




DOI: 10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-2-200-210

Научная статья / Research article

## The Politics of Border Closure and Its Implications on the Nigerian Economy

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**Abstract.** The research establishes that land borders closure by the Nigerian government against other neighboring African countries due to smuggling and illegal business trades affecting the unstable economy of the country calls for a radical change which determines whether the closure of the land borders affected the growth and development of the Nigerian Economy, as it also determined measures to mitigate the challenges of smuggling in Nigeria. The study made use of data mainly obtained from secondary sources which were acquired from books, articles, journals, newspapers and other published materials. The study uncovers that the closure of the land borders had certain consequences which negates Nigeria's international trade treaties and economy as certain African countries backfired against Nigeria due to the land border closure. Furthermore, the study observed that the Nigerian Economy is still faced with the problem of inflation as a result of high reliance on foreign and imported products, but since the land borders were closed, job opportunities were created and local industries have developed, thereby leading to increase in the production of locally-made goods which aids the growth and development of the Nigerian Economy. The study recommends that the Nigerian government should invest highly on local entrepreneurs and the Agricultural sector as this will encourage foreign and local investments aimed towards the progress of the Nigerian Economy.

**Keywords:** border, closure, development, economy, Nigeria

**Conflicts of interest:** The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

### Article history:

The article was submitted on 01.02.2022. The article was accepted on 30.03.2022.

### For citation:

Omodunbi O.O., Olawole O.S., Mohammed J.B. The Politics of Border Closure and Its Implications on the Nigerian Economy. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*. 2022;9(2):200–210. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-2-200-210>

## Introduction

International Trade has been one way through which exchange of goods and services occur across state borders. States rely on international trade in order to foster its economy as no nation can completely isolate itself economically. It has been observed that the Nigerian Economy rely on international trade, causing decline

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in the production of locally made goods and services rendered. By implication, the Nigerian government formulated policies on Land Border Closure to help regulate the inflow of goods and services into the country.

The Legality of the Closure of the Land Border has been widely debated on the basis that Nigeria as a country is forced to come up with a system on the best way to curb the non-stop smuggling of verboten food items and other illegal imports goods [1]. In Africa, borders refer to the demarcation a country has in respect to other countries with sovereignty standing as a medium of exercising its internal affairs which now dictates how goods come in and out of the host country. Due to the issue of illegal international business and smuggling, the flows of illicit goods such as drugs and food products has led to the closure of the land borders in some African countries [2].

The continuing controversies on the politics of the Land Border Closure and its implications on the Nigerian Economy and its socio-economic relationships with other neighboring countries has raised major concerns, not only among economists and intellectual researchers but also among Africa's sub-regional organizations, governments and as a matter of fact, among concerned citizens [1]. The decision of the formulation of the land border policy has raised serious doubts on whether it is the most expedient measure both in theory and practice to revive the Nigerian economy. The government of Nigeria deliberate actions to close its borders on land has brought about many difficulties in the country with many Nigerians expressing concerns about the implications on the prices of food, household items and the economy in general. The land borders have a huge impact on the country's economy and since its closure on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, there has been reduction in movement of goods and services inside the country [1].

It has become imperative for Nigerians to know the implications it poses on the nation's economy and national development. It is for this reason that this study is aimed at evaluating the land border closure in Nigeria. As a result of this, the paper will tend to examine the consequences of the prolong closure of the land borders on Nigeria's socio-economic activities. Also, it will examine the effects of the AFCFTA agreement on the Nigerian government based on the land border closure. For analytical purposes, the paper is divided into different section; while this section introduces the paper, the second section reviewed the major concept in the concept of theoretical framework. The third section gives the Nigerian policies for border closure linking it with its consequences. The fourth looks into the impact of border closure on the economy. It also captures some of the reactions of African countries to Nigerian Border closure. The last section is the concluding part.

## **Literature Review**

Governments, sovereign states, federated states, and other sub-national entities all have borders, which define the geographical boundaries of their political entities or legal jurisdictions. Borders are established through agreements between the political or social entities responsible for specific territory [3]. The size of external borders is partially or entirely controlled and may only be legally crossed

at designated border checkpoints and border zones. Borders may also serve as an incentive to build buffer zones. Academic research has established a distinction between border and frontier, with the latter referring to a state of mind rather than state boundaries [4].

Borders are now widely recognized as a multi-leveled, multi-layered social phenomenon that affects both the fundamental structure of society and human psychology. This has not always been the case but approaches to and interpretations of boundaries have changed in lockstep with broader discursive shifts in border understanding and framing. Traditional definitions and perceptions of boundaries have been called into question as the context in which they were established and existing has shifted. Border studies has developed into an interdisciplinary field of study, with contributions from political scientists, sociologists, ethnologists, psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, economists, physical geographers, and even experts in more technological fields [5].

A closed border is one that prohibits individuals from travelling freely between different jurisdictions with few or no exceptions. These boundaries typically have fences or walls along which any gates or border crossings are closed, and if these border gates are opened, persons are typically only allowed to cross under exceptional circumstances. Perhaps the most famous example of a closed border is the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. Perhaps the Berlin Wall was also referred to as a closed border [2]. Borders can be opened or closed based on an immigrant's entry status, duration, qualification, rights and obligations, and quotas. When and if someone is permitted to cross a border, regardless of whether they are students, laborers, soldiers, or immigrants, their occupation is referred to as their entrance status. The ability to cross a border is contingent upon one's position. The majority of states regulate border crossing by limiting the duration of any visit. Health, age, wealth, religion, and race all have an effect on admission requirements. Numerous countries, including Canada and Singapore, will admit wealthy immigrants who demonstrate an aptitude and willingness to contribute to the country [3]. Entrant's rights and obligations refer to the limits placed on those who have already been granted permission to cross a border; in order to remain in that country, you must adhere to specific government-established laws and regulations. A government may grant you permission to reside but not to work, and those who are permitted to work may face difficulty finding job due to the restrictions on the types of employment permitted. Quotas for entry are restrictions on the number of immigrants who can cross a border in a specified period. Even if an individual meets all of the standards for border crossing and the country to which they wish to travel has achieved its immigration quota, they may still be denied access [6].

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Hardi and Uszkai [7], the location of borders changes over time. These changes are a result of the historical, geographical, political, and other critical factors that surround the regions. The investigation was conducted in accordance

with the Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST). Proponents of the hegemonic stability theory include Stephen Krasner, Robert Gilpin, George Modelski, and Robert Keohane. The primary tenet of this theory is that powerful governments or nations utilize their might and resources to ensure that weaker nations adhere to the stronger nations' beliefs and philosophies [7]. This theoretical framework continues to be adequate for explaining the Nigerian state's closing of its land borders.

On the other hand, hegemonic stability theorists believed that a command given at the expense of some self-government and benefits made possible by the order would be acceptable; and that relinquishing some potential to act in unison would be justified [8]. As a result, powerful states are more likely to adopt and implement policies to achieve or realize their objectives at any given time. Simultaneously, smaller or weaker countries will concede significant authority in exchange for material assistance, allowing these actions to compel decisions on their own turf [9].

As a result, the hegemonic stability theory (HST) exists to preserve stability and order, but the objective of boundaries is to specify the area to be excluded from comparative advantages or benefits calculations. Additionally, trade and immigration policies are influenced by state hegemony dynamics; as a result, this study concludes that Nigeria's power relation in the West African sub-region remains a force to be reckoned with as the region's largest economy, population, and military force. This provides Nigeria with the confidence to close all of its land borders in order to compel complete obedience from her weaker neighbors, who have been singled out for illegal and undocumented passage, the illegal importation of contraband goods, and the harboring of various criminals and terrorists in the region.

According to Minghi [9], a country's border is more than a map indicating the boundaries of a country's domain; it is a symbol of globalization based on trade conventions, agreements, and treaties, as well as the mobility of goods and services that is used to exert economic and political influence over unstable nations. This study demonstrates unequivocally how border limitations can be utilized to compel all other adjacent governments to implement necessary economic and security measures. Nigeria's deliberate influence over the sub-region has converted its border-sealing tactics from an internal matter into West African economic, political, and diplomatic difficulties.

### **The Policies for the Closure of Nigerian Land Border**

Uche [10] stressed that the Nigerian government implemented a land border closure policy in the interest of national security, allowing goods and people to be moved between Nigeria and her neighbors such as Niger Republic, Benin Republic, Chad, Togo, and Cameroon on an informal basis, with temporary clandestine workers, traders, cross-border workers, professionals, and refugees moving from one country to the next (ECOWAS). As a result, cross-border migration between Nigeria and its neighbors receives less scrutiny, and governments are less willing to act.

Additionally, as modern mobility has a detrimental effect on the nation's security, it is progressively becoming a matter requiring government policy (Nigeria). This facilitates the spread of foreign violence and criminality across national borders. As a result, the Nigerian government began a policy to close the country's land borders.

According to Adeola and Fayemi [5], the Nigerian authorities have outlined the fundamental reasons for sealing the country's land borders. Essentially, it is vital to enhance domestic agriculture and boost national productivity growth, hence reducing product smuggling and significantly cutting illegal rice imports. Additionally, the government's justification for the border closure includes blocking the export of inexpensive fuel to the Niger Republic, Benin, and Cameroon. Nigeria's administration has chosen to close the border as a result.

The federal government, through the Nigeria Customs Service, enforced the law governing the closure of the country's land borders in a circular reference no. NCS/ENF/ABJ/058/S.24 dated August 20, 2019, in order to prevent the sale or transfer of goods and services into the country [5]. According to Adeola and Fayemi [5], the country's land borders were closed as a result of the government's efforts to strengthen the country's domestic agricultural sectors and boost productivity in order to reduce smuggling of goods into the country, particularly the unlawful flow of foreign rice. Additionally, the government justifies the border closure by prohibiting subsidized gasoline exports to the Niger Republic, Benin, and Cameroon. Nigeria's administration has chosen to close the border as a result.

The aforementioned land border closure policy was imposed after the Council for the Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria (CRFFN) determined that, despite its population of only 12 million, Benin Republic is the world's fifth largest rice importer. Aluko [4] said that Benin Republic imported rice worth \$996 million US dollars in 2018, with 98.2 percent of this imported rice smuggled into Nigeria without payment of required customs duty, tax, and other expenses, hence damaging Nigeria's economy. It's worth noting that Nigeria has 36 official land borders that act as entry and exit points. In Kebbi State, Bagudo, Maje, Lolo, Dole-kaina, Kamba, Kangiwa, and Bachaka; in Sokoto State, Illela, Gada, and SabonBirni; and in Jibiya-Magama, Jibiya-Maje, Mai-Adua, Yardaji, Kongolom, BabbamMutum, Zango, BirninKuka [6].

### **Nigeria Land Border Closure and its Consequences**

Nigerian land borders closure has had major fallout in the country's international trade relations with other African countries because the African countries that are involved in the international trade businesses with Nigeria are retaliating against the Nigerian Government [8]. Nigeria land border closure was erratic with the country's multifaceted commitments with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty and African Continental

Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) Agreement, and these organizations see this as a key disturbance by Nigeria to the whole Africa in retrospect to transnational trade affairs [8]. The land borders closure has major consequences which affected the Nigerian Economy and they include the following:

- It Caused a Massive Decrease in the Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy: Nigeria's economy deteriorated by 1.6 percent in 2019 likened to the preceding year as reported by IMF (International Monetary Fund) in 2019 [13]. The closure of the borders led to a worldwide increase in crude oil price in 2020 which affects the country's economic growth and the citizen's earnings when most of the country's population feed from hand to mouth and their means of livelihood became much more difficult. International Trade in Nigeria with other neighboring African countries will be difficult as no nation will be willing to do business with a country whose economy is highly unstable and unpredictable [14].
- Devaluation of the Nigerian Currency: The Naira which is Nigeria currency fell from 30 percent of the dollar generating a shortage in Nigeria foreign exchange. The Nigerian currency value became irrelevant due to the low importation and exportation of goods and services which serves the countries international businesses and trade for boosting the Nigerian economy. Businesses and transactions conducted within and outside Nigeria will be closed down or shut down for good completely as the closure of the Land borders have depreciated the value and worth of the Nigerian currency with which trade is being conducted with [15].
- Shortage of materials imported into Nigeria: Nigeria rely on the importation of foreign products being brought into the country for trade purposes, as the country on its own, can hardly produce Nigerian-made products to aid the wants and needs of its citizens which is why most Nigerians prefers to buy foreign goods as it might be cheaper and affordable than the Nigerian-made products. Due to the closure of the land borders, the country suffers, not only on the decrease of products imported into the country but also from the rise in the price of the Nigerian-made products which has drastically affected the socio-economic growth of the country's economy and also affected its trans-border relations with other neighboring African countries [16].
- The Destabilization of Trade Liberalization in Africa: The Policies of Trade Liberalization in Africa is simply to promote free trade and when such trade agreement fails, it leads to fall in the financial market development, decrease in the financial market accessibility, increase in trade obstacles, low trade growth in African market businesses and political instability [17]. The closure of Nigeria border brought about a decline in the success that is meant to be achieved at regional and small intra-continent regional trade agreement.

## **Impact of the Border Closure on the Nigeria Economy**

The closure of the land borders was a strategy adopted by the Nigerian government to curb smuggling and other illegal activities conducted in and out of the country which resulted in the following;

- **It led to increase in the production of locally-made goods and products in the country:** The closure of the land borders has helped in making local goods comparable in price with other imported goods which come into the country through other channels which are still open as the importers will pay the applicable tariff on these goods which will increase the price. It also reduces the importation of foreign goods imported into the country, thereby providing ample opportunity for local producers to sell their products to consumers and this has led to self-sufficiency in food production as well as general economic growth and development because the closure of the land borders has compelled a massive investment in agriculture [12].
- **It contributed to the Development of local industries, especially the Agricultural sector:** Shutting the borders restricts the importation of goods and services into the country and this gives local manufacturers in the local industries the opportunity to scale, trade, and produce then also to make profit. It lessens the level of unfair rivalry they encounter from foreign investors and companies, thereby increasing their competitiveness and production of Nigerian-made products and as long as our local goods are patronized, it reduces the level of unemployment in the country because our uncontrollable appetites for foreign goods and services have been mitigated. This position has been exemplified in the Cement industry in Nigerian which is cited as a success story due to the land border and the shutting down of the land borders permits firms to attain economies of scale and guard growing industries, especially in Nigeria.
- **It aided in alleviating the issue of smuggling:** The illegal importation of goods and persons into the country had become a serious issue in the Nigerian economic system in which numerous industries have suffered from this deleterious act because goods cost billions of naira which involves food products especially rice, are being rustled into Nigeria from Benin Republic, but since the closure of the land borders, the country has been able to tame the fraudulent export of goods and other foreign products by fighting the importation of these products through the land borders and due to this, the production of local rice and other food products has become effective in the country in which the Nigerian citizens don't have to rely on foreign rice and imported food products. The closure of the land borders has also offered the Nigerian Security Agencies at the borders, a window of opportunity to identify the security lapses in the borders.

## **Reaction of African Countries to Nigeria's Land Border Closure.**

As a result of the border closure initiated by Nigeria, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) began the rejection of Nigerian goods as a retaliation strategy to the country's Land Border Closure. Adeola [14] opined that the Land Border Closure is a blow on the face of African continent's integration efforts because it is likely to destroy African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AFCFTA), which has the probability of becoming the world's major free trade zone, even exceeding the World Trade Organization, established in 1995. Foreigners, who are involved in the Trans-Border business and exporters, who are in trade area experienced fatalities as nations within the ECOWAS sub-region began to decline Nigerian products. The exporters reported that the action gradually crippled their businesses at large.

Such punitive actions certainly impacted negatively on the economy of the African countries as the exports done within the ECOWAS region in the African continent decreased. The countries that helped with opening border no longer do so because of the Nigerian land border closure. Nigeria does not assume to get the level of cooperation and recognition that it was getting before, because it has been hit hard by its closed borders decisions [17].

As Nigeria locked its Land Borders, Ghanaians closed down the Nigerians businesses in their country. It also closed down seventy businesses of Nigerians as they claimed it desecrated "section 27 of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act 865", which orders that "the sale of goods and provision of services in a market, petty trading or hawking and selling of goods in a stall at any place" must be held in reserve only for Ghanaian citizens [14].

Nigeria share boarder with four countries but the largest is with Niger Republic, Cameroon and Benin Republic because there are practically 4,000 kilometers of border that occur amongst the three countries. Nigeria's cordial relationship with these countries involves bilateral agreements between them for the importation and exportation of products to promote their trade business and boost their respective economies. Nigeria's trade relations with these African countries aforementioned are the most important because these are the countries with which Nigeria trade the most with and some of the countries are Nigeria's immediate neighbors. Therefore, the international trade between them goes a long in promoting trade businesses and creates job opportunities which in turn, reduce unemployment and these border trades tends to aid the development and growth of the economy which stabilizes the relations between Nigeria and these other African countries. In Africa, Trade remains a major factor for socio-economic growth, reduction in poverty and regional network because it plays an important role in facilitating the procedures of a reliable transport network which ensures a steady and an apparent framework for the effective movement of goods and services across borders [12].

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study depicts the fact that the smuggling of illegal products is a major problem faced by the Nigerian government, as it affects the economy. However, in an attempt to persuade the Nigerian government to never close its land borders



from its neighboring countries, both Nigeria government and its citizen needs to work together in unity to guarantee the total abolishment of smuggling in Nigeria.

Based on the finding of this study, a number of recommendations are put forward to curtail the issue of smuggling in Nigeria. The Government should make it a necessity to seek lasting and better ways to deal with smuggling through the land borders. Smuggling is not unique to Nigeria or Africa and in order to solve this recurring menace the country needs to leverage on modern technology, that can be used to combat smuggling and illegal importation and exportation, just like the advanced countries. The country also needs to create an enabling operating environment with the necessary amenities such as electricity and standard infrastructural roads which will alleviate the cost of production for the local entrepreneurs in order to promote the growth and development of the economy.

Furthermore, effective measures must be taken by the Nigerian Government to expand the economy. It must not just rely on the oil sector but should also focus its attention on the Agricultural sector in order to implement a market that is friendly so as to enhance foreign and local investments. In addition, the Land Border Agencies in Nigeria such as the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) should engage its officers and men into rigorous training, seminars and workshop, both domestically and internationally on the tricks of manning or handling the land borders with modern gadgets and sophisticated equipment in order to combat smuggling. Finally, Nigeria needs to encourage its citizens by calling them to action, in order to support the importance of local products which cannot be overemphasized as there are several locally made products of international standards that currently exist in Nigeria.

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## Политика закрытия границ и ее последствия для нигерийской экономики

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**Аннотация.** Статья устанавливает, что закрытие сухопутных границ правительством Нигерии по отношению к соседним африканским странам из-за контрабанды и незаконной коммерческой деятельности, приводит к дестабилизации экономики страны, что требует радикальных изменений, которые определяют, повлияло ли закрытие сухопутных границ на рост и развитие нигерийской экономики, с учетом проблем контрабанды. В исследовании использовались данные, полученные в основном из вторичных источников: книг, статей, журналов, газет и других опубликованных материалов. Исследование показывает, что закрытие сухопутных границ имело определенные последствия, которые сводят на нет международные торговые договоры и планы развития экономики Нигерии, поскольку некоторые африканские страны имели неприятные последствия из-за закрытия сухопутной границы. Кроме того, в исследовании отмечается, что нигерийская экономика по-прежнему сталкивается с проблемой инфляции в результате высокой зависимости от иностранных и импортных товаров, но поскольку сухопутные границы были закрыты, были созданы рабочие места и развивалась отечественная промышленность, что привело к увеличению производства товаров местного производства, которые способствуют росту и развитию нигерийской экономики. В исследо-

вании рекомендуется, чтобы правительство Нигерии инвестировало значительные средства в национальный бизнес и сельскохозяйственный сектор, поскольку это будет стимулировать иностранные и местные инвестиции, направленные на развитие нигерийской экономики.

**Ключевые слова:** граница, миграция, развитие, экономика, Нигерия

**Заявление о конфликте интересов:** Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов

**История статьи:**

Статья поступила в редакцию: 01.02.2022. Статья принята к публикации: 30.03.2022.

**Для цитирования:**

*Omodunbi O.O., Olawole O.S., Mohammed J.B.* The Politics of Border Closure and Its Implications on the Nigerian Economy // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Государственное и муниципальное управление. 2022. Т. 9. № 2. С. 200–210. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-2-200-210>

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