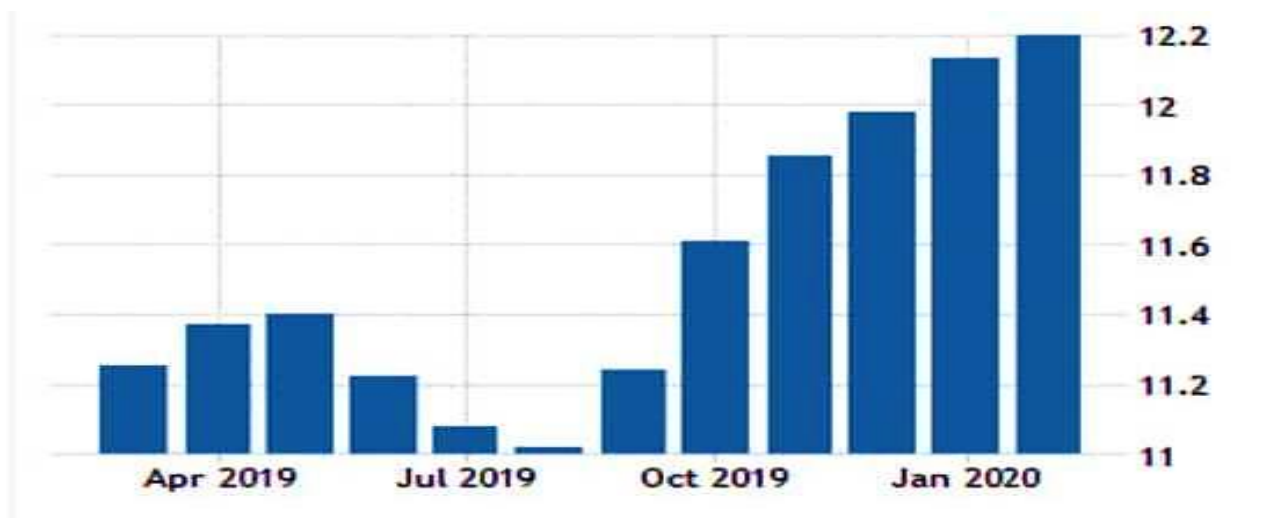
- d. There was also an increase in investment in the area of local rice production by local and foreign investors, and employment opportunities because the agricultural sector employed more hands into the sector.
- e. It stemmed the rate of smuggling of contraband goods especially rice, controlled proliferation of small arms and light weapons and reduced influx of illegal migrants into the country. Besides, the Minister of Petroleum Resources, Timipre Sylva said that “there was a drop in fuel consumption by eight million liters a day” (Sylva, 2019).

The negative implications of border closure are as follows:

The closure of land borders by the federal government has resulted in inflationary pressure up to 11.85 percent. The NBS (2019) stated that following the closure of Nigeria’s land borders with her neighbours, there was an increase in inflation rate because local demands for food items especially rice were higher than local production. Rice is a staple food with high rate of consumption by virtually everybody, and with the increase in price, it became unaffordable especially to the poor and vulnerable resulting in poverty, hunger, starvation and death.

Nigeria Inflation Rate at Over 1-12 Year High of 11.85%

Figure 1: Nigeria Inflation Rate at Over 1-12 Year High of 11.85%



Source: Tradingeconomics.com, National Bureau of Statistic, Nigeria

The annual inflation rate in Nigeria rose to 11.85 percent in November of 2019 from 11.61 percent in the last month. It was the highest inflation rate since April last year, as food prices continued to surge amid the ongoing country’s border closure and the festive season mood.

Besides, it has caused untold hardship to Nigerian citizens especially those who are engaged in informal trade across the border as a means of livelihood. Some of these Nigerians whose means of livelihood have been affected by the land border closure policy of the federal government could easily resort to crime such as armed robbery, ritual killings, banditry, kidnapping etc. as survival strategy. In the same vein, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) complained bitterly that the land border closure has affected their business because they get some of their inputs or raw materials from the neighbouring countries and also export finished products to them. Consequently, the policy of land border closure has forced some of them to close down resulting in lay-off of workers. Also, Imokhai Ehimigbai, a member of MAN and a representative of Aarti Steel (Nigeria) Limited has observed that some Nigerian traders took loans from banks to import but the goods had been trapped at the borders about a year ago.

*We are losing money daily. We don't have contraband
We have goods like electronics, battery and some of the owners
of these goods have died. We have lost over four or five members
since this crisis. The loan is there and interest is accumulating
on a daily basis (Ehimigbai, 2020: 5).*

The border closure is inconsistent with Nigeria's multilateral commitments, including ECOWAS and AfCFTA, and is a major disruption to Nigeria and the entire region. This will surely frustrate the momentum of removing trade barriers in the region and across Africa. It undermines the systems agreed to and destroys trust and goodwill (Musser, 2020: 7).

The border closure by the federal government is an indictment on the security agencies such as army, police, civil defense etc. and paramilitary agencies such as Nigeria Customs Services, Nigeria Immigration Services etc. that are manning Nigerian borders with her neighbours. In other words, these agencies are alleged to be involved in corrupt practices. This was buttressed by the Vice President of the Nigeria Agri-Business Group (NABG), Emmanuel Ijewere, who stated that "border closure against importation and smuggling of agro-allied products is an indication of absolute lack of confidence in the Nigeria Customs Service" (Ijewere, 2020). Similarly, Mallam Ali, a Cameroonian, who claimed to have been going in and out of Nigeria for the past twelve (12) years without a single document to show security officials said that "Some of us are very familiar with your security men here. Certain amount of money has been fixed for people like us who do not have traveling documents. As far as we are able to pay them (security officials) the fixed amount, our going out of Nigeria is hundred percent guaranteed". He went further to say that the reverse is the case in Cameroon; "it is easier for foreigners to enter your country from this area than my country, Cameroon" (Ali, 2019:20).

Unemployment has also increased as a result of lay-offs by the manufacturing sector which found it difficult to access raw materials, and whose products could not get across to our neighbours due to land border closure. Some products such as cement and other goods loaded in trucks could not cross the border to our neighbours and in the process spoiled or even expired. It

was also alleged that some manufacturing companies have closed down because of their inability to access raw materials for their business.

Isah (2020) observed that the increasing security challenges have made Nigeria to rely on regional military cooperation with Cameroun, Chad and Niger to fight the Boko Haram insurgency, which has claimed more than 35,000 lives as reported by the Council on Foreign Relations. With this border closure, Nigeria has turned its back on such strategic partners for economic reasons; these countries may be reluctant to offer the assistance Nigeria needs to tackle its domestic challenges in the future. This may be detrimental to the much needed economic, security related and political cooperation that the sub-region requires to achieve a sustainable economy.

4.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

The land border closure policy of the federal government has positive and negative implications. The positive implications are increase in revenue to the federal government through taxation, increase in the income of rice farmers, increase in investment in local rice production by both local and foreign investors. The negative implications include inflationary pressure, unemployment due to lay-offs by MAN, untold hardship to informal traders and closure of some companies, security challenges, significant political and security implications in the sub-region etc.

4.2. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- It is important and necessary to increase local rice production through deliberate policy such as credit facilities to local rice farmers without discrimination such as political, religious and cultural sentiments as well as ethnic bias.
- Land border closure should be total and comprehensive, and not discriminatory. In other words, once the policy is made by the federal government, it should be for all our borders both north and south, and not for a particular region. In doing so, the expected results would be achieved.

- Because of the vastness of the land borders, it requires more man power to man these areas. Also, any security officer found wanting in the discharge of his / her duty should be punished according to the law without sentiments.
- Security equipment and devices that can track down movement of persons and goods should be installed at border posts or areas to check and control smuggling and illegal migrants, as well as proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
- Retraining of security personnel that man our borders with update on information and surveillance on our borders should be encouraged and supported.
- The governments of countries that share borders with Nigeria should ensure that they obey the rules and regulation on ECOWAS protocols and AfCFTA guidelines as strictly as possible.
- Stakeholders such as government officials, farmers, manufacturers, security personnel etc. should come to a round table discussion on how to address the issues on land border activities with a view to satisfying the various parties involved.
- Nigeria needs to strengthen its borders by increasing the capacity of border agents to do their job well and enforce laws and regulations effectively. This requires professionalizing staff, creating systems of accountability that discourage corruption among border officials and pushing for the implementation of a common external tariff among ECOWAS states.

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