

The Snare and Delusion of ECOWAS Economic Integration: The Demystification of Nigeria's Border Closure

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Abstract: Movement of goods, services and persons between Nigeria and its neighbours has been a great source of concern for the Nigerian economy; with installed social, political and security implications. The permeability of the Nigerian borders has contributed to the influx of all sorts of smuggled goods and persons that is injurious to the Nigerian economy and security. This paper explores the tricky traps in the ECOWAS economic integration and unravels the mystification of Nigeria's border closure. It further explores all the consequences of and impacts on such moves by the Nigerian state to curb terrorism, insurgency, trafficking, smuggling etc. which have become increasingly intractable and unbearable for the Nigerian state to handle or resolve.

Keywords: *Economic Integration, Border Closure, Smuggling, Insecurity, Trafficking.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

West Africa is a vast region with abundant human, natural and mineral resources. It is also composed of varying topographical, and ecological or environmental disparities. Hence, vast opportunities and prospects exist against the prevailing socio-economic and political problems and challenges of economic integration of the region. Such problems and challenges have continued to emerge without practical solutions. Economic Integration of trade and market has been the hallmark of the aim and objectives of ECOWAS. Part of the stipulated and revised Treaty of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the apparent removal of trade barriers and harmonization of trade policies among the member States. This was also seemingly designed to bring about the establishment of a Free Trade Area, a Custom Union, a common market as well as a monetary and economic union for ECOWAS. The trap in ECOWAS treaty, that is contained with false belief in economic integration, has tempted but misled West African States in failing to grasp the elusive socio-economic and political reality that is neither satisfying nor reassuring. Hence, the delusive propaganda of economic integration, in the name of international trade and globalization, against national security and domestic interest of the States and the sub-region in general, have continued to persist and challenge peace and stability in West Africa. Such a device was strategically designed to render the economies of the region severely constrained in the political game of trap-ball of Western economic control.

The principal and predominant feature of the West African region is the reliance on agriculture that highly contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP). Even though its economic features and fortunes in industrial sector are weak, there are, however, notable and considerable variations of the manufacturing sector which also contributes to its economic growth but notwithstanding dependent on agricultural production. Given the limited feature of the West African economies, characterized by the highly limited forward and backward linkage of the manufacturing sector, and composed of imported consumer products, the feature of the West African economies is, however, exhibited by the preponderance under-utilization of available resources. A number of items for economic integration of West African had been adopted and agreed through the ECOWAS policy on Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). These include such items like agriculture and unprocessed products, artisan, handcrafts and industrial products. The pursuit of ETLS, based on free trade area, has always been guided by ECOWAS States in order to facilitate uniformity and compliance throughout West African States. All these are, however, being teleguided and sponsored by the World Bank/IMF in order to deepen trade and market integration in West Africa for easy exploitation of opportunities in the region (ECOWAS, 2009a).

With free movement of persons, goods and services among ECOWAS States, the promotion of investment and competitive policies were expected to have emerged with identified strategic areas. These include the creation of

ECOWAS Common Investment Market, investment climate promotion and financial market integration (ECOWAS, 2009b, African Union, 2014). With negotiations between ECOWAS and European Union, an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) has already been concluded in July 2014. The ECOWAS Heads of State and Government endorsed the EPA. With the elimination of tariffs on regionally sourced imports, goods are, therefore, supposed to be transported duty free even without the need for a certificate of origin. Thus, apart from creating a wide common market for free flow of goods and services, the design of the ETLs has provided unprecedented free movement of labour as well as free movement of capital within the West African region with no security implications contemplated. Hence, border shutdowns in Nigeria, at least since August 2019, were ostensibly designed to prevent cross-border movements of people, goods and services. These, notwithstanding, go contrary to the spirit of ECOWAS economic integration.

The clampdown of the remote and disperse border areas, characterized with porosity and artificiality, were aimed at curbing the smuggling of rice and other packaged foods (Blum, 2014). Since this act of shutting down of borders by the Nigerian State has threatened the foundations of ECOWAS, how does Nigerian State reconcile and sacrifice its security, safety and domestic interests for ECOWAS economic integration? How does Nigeria diplomatically or otherwise treat the actions of the Benin Republic, where all the second-hand goods from Europe, Americas and Asia and even Africa, especially vehicles and other merchandise goods such as fruits and used clothes, popularly referred to as *dan kwatano* (imported from Cotonou), are smuggled into the country as part of the ECOWAS principles of economic integration, national security and national interests of the States? How does Nigeria also watch the Benin Republic, that is absolutely dependent on huge Nigerian markets and as one of the world's top rice importers, find its ways for almost all the rice imports in Nigeria? What would be the fate of the Nigerian rice farmers in reaping the fruits of their labour and Nigeria being self-sufficient in rice production? How would security be guaranteed in the face of the fragile security challenges in Nigeria?

➤ *Economic Integration and Free Trade: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges*

Free trade, as it represents the phenomenon of unequal exchange, is a gospel perpetrated and advanced by Western imperialism and colonialism for free capital movements. This is designed to further entrench and continue to hold the global economy at their whims and caprices. The policy entrenched in free trade is simply the non-restriction of all trade transactions, generally referred to as the *laissez-faire* trade or trade liberalization (Spero, 1993:4-7). This hands-off trade posture is to enhance hegemony and cohesion contrary to protectionism. It should be emphasized that free-trade policies do not absolutely relinquish control of import and exports or forsake and completely destroy the existence of policies of protectionism. The philosophy of economic integration is ultimately hinged on free trade agreements. This is a pact entered between or among countries particularly in the same or similar geographical locations in order to

reduce or remove tariffs to imports and exports. Within the provision of the free trade pact, tariff and non-tariff barriers with little or no government control to prohibit their exchange that enhance the free flow of goods, services and other factors of production can be bought and sold across borders.

Such an economic integration in coordinating free trade, fiscal and other monetary policies among nations would exceptionally prohibit import of specific drugs, animals or processed foods that do not meet the minimum requirements and standards. The politics and economics of free trade can, therefore, be viewed from different standpoints and perspectives based on the degree and levels of economic, social and political development of the nations involved. This also consists of their historical antecedents, the interests they protect or are used to project and influence. Since Western imperialism or neo-colonialism supports free trade policies and agreements with the under-developed economies of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the desirability for such free trade to be enhanced amongst the regions of the under-developed economies has become unanimously propagated by the American or Western imperialism. Freer trade transactions are essentially not favourable to the economies, policies and societal circumstances of the underdeveloped parts of the world due to the unfairness and unequalness of trade competitions in all ramifications (Abbass, 2017:338-340).

For the sake and in the interest of Western imperialism, free trade phenomenon is a golden opportunity to further open and penetrate new world markets for the Western domestic market producers against those fragile and undeveloped parts of world (Owen and Sutcliffe, 1972:1-21). The free trade politics has thus turned out to be an integral part of the world or global financial market systems where the West has found the underdeveloped region as the dumping ground for its goods or products (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2007:288). It should be noted that the ivory tower liberal and conservative economists have steadfastly promoted free trade agenda against the fierce skepticism and oppositions that advance protectionism of local industries and farmers from the ravages of foreign unequal competitions.

Bourgeois economists believe and advance that protectionism, used by States to launch and recover from economic downturns, has negatively affected economic growth and welfare. They advocate that protectionism turns out to translate into economic setbacks because free trade and reduction of trade barriers positively affects growth and stability (Guarino, 2018). Due to this inclination and in line with the burgeoning philosophy, they fail to realize that the liberalization of trade, over time, has caused significant and unequally disproportionate world and economic distribution of resources. These have equally caused global recessions and distributed losses with global economic dislocation of labourers in both the industrialized and underdeveloped States. It should be noted that the greatest part of the means of economic activity in the industrialized States is under the private ownership and control. This is, however, associated with remarkable and pervasive State intervention in every sphere of economic activities; inseparable from the history of

imperialism and State monopoly capitalism (Lenin, 1963). In a State monopoly capitalism, therefore, the partnership between those controlling the State organs and those controlling and owning the means of production always ensure that the accumulation and incursion of capital, through international trade, and elimination of all trade barriers for the ready markets of surplus products, are safely guaranteed.

Even though liberal economists advocate benefits of free trade to the segments of the bourgeois society (Ricardo, 1817), these so-called benefits do not favour the underdeveloped or developing nations. Whereas proponents of industrial policy have supported higher rates or levels for the underdeveloped States, especially in the productivity gap between the industrialized States and under-developed world, these should be justified in favour of the latter. This is because the productivity levels of the industrialized nations were comparatively much higher than the underdeveloped region. In other words, productivity levels cannot be compared when the industrialized States were at similar development levels of the underdeveloped States. Invariably, the underdeveloped regions were much weaker players in competitive economic circumstances and therefore greatly exploited, particularly during the colonial era (Rodney, 1972:162-175). This is because the colonial money economy, where the vast majority of people were engaged, consisted of the peasants that contributed immensely to the expatriation of surplus.

Tariff is chiefly justified in order to stimulate infant industries. If this is so, then it must be essentially and substantially raised and elevated to enhance local manufactured goods to favourably compete with imported goods and thus survive without being extinct. However, the porous theory of import-substituting industrialization is highly ineffective, ineffectual and impossible for the underdeveloped nations to rise above the sea of the global trade and commerce, *ala* industrialization (Frank, 1967). Since free trade creates conditions for winners and losers, the opportunity and amount or quantum of winnings from trade are more prone and larger to occur in the advanced industrialized nations than the underdeveloped regimes who are losers and consumers of the products of the winners of free trade.

Free trade in goods may constitute a number of measurable factors, policies and services that provide easier trade in commodities across borders and the desired destinations. Conventional indices of free trade in goods and services include market access, border administration, transport and communication infrastructure and business environment. Underdeveloped nations, such as Nigeria, have possessed these indices of free trade that are being continuously exploited by the opportunities abound to the permeability of their borders. The partition of colonial Africa facilitated the destruction of the *natural economy* through the penetration of commodity relations and incursion of international capital (Griffin, 1974, Wallance, 1981). This was further facilitated by incorporating agricultural activities within the scheme of the global capitalist economy. This simultaneously provided the state of ethnic or cultural division of Africans based on territorial integrity and coupled

with the current inherited artificial and porous borders (Miles, 1994:61-63). These activities consequently dissected African communities through such artificial borders and thus separated producers from their means of production through all forms of imposed taxation during the colonial era. With bequeathed relative political independence and power to African leaders, Miles succinctly wraps up this scenario as follows:

National sovereignty, territorial integrity and respect for inherited borders become more than lifeblood of the newly independent African regimes. In these circumstances, a keener competition and a more zealous approach to national sovereignty emerged between bordering to States. Niger was not to be confused with Nigeria; Nigerians were not Nigeriens. Even if such distinctions were initially ambiguous—especially in border areas, and especially among the Hausa—the very least governments of independent Niger and Nigeria could do was to ensure that their own official representatives respect these differences. Official international (i.e. transborder) missions were not to be undertaken without high-level permission. Leaving one's own country to go to the next was not to be taken lightly; the foreignness of the neighbouring States, not its similarities, was to be highlighted. This was not necessarily a conscious policy accompanied by formal directives and orders from the centre, but it has nevertheless become the *modus vivendi* of African chiefdom in its dealings with bordering States. Between Niger and Nigeria, as between most bordering countries in Africa, national sovereignty is a jealous preserve. Border permeability is least likely to be encouraged by government officials (Miles, 1994:850).

Arguments for protectionism against free trade have been advanced into two major categories: economic category and moral category (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2009:287-289). Since free trade hurts the economy or groups in the economy, the consequences, however, might help the economy with devastating ill effects in other areas. It should further be stressed that the prevalent and widespread proposition against free trade is that it represents the ideals and objectives of colonialism or imperialism in disguise. This explains why many States, especially the proactive or progressive developing States, adopt policies and strategies of self-reliance or autarky. However, the moral category of protectionism is vast or extensive which, among others, include concerns about destroying domestic infant industries against international competition. It is also about concerns of undermining long term economic development, promoting income inequality and facilitating environmental degradation. In addition, this also includes other concerns of supporting child-labour, promoting wage slavery, accelerating poverty in underdeveloped States, and undermining national security and defence etc. (Lustizing, 2004, Goldstein, 1986).

Economic arguments against free trade are, however, advanced based on the postulations, criticisms and outcomes of economic theories. Hence, socio-economic discourses against free trade indicate that social and economic outcomes have overriding economic influence on political stability,

national security, human rights and environmental protection (Edwards, 2011:3). If some specific goods, for instance, are crucial to the threats of national defence and security, the State may consider and declare them dangerous to allow domestic producers to go out of business and then be overridden by foreign producers. This might lead to those foreign producers or firms to be at a more advantageous position when allowed to operate. This may, inevitably, threaten the peace, stability and security of the country (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2009:287-290).

This, therefore, informs why domestic interests should take the top-most priority within the context of free-trade issues. Hence, the opposition of free trade by the local industries and other local or domestic interest is, therefore, a genuine protectionist and ideal situation. This is because free trade inevitably lowers the prices of imported goods which invariably reduces or kills the moral capacities of local producers against the imported products (Brakman, Garretsen, Marrewijk, and Witteloostirijn, 2006). Invariably, free trade allows open, direct and maximum exploitation of the economy and society by the sway of capital. This is due to the fact that the owner and controller of the capital would set up an inescapable trap with “indefeasible charted freedoms” by setting up excessive and unreasonable amount of tempting but misleading and “unconscionable” freedom-free trade. The desired outcomes have, therefore, been “with brutal display of vigour” designed for effective exploitation which according to Marx and Engels has “substituted naked, shameless, direct brutal exploitation” (Marx and Engels, 1899:115).

Free trade issues were contained in the colonial and imperial administration of the British Empire (Acosta, 2006). Hence, free trade, based on economic nationalism and mercantilism, is hinged on colonialism and imperialism which reached its apogee in the 19th century, especially by the British imperial power. Invariably, free trade is actually a Western imperialist idea with developed free trade agreements signed by all nations in favour of imperialist interest based on the British mercantilism. Imperialism, therefore, initially created trade blocs in Europe and Americas in order to freely engage in the so-called free trade of their commodities. Therefore, the mercantilist philosophy was essentially hinged on wealth and power through direct possession and control of colonies based on international markets and exchanges (Crownder, 1968). The mercantilist State’s desire to acquire colonies was for the purpose of favourable trade transactions for the political and economic goals based on plunder and fortunes of the colonial economy. Hence, with the global and continental balance of power, new international economic system, therefore, emerged on the so-called free trade system (Spero, 1993:5-6).

Anti globalisation groups across the globe have continued to oppose free trade transactions. They justify their opposition based on the argument that free trade arrangements do not, in essence, increase economic freedom and benefits of the poor or the working class or the underdeveloped regions of the world (Stiglitz, 2002:5). On the contrary, free trade arrangements make them poorer and

structurally underdeveloped. In other words, free trade materially injures and damages the potential capacity of the State and people in underdeveloped region. This is because subsidized commodities under free trade are put at detrimental prices well below production cost which has continued ruin local farmers. In essence, this type of subsidies has completely violated the free trade theories due to the defamatory macroeconomic and fiscal policies as determined by the trends of globalization (Michael, 2014:10).

➤ *ECOWAS Treaty on Trade, Economic Integration and Free Movement: A Hoax?*

Since the inception of ECOWAS in 1975, the overriding policy objectives were the need for the economic integration of the region. ECOWAS has, therefore, been designed to promote cooperation and development in economic, social and cultural activities with the aim of encouraging, fostering and accelerating all facets of human development among member States towards enhanced living standards of people (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975:2(1)7). However, within the Pan-Africanist posture, ECOWAS is apparently desirous in increasing and maintaining stability as well as improving relationships towards the progress of African progress, self-reliance and development. Areas of economic integration in ECOWAS include the liberalization of regional trade and harmonization of monetary and fiscal policies. Others include the liberalization of movement of persons, goods and services through mobility. This is designed through regional cooperation by promoting labour mobility in the region. In addition, the harmonization of business laws, the development of the network of transport, communications and energy infrastructure has been regarded as a milestone in the integration process, particularly through the involvement of private sectors (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975:2(2)).

Even though transport and communications are crucial engines of integration, issues surrounding these wretched sectors in West Africa are distressing. These sectors have continued to cause unmeasurable griefs in intra-and inter-trade transactions within the West African region. With the display of serious calamities involved, particularly in road transportation and associated with the nature of porous and artificial borders, economic integration in West Africa seems a mirage and thus a delusion. In other words, the propagated theoretical beliefs in economic integration are far better grasped to the stark reality that are not satisfying and assuring. As such, the reality on ground has structurally trapped the ECOWAS economies with a loop of cord of the Western imperialist and capitalist economy. A trap of the agricultural system, especially food crops production, is no doubt a trap of the entire State, economy and society. Ezenwe (1984) succinctly states the role of food crops in the ripple-effects of economic viability and integration.

Production of food crops is surely a potential area for integration of industry and agriculture. It would be not only through food processing and utilization of the by-products but also through the development of agro-industries based on food crops which would facilitate the growth of an engineering industry and of food technology in the widest sense including those technologies related to reduction of

waste and to packaging and canning (Ezenwe, 1984:139-140).

The consequences of these seemingly laudable objectives of ECOWAS were later to be noted with devastating bearings on the economic, social, cultural and political life of the West African States. The promotion of free trade, the mobility of labour and other factors of production enacted by ECOWAS further accelerate neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism and structural underdevelopment of the region. Hence, the ripple-effects of such framework in the fragile or underdeveloped region could not repudiate the artificial colonial and porous borders as impediments to economic integration. These only provide a trap or a nest to incubate and breed insecurity and instability in all the States of the region. In addition, this trap is also used in diverting and jeopardizing earlier efforts towards enhancing socio-economic development in and among the West African States and economies.

Free movement of goods has led to the importation/smuggling all sorts of goods from all over the globe, not from the ECOWAS States, to have the upper hands in the region. This has constituted a serious hinderance for the economic, social and industrial growth of ECOWAS States. In addition, this has created the current regime of high unemployment; especially in agriculture and industry. Over time, there has been unmitigated industrial and agricultural stagnation with imminent collapse witnessed throughout the region. These constitute the bedrock of the socio-economic tensions and conflicts in the region that culminated in incessant military coups leading to intense political instability. In addition, the smuggling of small arms and light weapons led to the emergence of ethnic militia, religious uprisings, insurgencies, terrorism and full-scale wars.

It should be emphasized that the free mobility allows free movement of all kinds of people, goods and services. Due to the threats posed to the region, these practically make economic, social and political union of West Africa not only difficult but impossible. These so-called services rendered in ECOWAS region have manifested in all sorts of conflicts and instability accompanied by economic turmoil and social insecurity. These have not only augured well for the past and current circumstances but also for the future course of the West African regional economic integration processes. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union that signaled the end of the cold war and the global balance of power, the West African region has witnessed a series of political plunders, instability and conflicts as well as economic crises. All the States in the region have been involved in one form of conflict or the other. The fragility of the States, created by the colonial circumstances, characterized with weak economic and political base, have been hit by unprecedented corruption; leading to the mismanagement of resources and serving only the elites and the colonial forces that have justified and supported the predatory leaderships in the region.

Notwithstanding the signed ECOWAS Treaty by all the States, diplomatic rows and conflicts have ensued throughout member States. This has waxen the degree of

surveillance of borders by ECOWAS States, manifesting a direct similitude of the colonial order. This was due to the abrupt expulsion of citizens who, however, obtained rights to enter and reside. In 1983, for example, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone expelled immigrants residing within their territories. Nigeria's action, as the backbone and main brain behind ECOWAS, had several implications. Nigeria had hitherto expelled a large number of ECOWAS citizens in 1982. In 1985, the Buhari military junta also expelled thousands of aliens popularly referred to as *Ghana Must Go*. The primary reason for Nigeria's action was largely domestic interest bordering on security and economic wellbeing of Nigerians (Miles, 1994:86). In international politics, security is a scarce and essential commodity. The Nigerian State has, over time, constantly sought to secure, within its colonially artificial and porous borders, relative safety international movement of persons and goods, especially with its neighbours. All these attempts have met with troubled internal dangers and external alarms or contemplations. As a result, the adverse impacts of the security demands of the Nigerian State have failed to bring about the synergies and complementariness required to interact and overlap in international relations with ECOWAS States. Due to this unfavourable outcome, internal peace and security in Nigeria have eluded it notwithstanding the enormous investments put in place.

The artificial and porous land borders in West African States are expected to serve in promoting economic integration through labour mobility and free movement of goods and services under ECOWAS for regional cooperation. Since these borders, more often than not, were colonially and artificially created, they have divided families, cultures and ethnic groups among African States (Spero, 1993; Miles, 1994). Cross-border movement has been relatively hampered due to these artificial borders coupled with the various States' customs laws. Even though unilateral border closures by ECOWAS States go contrary to commercial and freedom of movement treaties signed and the historical free trade agreement signed by African States, the huge negative impact of freedom of movement and free trade are causing in the region in the name of economic integration is alarming and threatening. Conflicts within and among ECOWAS States have been internationally escalated with spill-over effects. There have, therefore, been the existence of calculated cross-border criminality masterminding the networks that have continuously increased and become internationalized with vested interests in the economies of the region. The West African region has notoriously been transformed into an international trans-border criminality network for the vested international interests and aggrandizements.

Hence, with free trade provision in ECOWAS, international and local criminals have hijacked the opportunity and the wide window to jump into illicit activities sponsored by different interest groups locally and globally. These have a lot of security, economic, social and political implications for the security and stability of the region. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has, no doubt, threatened the State, security and economy of the region. Within the security architecture of the West African region,

there is no mechanism within the artificial and porous borders for effective checking of illegal immigrants, money laundering, trafficking in human, drugs and illegal arms etc. In other words, the so-called unrestricted movement in ECOWAS brings about tension which is beyond the capacity of the weak States to handle and live in peace.

Even though the patterns of production and trade relations or connections have crucial bearings on economic integration, the West African States have exhibited chronic paucities and deficiencies in these crucial areas of activity. Hence, despite the continued importance of the subsistence sector, the region is highly dependent on foreign trade and finished agricultural products. Such a high rate of economic dependence, in most ECOWAS States, on agricultural and other products, has continued to be worsened with severe and restricted or insufficient range of primary products against the high imports of manufactured goods and foodstuffs. However, intra-and inter regional trade transactions are expected to be principally of high economic value which, due to certain factors, have not featured well to transform the region by making themselves customers to each other. With the emergence of petroleum in the economic transactions, agriculture has completely become relegated to the background, especially in Nigeria leading to the structural distortions of the economy and society as a whole.

II. THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF NIGERIA'S BORDER CLOSURE

The Nigerian economy has continued to decline due to a number of factors. The economic downturns in the drop of the oil price at the international market is a major factor. The weak or non-diversifiability of the economic and predatory nature of the Nigerian State are other factors. However, the porosity of Nigerian land and maritime borders is also an added impetus to the economic decline. These are the avenues where all sorts of smugglings are hatched and conducted with the aid of customs, immigration and other security agencies. Through such trapdoors of the Nigerian borders have landed the Nigerian State to fall into very hard times of austerity and structural adjustment programmes. Other important contributing factors to the economic decline of the Nigerian economy include the role of foreign direct investments (FDIs) inflow with increased investment. They have notwithstanding done far less to the Nigerian State to justify their presence. This is because investment only flourishes when much is extracted from the Nigerian economy with adverse consequences. Such huge investments, with repatriated benefits for the investors, have constituted insignificant indices in Nigeria's economic growth and development (Stiglitz, 2002:67-73).

However, the trends of corruption and high rates of extreme poverty also contribute and constitute a great deal of the prime factors in Nigeria's economic decline and socio-economic woes. It is against these settings that the Buhari regime took over the realm of the State in 2015 with mounting economic crises. Prior to the current spate of border closings, the Nigerian borders were temporarily shut on certain unique or exceptional situations. These include the military coups,

civil wars, and epidemics such as diseases, draughts etc. that would warrant or justify the State to prevent people from crossing for a number of security factors. However, the frequent sealing-off of borders by the Nigerian State has taken new twists and turns, particularly by asserting its prerogative of power to guard and control its inherited colonial but permeable frontiers.

However, the shortage of foreign exchange and the devaluation of the naira, sequel to the IMF/World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), has also led to the collapse of industries especially the small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) (Abbass, 1995:72-76). These trends have culminated into unprecedented unemployment; leading to all sorts of criminalities in all sectors of social, economic and political life of the Nigerian State. Thus, the conditions of the economic crisis had highlighted the apparent trends and needs by the Nigerian State to diversify and restructure the ailing economy towards transforming its commanding heights. This has resulted in increased attention and focus on agricultural sector which has suffered structural decline since the 1960s, resulting in all sorts of food importation, especially rice (Abbass, 2014:383-387). Nigeria has, therefore, reached a point where basic conditions and responsibilities of governance are not properly functioning, thus culminating in the failures of the State.

Border closure is not a new phenomenon, but Nigeria's action to close its borders has posed crucial issues on the prospects of the envisaged regional economic integration. The need, therefore, to deepen government investments in agriculture to heighten and save the sector's potential contribution to economic growth and development has obtained the apparent blessings of all regimes since 1980s. Policies, programmes and strategies of agrarian transformation were based on capitalist agriculture (Watts, 1987:71-81). These were, overtime, put in place to revive the ailing sector of the economy but received little or no seriousness and clear economic recovery plan strategy to boost the morale of farming and farmers in the country. Border closure in Nigeria is, therefore, a direct manifestation of State failures to strategically deal with both domestic socio-economic challenges and external forces.

A number of factors have emerged as the prevailing determinants for the incessant closing of the Nigerian borders. These include curbing the new trends and waves of money laundering, the illicit human trafficking, curtailing the smuggling of petroleum products, preventing illegal arms and ammunition importation, tackling the importation/smuggling of foodstuffs, maintenance of territorial security against terrorism, insurgency, and controlling foreign attacks/incursion as well as other forms of border criminality. All these, no doubt, have serious bearings and impacts on the ailing Nigerian economy and distressed society. Hence, due to the collateral injuries these have on the socio-economic and political settings, the Nigerian State has continuously involved in the combined border patrols mounted by the military, customs and immigration services to enforce compliance through increased border surveillance.

Consequently, agriculture in Nigeria has continued to collapse and thus fail to bring about the expected high growth rate prospects with accompanying value chain in the economy. This is indicative of the failure to strategically develop raw materials or commodities into finished goods for domestic consumption, marketing and exports. However, because of the non-diversifiability of the commanding heights of the economy, agriculture faces unattractiveness for the able-bodied population to be recruited towards reducing poverty and unemployment, raising productivity and incomes, as well as influencing other huge opportunities in reviving the ailing economy. In addition, agriculture has further failed to bounce back from its hitherto potentials and reputation due to the continued threats to unprofitability and lack of sincere State support for farmers and farming. All these have culminated in the debilitating consequences, especially in the lack of self-sufficiency which have threatened food security and nutrition in the country. These have also contributed in the economic recessions and other economic miseries. Public service delivery by the Nigerian State turns out to be too little, too late and thus leading to increased poverty, hunger and destitution. The emergence of violent militant activities in the South-East, South-South and South-West as well as the recent and most dangerous terrorism and insurgency from the North-East and North-West are clear evidence of woeful State failures. This is apart from the sporadic ethnic, religious and sectional conflicts ravaging the entire country. All these are a part of the impact of the demise of agriculture in Nigeria since the 1960s.

The stagnation and failure of agriculture, for example, were fundamental and critical for the further burst of the Nigerian's porous and artificial borders due the dwindling exports and expanding imports of food. With the dismal outcomes in the revival of domestic farming in Nigeria, food importation oozed out of proportion with unpleasant economic outcomes. Unprecedented food importation, therefore, zoomed into the upper-case point-of-no-return without any strategic plan to control and curb its negative consequences on the economy, polity and society. The too little, too late panic measures by the Nigerian State to close its land borders may not be strategic and sustainable to protect domestic farmers and farming system. This may also not be strategic to curb the tempting and lucrative food (rice) importation/smuggling that kills farming and farmers in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, rice has turned out to be the most highly valued and economically placed food crop in the society. Rice has, therefore, become particularly well positioned in order of food priority or preference amongst majority of people in Nigeria. In essence, this order of priority and preference rice has been attributed to in Nigeria, is seen and centred on the continuous increase in the production, consumption and marketing, especially the imported or smuggled commodity. Rice is, therefore, not only considered and valued as the top stable food component in Nigeria, in particular, but globally, in general. However, due to its simplicity and less complicated or easy production and consumption process as

well as its lucrative marketing, majority of Nigerians regard rice as a major sign and source of social status. Even though rice production is far from being sufficient in Nigeria, for both food and industrial production and for export, the crop has great potential for high production due to the unique ecological circumstances in Nigeria. Invariably, Nigeria has become the veritable and most vital rice production country in the West Africa sub-region with high potentials in the West African market and thus, a force to be reckoned within the entire African continent (WARDA, 1996).

Smuggling across the borders has continued to threaten the security, self-sufficiency in food production and the overall agricultural policy of the Nigerian State. Smuggling of food etc. has, therefore, ruined and turned the Nigerian State as a dumping ground of all sorts of commodities from all over the world. These occur partially due to the porosity of the Nigerian's land borders. How can the Nigerian State stem this dangerous trend of smuggling and its wider ripple-effects on the State, society and economy? Hence, thinking globally, regionally and sub-regionally but acting locally may bring positive outcomes to domestic food challenges in Nigeria. Countries in West African sub-region have diversities in culture, social configurations and economic standpoints with strategic and complementary policies, actions and programmes to boost their economic bases. The so-called free trade in the region has serious or adverse implications for the countries in terms of security and defence, food sufficiency, economic and industrial development and interdependency. This situation has diabolically affected the region due to, among others, the porosity of their borders that facilitated the smuggling of small and big arms (weapons) with the aid of the West to boost their arms production market. This has no doubt ignited most, if not, all the conflicts and welfare, terrorism and insurgencies in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria.

Nigeria is always referred to as giant of Africa with the largest economic base. The Nigerian State attempts to protect its declining rice farming industry and save foreign exchange has provoked it to adopt protectionism in defence of its internal interests, security and sovereignty that perhaps go contrary to the principles of ECOWAS and the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Due to the failure of the Nigerian State in its security responsibilities and development challenges, the inability of the security forces and the entire leadership and governance to effectively guide and spearhead in the recovery of the State has become critically dismal. The State has, invariably, been consumed by its internal violence, border insecurity, lack of service delivery and public goods to the citizens. Based on such abrupt actions to close its borders, can the domestic food (rice) production meet domestic demand? Can the domestic rice production in Nigeria, in terms of quality and purity, be matched with those being imported? Can this lead to not only meeting domestic demand but also compete favourably on the world market in export to other countries? What will be the cost of the home produced-price against those being imported?

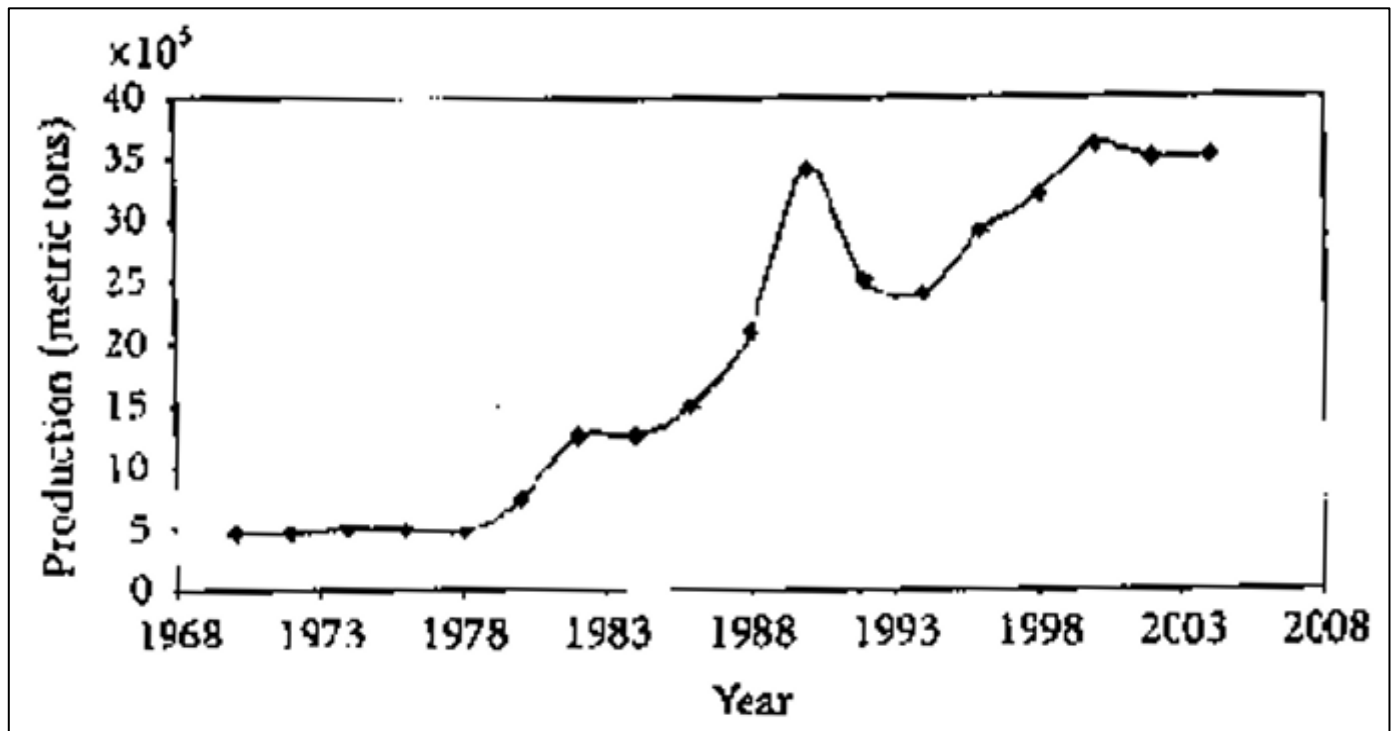


Fig 1 Rice Production in Nigeria 1968-2008

Source: United States Department of Agriculture. Adapted, with modification, from Ajala and Gana (2015) P2

Due to the strategic place of rice amongst Nigerians and its potentials in the growth and improvements in the economic activities, its production, consumption and marketing have grown astronomically (see figure 1). This is largely sequel to its high consumption trends and preferences than all other food cereals. However, a serious drawback on the commodity is the Nigerians' preference in the consumption and marketing of the imported rather than the production of local rice. This is partly due to the quality in the technical processing and appearance of the imported rice that satisfies or complies with international quality measurement. Nigeria's faltering and failing responsibilities, particularly in the technical processing of local produced rice, notwithstanding its enormous resources, would continuously and rapidly slid the country from strength to weakness and eventual failures. These incidences have been catastrophic for the Nigerian economy and society without being rescued and restored to functionality and governance that may enable it to an enduring stability and compete in global trade, especially in rice.

For about one and a half decades since 1993, the production of rice in Nigeria has rapidly risen very high due to a number of factors. This soaring rise in rice production was partly due to the increase in the rate or volume of production; occasioned with high or explosive increase in population that culminated in the high increase in the consumption patterns. Such increase in the rice production trends, however, could not be sustained due to the fluctuating and unstable State policies in the importation of the commodity (see figure 2). The period of soaring rice

production in Nigeria was associated with the State ban on imported rice particularly in 1985. However, such restrictions, over time, had not been effectively enforced; coupled with the porous and artificial borders as well as the attitudes or behavior of the corrupt immigration and customs officers etc. charged with these responsibilities. In essence, the cankerworm corruption amongst border agencies in Nigeria has continued to undermine efforts to curb smuggling as well as counter organized crimes across borders which have potentially threatened public goods and security.

If Nigeria, for example, reduces tariffs on imported rice, the Nigerian rice producers will be at a loss. The Nigerian rice farmers would receive lower prices and profits for their commodity. However, rice consumers in Nigeria would spend less for the same quantum of rice because of the lowered price regime. This, therefore, makes Nigerians dependent and thus reduced as a consumptionist State. However, the capacities of the Nigerian rice farmers are jeopardized and will ultimately lose the stimulus and steam to produce. Invariably, the Nigerian State is dangerously at the crossroads, between the consumers and producers where the former, with appropriate incomes, gains and the latter certainly lose due to the cost and other factors of production (Ricardo, 1817). With the idiosyncratic violence for the Nigerian State failures, indicators of predatory governance have led to the colossal loss of control over territories (ungoverned spaces). These have been occasioned with criminal violence and weakening of State institutions that prevent tangible agricultural pursuit.

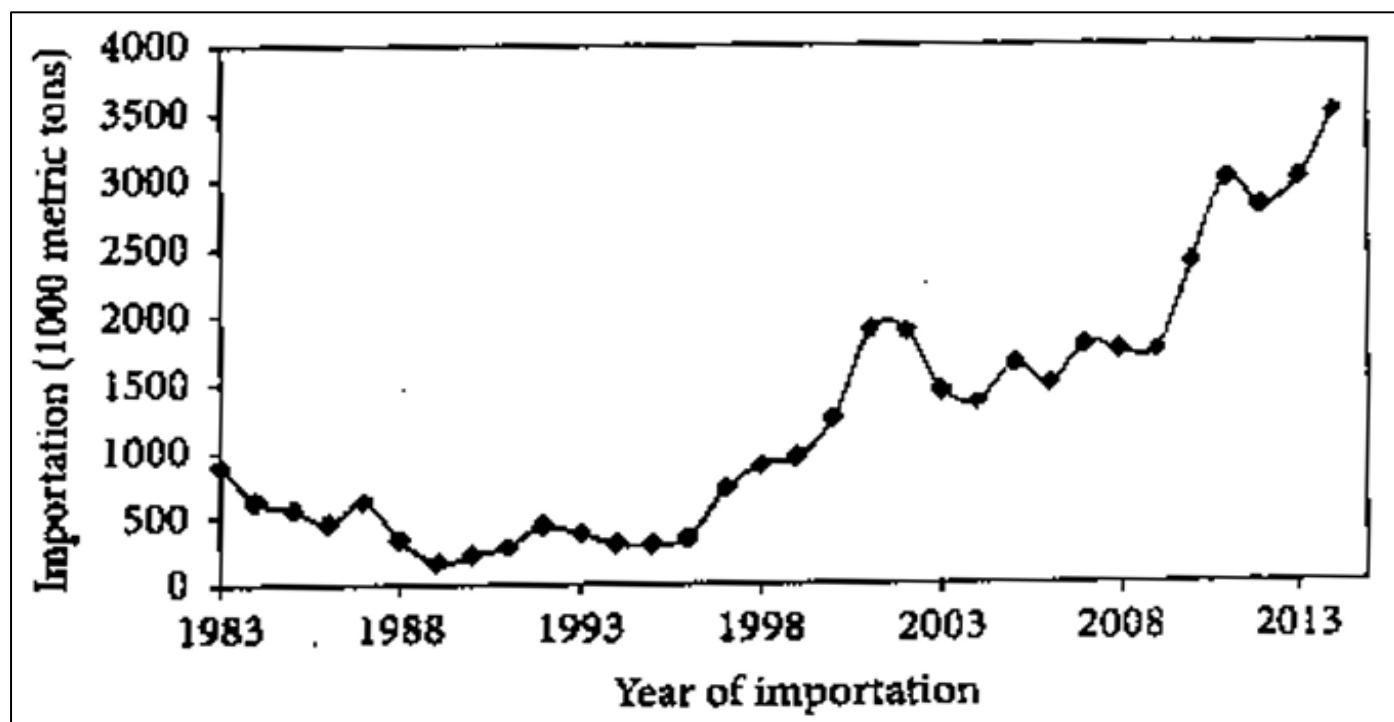


Fig 2 Rice Importation in Nigeria 1993-2013

Source: United States Department of Agriculture. Adapted, with modification, from Ajala and Gana (2015), P 2

Thailand, India and other countries that produce more quality rice and more cheaply than Nigeria offer more impetus to their farmers for sale through exporting the products to Nigeria. This is strategically killing the morale and productivity of the Nigerian farmers by rendering the Nigerian State structurally dependent and a dumping ground. Would free trade in rice lead to poverty reduction, agricultural productivity and income, productivity of the labour force, employment and general well-being of the people in Nigeria? Is this actually suggestive of the concept of comparative advantage? If or when two or more countries on the same or similar economic pedestals produce complementary goods and service for each country's benefits, free trade can go on smoothly. Hence, the inevitability of the border closure by the Nigerian State was to foster the inimical dangers posed by the orthodoxy of free trade policy that does not address Nigerian domestic interests, security and defence, productivity and other social, economic and political factors.

Rice farmers in Nigeria, therefore, have continued to face unmitigated challenges and constraints in meeting their anticipated productivity and incomes stability or standard as well as meeting the domestic demands for the production of rice and its self-sufficiency. However, by 1997, and owing to its failed responsibilities, the State has officially relaxed and slackened its policy on the rice import restrictions that continues to weaken the economy. This act had consequently led to the flooding of all sorts foreign rice importation into the Nigerian markets (Ajala and Gana, 2015:2). Hence, with further deterioration of the economy and reintroduction of restrictions of rice importation especially in 1997, local rice production in Nigeria soared tremendously (see figure 1) that was accompanied by attractive price tag offered by the State

which boosted the morale of farmers and the price of the commodity (Emodi and Madukwe, 2008; 77-80).

Nigeria's border closure has, notwithstanding, been predicated on a number of domestic pressures, regional challenges and international factors. These constitute part of the fundamental problems which the Nigerian State is grappling with. The failures of the Nigerian State may, therefore, be viewed from these parallelogram-shaped axes. With the deformed Nigerian economy, primarily dominated by the weakened agriculture that employs predominantly physical peasant labour force, the elusive orientation and focus have been directed at satisfying not only domestic needs, in terms of food self-sufficiency, but essentially for the external markets. These constitute, at certain conjuncture of times and events, specific aspects of cash crop production at the detriment of food crops for local needs. These structural defects have continued without taking into cognizance of all the consequences on how these would turn out to be. In essence, these have manifested in food dependency and food insecurity by rendering and reducing the local farmers completely irrelevant in not only failing to feed themselves but at the same time inability to produce surplus for appropriation and exports.

The politics and economics of rice dependence and underdevelopment in Nigeria have been attributed to the commercial and large-scale food importation into the country. These may be synonymous with and within the context of economic integration that have severely constrained the transformation of domestic agriculture in general and rice farming in particular. It should be noted that agricultural and trade development can be accelerated only if food imports are restricted or curtailed with accompanying policies that are strictly adhered to. Nigeria's border closure,

no doubt, places serious embargoes on both domestic and the neighbouring ECOWAS States with further strains on the over-burdened dependent economy. Hence, far from being ostensibly aimed at curbing smuggling of rice etc., the border clampdown was essentially to review the failed security challenges, perhaps with a view to developing new strategies on how to contain numerous threats to life and property in Nigeria. This is notwithstanding how these have potentially and effectively severed trade relations with ECOWAS member States.

The ecological characteristics and beauty in the Nigeria's major agricultural belts, in a variety of crops production in the North and South as well as Central regions and within them, are potential in making the country to be reckoned with in food sufficiency, not only Africa but also the world at large. In Nigeria, there is no crop that cannot be commercially and profitably grown in the country considering its ecological potentials and huge population. Crops such as rice and tree crops, maize, cassava, yam, guinea corn, root crops, millet, groundnuts, cattle as well as other cereals cultivation through irrigation can have fantastic productivity. This can also bring about enhanced incomes for the farmers as well as State capacity and strength in the comity of nations. These crop classifications and their regional areas of high productivity can serve important trends and direction in Nigeria's sub-regional, regional and international trade.

It is imperative to note that due to a variety of State interventions, especially in agriculture and other economic sectors initiated and supported by the international financial institutions (IFIs), such as World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc., local production of rice and other agricultural activities in Nigeria subsequently collapsed. This has, therefore, contributed immensely to the failure of the State to satisfy the basic requirements of the demand for rice cultivation and consumption in the country. These have, thus, culminated in the massive rice importation into the country which kills farmers' morale and capacity. This act has had adverse impacts on the Nigerian economy and society with structural dependency on rice importation/smuggling and the enormous inability to feed the expanding Nigerian population. In addition, and within the context of political economy, the Nigerian Western styled model State is highly antithetical to its traditional heritage or legacies and cultural backgrounds. All these, therefore, question the expected universal applicability and compliance with Western system since the instrument of governance outcomes in Nigeria is not appropriately corresponding with the economic system put in place.

With a lot of resources invested or wasted in rice production in Nigeria, the demand has continuously outstripped supply. Local rice production has continuously been hampered with embarrassing and poor production; leading to constraints and insufficiency. All these are largely attributed to policy, technology, attitude and foreign manipulations. These have, however, adversely resorted to the spree of massive importation of rice from Thailand, Philippines, India, China, etc. With Nigeria's enormous

wealth, that is wrecked by corruption and confronted with large population, rice markets for the importers mean a huge 'gold mine' with demand always exceeding supply. Even though Nigeria is potential for rice production, the poor outcomes of locally produced commodity makes the country go against itself and its products in the rice production, consumption and marketing trends; whereby Nigerians prefer imported rice and at a more competitive price.

Nigeria's contradictory system has not provided for great network and complementary strategies towards agricultural productivity or crop production. It is pathetic to note that the same or even different crop belts have continued to produce the same or similar agricultural products without assessing their respective strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. As they cannot consider themselves complementary to each other, or to a large extent, the State cannot design and plan to make them understand themselves as potential customers to each other, their productivity has always been wasted. This act cannot, therefore, transform the labour exerted into big dreams and realisation of the inevitability of mechanisation and industrialisation. The serious concern of the political economy is the fact that the dependency position of the Nigerian State has structurally been transformed to a further sorry state of affairs. Most of the manufactured goods imported through the Nigerian porous borders, in the name of ECOWAS, African and international trade, are processed agricultural commodities. These include frozen fish, meat, textiles, leather products, tomato purees, sugar, wheat flour, etc. mostly coming from Europe, America and Asia. As such, the agro-industrial contribution to the Nigeria's GDP is woefully insignificant considering the vast opportunities abound.

Another fundamental issue surrounding the Nigeria's border lockdown can be connected with the problem of intra-trade relations. This aspect in the country has persistently failed to sustainably grow as expected due to a number of primordial factors such as ethnicity, religion and politics. This is notwithstanding connected with the long history and long-standing trade legacies and relations that were established with various communities in Nigeria since time immemorial. The traditions and conditions of intra-trade have turned out, in recent times, to be characterized by bitterness and aggression; leading to the destruction of lives and properties in many parts of the country. Intra-Nigeria trade has continued to be highly wasted and sometimes very dangerous especially with the home-grown products such as cattle, perishable vegetables etc. These have threatened the potential of Nigeria's intrastate trade expansion as well as intra-regional trade across West African States. Nigeria sadly still imports food such as maize, rice, wheat, processed meat, fish, poultry etc. through both the land and marine boarders. This has reduced the country with dwindled self-sufficiency in a lot of products. Invariably, this problem has reduced the Nigerian State capacity and degree of socio-economic integration, interdependence and independence in basic necessities of life.

The Nigerian State's glaring contradictions and woeful failure of the system are manifesting in all State activities,

especially in leadership and governance. Border closure in Nigeria may, therefore, be seen as a manifestation of leadership and governance gap. The character of Nigeria's transport system, both within the country and those that connect with its neighboring countries, are woefully inadequate and thus unsustainable, unsuitable and dangerous for inter-and-intra-trade transactions. Roads and railways or even water-ways transportation, not to talk of the airways, have continued to display disappointing and unacceptable situations. A large percentage of goods and merchandize products, designed and destined for Nigeria and transported by sea, is berthed at neighbouring ports, especially at Cotonou, and transported by road through the porous borders without appropriate tariffs. This involves a lot of smuggling of all sorts of goods that are harmful to the State and its citizens. Since the Nigerian economy has been tilted, distorted and reoriented for imports, railways and airways means of transportation have crumbled and even the need for all weather roads do not sustainably exist.

Notwithstanding, in terms of intra-ECOWAS trade, the Nigerian reality with other ECOWAS States is that of unequal partnership in all regards and in all respects. Nigeria's endowed resources are intimidating to its ECOWAS counterparts. For economic integration to take-off and succeed, partners must be comparable and compatible with their resources and levels of socio-economic development and industrial development base. The partnership should be on the basis of complementarities or interdependence and strategic planning for exchange of goods and services. Nigeria is, no doubt, endowed with enormous natural resources, huge population, large land area and with the largest and diversified industrial base. Nigeria's market potentials make its neighbours completely dependent on the Nigeria's opportunities. They go through all illegal and porous routes; by road, sea and air, to survive. Any closure of Nigeria's borders makes them completely vulnerable. Nigerians who are partners to such illegalities also suffer the same fate like their own foreign counterparts. However, the closure of all filling stations, 200 metres away from the land borders, has perhaps curtailed the wings of the petroleum products smugglers across the borders. All these were instituted due to the panic and failed responsibilities of the Nigerian State through its inefficient agencies.

It should be noted that Nigeria is land-bordered from all directions by the French speaking neighbours. Invariably, the partitioning of the boundaries by the British and French colonialists separated homogenous communities during the scramble for and partition of colonies in Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Chad and Cameroon. Such communities at the borders share long historical legacies, cultures and religions beliefs. They also share common political economic and social settings, obligations and markets. They, more often than not, cross such artificial borders to attend to their relatives' socio-cultural obligations such as weddings, funerals, naming and other social ceremonies etc. Despite frequent border closures, they follow circuitous or indirect, long but winding routes to beat or burst the permeability of the borders. This, therefore, implies that the unprovocative and harmless traffic of border-

crossings that apparently divide communities cannot be prevented by government (Miles, 1994:89).

Even though during the colonial era, there were frequent official cross-border contacts and correspondence at border towns by the Nigerian officials, and functionaries etc. with their neighbouring counterparts. But with political independence, these contacts ceased and replaced with new and increased hostilities and new phases of installed disunity. "Today, such trans-border contacts by local officials and administrators are almost non-existent. The centralization of government and protocol are hallmarks of post-colonial African politics, when it comes to foreign relations and international contacts, local initiative is shunned all the more" (Miles, 1994:84). With colonial orientations, therefore, disunity of Africans was intrinsically set in motion even amongst the same people with cultural, linguistic and religious legacies. These contacts, correspondence and harmony the African communities had prior to the colonial conquests consequently ceased to operate.

This consequently constitutes one of the striking development or impact of colonialism on African peoples, especially on the border towns/villages. This is because with the attainment of independence from their respective colonial powers, national sovereignty became fervently defended more than they defend their communities and what bind them together. Hence, the vision of Pan-Africanism has become seriously shattered and threatened (Miles, 1994:83). Nigerians at border villages with Niger, Chad, Benin and Cameroon automatically become strange bedfellows or "foreigners" because they are divided to live in different countries and can only visit their kith and kin by official permission. In other words, wherever they are, if not in the colonially demarcated region, they are aliens to themselves. They are separated not only by land but also by language, culture and religion etc.

Another dilemma faced by the Nigeria State, in the demystification of border shutdown, is related to tariff, especially on the imported goods. ECOWAS policy on economic integration is faced with serious challenges of domestic interest and security. In the first place, there is the wishful need, based on self-delusion, to protect the fragile industries to grow to maturity. There is also the need or illusion to juxtapose the loss and gain of revenue that may arise from abolition duties that ought to be paid for importation of goods. Can the low tariff rate adequately compensate the State or negatively affect it? These can be viewed in the over-protection of producers purposely designed to favourably compete and encourage quality and efficiency. Another implication is the issue of the wishfulness of youth employment that should be sustained by the efficacy and efficiency of the industries within the policy of protectionism. Other tinkering issues and wishful thinking Nigeria faces are connected with the "non-existence of factor mobility, intra-regional trade, harmonization of financial policies" (Ewenze, 1984:141). Ewenze has succinctly identified and wrapped up these problems as regards to the:

Mutually convertible currencies, monetary union, currency unification central Banking System, problem of desperate exchange rates, imperfections in commodity and factor movement, free capital movement, lack of common market for different sets of products, lack of opportunities for enhanced pooling of resources to protect markets and industries (Ewenze, 1984:141).

To further demystify the Nigeria's border closure as antithetical to the regional integration can be contrasted with the stark realities of the precarious and huge domestic quagmire the Nigerian economy and society are confronted with. As Nigeria is deeply faced with food insecurity, a situation where it cannot produce enough food to meet domestic demand, it indicates that food and the dilemma of food security within the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy have continuously constrained and incapacitated the State on its responsibilities and roles to the society. Hence, within the contours of international influence, through international trade, international capital penetration and global integration of economic activities, agricultural interventions by international financial institution (IFIs), with biased policies, have practically produced further structural dependency and underdevelopment in the Nigerian State and economy especially through the enthronement of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) since the 1980s.

Food crises in Nigeria are determined by a number of factors, among which include Western imperialism, colonialism and changing patterns of agricultural interventions and productivity. Other factors are the urbanization spree, changing patterns of consumption, non-diversification of the economy and non-investment and corruption, socio-economic and political instability, wars etc. All these are prime factors leading to societal problems of hunger, destitution, excruciating poverty and social dislocation. Hence, with the declining and collapsed commodity prices, the peasant farmers have been gradually strangled. This has led to terrible short fall in productivity with serious insufficiency and lack of income generation. Hence, the dependent nature of the Nigerian State, economy and society makes international trade inconsequential to the needs of the Nigerian market and thus with huge losses. This has rendered the Nigerian domestic market too fragile with frequent and loud hiccups that have hampered international competition even against its close neighbours to its expected and installed advantage. In essence, the struggle is far more than the struggle against Africa neighbours who are used as the platforms for the Western markets to flourish. In other words, this is a device, based on the adopted open-door policy, orchestrated by the trends or motion of globalization and championed by IFIs, for perpetual exploitation of resources, structural dependency and underdevelopment of the Nigeria State and economy.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The demystification of the Nigeria's border closure, sequel to the failures of the State, can thus be clarified appropriately by examining all the factors of economic integration and free trade, ECOWAS treaty and free

movements as well as politics and economics associated with them. Hence, pathways to the State failures in Nigeria, resulting in the border closures, are intertwined. Thus, the nature and circumstances of State predation and the preponderance of State corruption have led to the withering away of the State responsibilities by tilting towards anarchism. This results in escalating communal, religious and ethnic conflicts that have translated into huge rebellions in forms of terrorism and insurgencies that have questioned and shaken the legitimacy of the Nigerian State. The challenges posed by the movement of persons, as provided in ECOWAS treaty and advanced or advocated by globalization, are enormous and challenging for any underdeveloped country such as Nigeria to bear.

The Nigerian State is, therefore, expected to prevent the destruction of lives and property as well as prevent any form of rights abuses or violations. Hence, the copious liabilities of such migration of people in West Africa have tended to bring about collateral damage for the countries involved in political, economic and social angles. Trafficking in human and money laundering activities as well as all sorts of smuggling of arms, foods, drugs etc. contribute immensely in the crippling of the economy and society as well as destroying leadership and governance. Hence, one of the chief factors for the clampdown on borders is essentially to curb the illegal cross-border traffic in arms and ammunition that aid terrorism and insurgencies which the Nigerian government has failed to nip in the bud.

Impediments to economic integration in West Africa lie on the threshold obstacles to agricultural productivity with accompanying barriers to value chains, *ala* industrialization. Agriculture in Nigeria, therefore, lacks local and global competitiveness in production, quality processing and comparative advantage. Hence, the unreliable energy, threats to farming activities, porous borders, crowded and congested ports, corrupt officials, poor road networks, access to inputs and high cost of production with lower yields, low price of commodities for farmers, lack of State support and other agricultural neglects by the State etc., have all added impetus that hamper compatibility, complementariness and interdependence of a variety of commodities for smooth inter-and-intra trade exchanges among ECOWAS State. Nigeria's dependency reinforcement in trade relations on Europe, Asia and America etc. can only be resolved on greater interdependence or cooperation among the ECOWAS based on the genuine principles of regional economic integration. This, however, can be alleviated or reduced if the choice of technology, by the regional economic grouping, does not increasingly depend on the Western technology even in its determination for self-reliance under the current trends and waves of globalization. Self-reliance of the sub-regional bloc should be based on the promotion of cooperation, exchange of products and development in all economic, social and cultural fields towards fostering or enhancing socio-economic relations and thus raising people's conditions of living.

Importation of goods and services from foreign countries has continued to undermine the cooperation and

needed self-reliance of ECOWAS. The adopted industrialization model by ECOWAS States is, therefore, antithetical to the envisaged objectives and development of the regional body. The domestic markets in the ECOWAS receive predominantly consumer goods which inhibit the growth and development of inter-and intra-trade transactions in the region. This has continued to consolidate the hegemony of foreign manipulations of ECOWAS economies, albeit with political control. Such foreign domination of the ECOWAS economies has posed crucial problems for its economic integration and achievement of the set-out objectives. Hence, face-to-face with intractable and mounting socio-economic and political problems of integration, ECOWAS inability to harmonize its operations has brought hiccups and pitfalls in its development and cooperation strategies designed to transform the economies and politics for its own benefits. The inability of the former French and British colonies to wrestle the colonial links with and dependency on the metropolises has brought about conflicts of interests and acrimonies between them with instability or conflicts. And as such, abrupt border shutdown phenomena in Nigeria and all ECOWAS States will always be used as scapegoats, underpinned with the tail wagging the dog.

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