

**LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY
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**THE 2019 - 2020 NIGERIAN BORDER CLOSURE AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS ON WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL
INTEGRATION**

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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents original research conducted by me, under the supervision of Dr. Juliana Appiah, and that all sources referred to have been duly acknowledged. Furthermore, no part of this work has been submitted anywhere for any other purpose.

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DATE.....5/12/22.....

DATE...5/12/22...



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty and my family.



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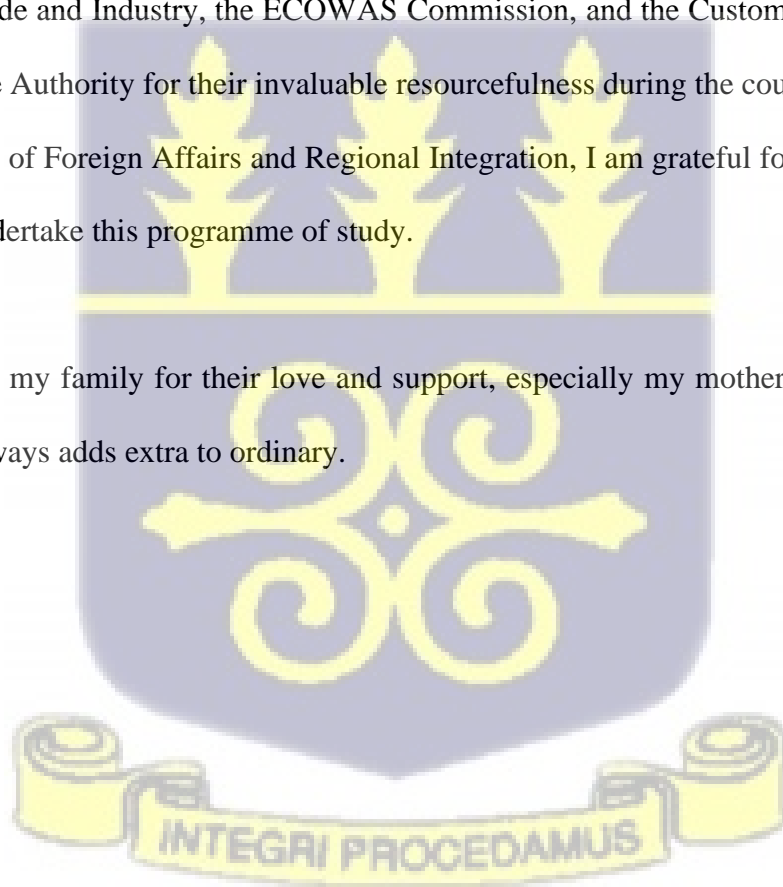
I first and foremost appreciate God Almighty for his mercies and guidance throughout this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFCFTA	-	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
ATPC	-	African Trade Policy Centre
CU	-	Customs Union
ECOWAP	-	Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
ETLS	-	Ecowas Trade Liberalisation Scheme
EU	-	European Union
FTA	-	Free Trade Area
NTB	-	Non-tariff Barriers
NTMs	-	Non-trade measures
RTA	-	Regional Trade Area
TB	-	Trade Barriers
WACIP	-	West African Common Industrial Policy
WAEMU	-	West African Economic and Monetary Union

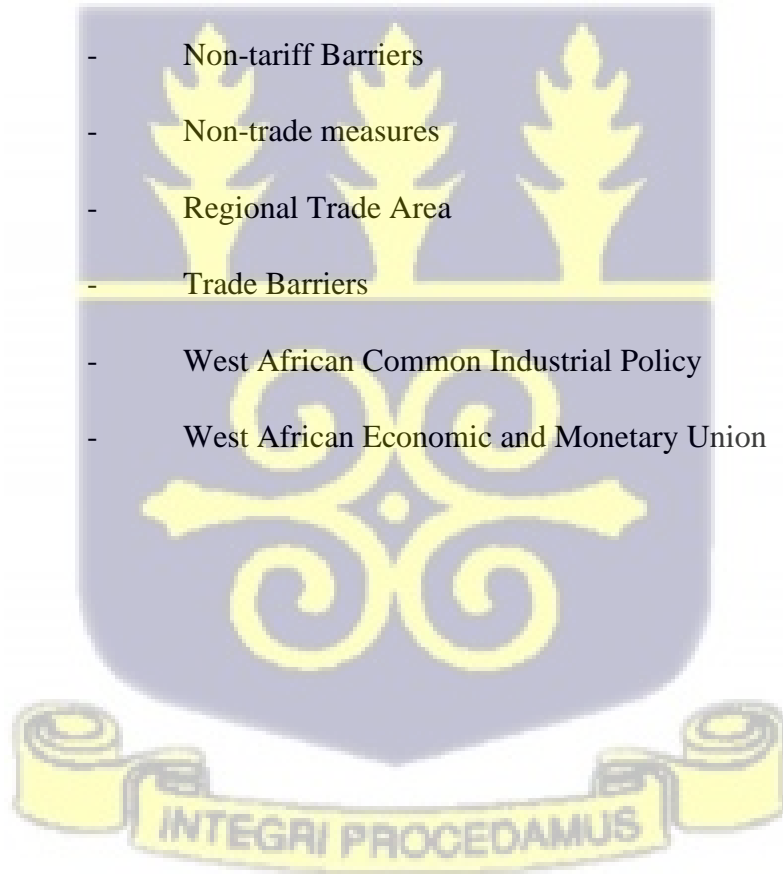


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ABSTRACT

On 20th August, 2019, the administration of Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari, closed the state's land borders with Chad, Benin, Cameroon, and Niger to prevent the illegal movement of goods in order to safeguard local industries and boost domestic production. The closure of the border to its neighbouring countries raised a lot of eyebrows by various scholars, prompted considerable criticism from other African states and raised doubts about the country's commitment to economic integration within the West African sub-region. The viability of every integration process subsists on the willing commitment of member states to abide by the dictates of their charter. For instance, the charter of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) is driven by its free movement protocols, which is organised under the broader ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS). The study investigated the implications Nigeria's border closure had on regional integration, particularly how it affected the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Adopting a qualitative approach, the study found that progress toward achieving the goals of regional and intra-continental trade agreements was slowed due to the closure of Nigeria's border. The closure of Nigeria's border put the free trade agreement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the new African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) in jeopardy. The study concluded that while Nigeria has shown commitment to ECOWAS integration, closing its borders was not the best course of action and that there were more viable ways of addressing its concerns. The study recommended that to combat the widespread breakdown of border controls, countries should rely on modern technology by installing electronic surveillance equipment at their many checkpoints.

Keywords: Border, Integration, ECOWAS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalisation and multilateralism have made it extremely crucial for states throughout the world to merge and join the development bandwagon, and Africa is not any different. As noted in its new agenda, the United Nations in 2016 acknowledged the importance of regional economic integration for sustainable development (Kolawole, 2018). Scholars argue that, in the context of globalisation, integration is believed to have caused economies in developing countries to grow twice as quickly as in rich countries in the 1990s. Despite being the fastest-growing continent, Africa remains the world's least integrated continent according to the African Economic Outlook (Kolawole, 2018).

To change this narrative, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed in 1975 to promote economic cooperation and development in the sub-region (Oloruntoba, 2016) geared toward becoming the continent's largest single economic union. Oloruntoba (2016) notes that after the withdrawal of Mauritania from the subregion in 1999, it is currently made up of 15 member countries. The formation of the ECOWAS came on the heels of the recognition of the imperative of a regional approach to development in Africa. To this end, various efforts have been made toward building regionalism in West Africa, especially within the context of the neoliberal economic paradigm in which removal of access to markets and other factors of production is the main concern (Oloruntoba, 2016).

Following the drive and impetus to implement regionalism within West Africa, a report from the Regional Integration and Non-Tariff Measures in the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) indicated that the community reached US\$664 billion GDP in 2015 and achieved a 6.4 per cent real GDP growth rate over the 2000 - 2015 period, making it the second-fastest-growing community in the region after the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) by surpassing growth rates of the East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (UNCTAD, 2018).

The UNCTAD (2018) report noted that the economic growth of the ECOWAS is primarily driven by Nigeria, the community's largest economy, which in 2014 accounted for nearly 79.1 per cent of the combined GDP, followed by Ghana (5.3 per cent) and Côte d'Ivoire (4.7 per cent).

In contrast to what has been stated above, Oloruntoba (2016) thinks that the efficiency of the subregional body has been hindered by both internal and external issues, even though there have been certain accomplishments. The UNCTAD (2018) for instance noted that there were substantial differences in terms of the level of development among the member states as per capita income ranged between US\$358 in Niger and US\$3,035 in Cape Verde. Moreso, the community's exports stand at US\$87.9 billion as of 2015, which is 0.53 per cent of the world's total exports (UNCTAD, 2018).

This figure is, however, almost half of its exports in 2012 partly due to the decline in Nigeria's exports (the biggest exporter in the community) as a result of falling global fuel prices. The imports amounted to US\$98.1 billion and about 0.59 per cent of the world's total imports (UNCTAD, 2018).

On 20th August, 2019, the administration of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari closed the state's land borders with Chad, Benin, Cameroon, and Niger to prevent the illegal movement of goods in order to safeguard local industries and boost domestic production. Evidence from the above demonstrates that Nigeria is instrumental in successfully achieving the ECOWAS integration drive. That is why Nigeria's 2019 border closure to its neighbouring countries raised a lot of eyebrows by various scholars, prompted considerable criticism from other African states and raised doubts about the country's commitment to economic integration within the West African sub-region (Duhan, 2019). The reason was that being the largest market within the subregion, Nigeria shot the ECOWAS integration agenda and by far, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), a regional agreement that aimed to enhance intra-African trade by removing tariff barriers and other trade impediments, which it signed three months earlier, in the foot (Liedong, 2019).

The viability of every integration process subsists on the willing commitment of member states to abide by the dictates of their charter. For instance, the charter of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) is driven by its free movement protocols, which is organised under the broader ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS). As noted by Asante (2018) the ETLS is a progressive policy that advocates for the delimitation of borders and enhanced cross-border trade within member states. It is against this background that this study seeks to explore in depth, the implication of Nigeria's 2019 border closure on West African Regional Integration.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The closure of Nigeria's borders from 2019-2020 presents a complex intersection of sovereignty, realism, and hegemony, pitted against the imperative of upholding ECOWAS

laws. Nigeria's decision to close its borders, despite its status as a signatory of the AfCFTA and a prominent supporter of the ECOWAS Protocol, reveals a shortfall in the execution and adherence to its border diplomacy and multilateral commitments. According to Signé and Van der Ven (2019), Nigeria's border closure also exemplifies the persistent implementation gap between the texts of regional or international trade agreements and the actual policies used by several African countries.

Against this background, this study attempts to investigate the implications Nigeria's border closure had on regional integration, specifically the implications on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

1.3 Research Questions

- How committed is Nigeria to the ECOWAS integration?
- What implications did Nigeria's border closure have on West African integration?
- What was the ECOWAS' response to Nigeria's border closure?
- What alternate measures could have been adopted instead of the border closure?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To assess Nigeria's commitment to the ECOWAS Integration.
- To assess the implications of Nigeria's border closure on West African Integration.
- To assess the ECOWAS' response to Nigeria's border closure.
- To ascertain alternate measures Nigeria could have adopted instead of the closure of the border.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the implications of the 2019 - 2020 Nigerian border closure on ECOWAS integration, with particular emphasis on the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and Nigeria's role in achieving it. Nigeria's decision to close its land borders in 2019 significantly affected neighbouring countries, including Chad, Benin, Cameroon, and Niger, which were reliant on cross-border trade for economic prosperity. These countries play vital roles within the ECOWAS community, making the impact of Nigeria's border closure a matter of regional concern.

1.6 Rationale

Numerous types of research have been conducted on Africa's Continental Free Trade Agreement but not much has been done on West Africa's regional integration with particular attention paid to Nigeria's border closure in 2019. This area of research has been chosen due to the increasing importance that has been attached to the concept of regional integration within the West African subregion and Nigeria's indisputable role in ensuring its success considering its wide market. This research can serve as a reference document for policymakers in Africa as well as a reference material for further studies on West Africa's regional integration.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research is underpinned by the theory of neo-functionalism. Neo-functionalism is a theory that explains the process of integration. As noted by Niemann, Lefkofridi, and Schmitter (2019), the theory stands out among early theories of European integration. The notion developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s to explain the level of growth in the integration of Europe as well as the function of the European Union (EU), as a supranational institution, in promoting this integration (Wilmot, 2019).

In reaction to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and later the European Economic Community, prominent proponents of neo-functionalism theory include Ernst Haas, Joseph Nye, and Leon Lindsey (EEC) (Niemann et al., 2019).

According to Wilmot (2019), the major assumption underlying this theory is that no state is capable of maintaining its economic structures and capable of meeting the economic needs of its people without cooperation with other countries. The main argument of neo-functionalism is that the initial agreement of states to cooperate in a particular sector subsequently leads to further agreements to cooperate in other similar and related areas (Dosenrode, 2010).

Furthermore, neo-functionalism maintains that economic integration inevitably drives players to strengthen ties in a certain region. Third, according to neo-functionalism, the supranational body tasked with overseeing integration begins to implement methods to deepen integration in already integrated sectors before expanding integration into new areas.

The concept of 'spill-over' is important to neo-functionalism. This idea depicts a situation in which a previous decision by a government to cede responsibility for a certain sector to central organisations produces pressure to widen the institutions' authority into other policy areas. This suggests that spill-over causes political and economic variables to cause more collaboration. This implies that the process occurs on its own and is outside the direct control of political leaders. The expansion of supranational organisations and institutions is an essential characteristic of neo-functionalism. Neo-functionalists say that supranational organisations can have their political agenda, which will always win over the interests of member states (Haas, 1958).

According to Rosamond (1999), whilst the progress from national sovereignty to supranational autonomy is projected by policy-makers in the various states to promote their national interests, the shift of power to a supranational body leads to an integration that is in the interest of all the countries involved.

Following contradictory developments in Europe that raised concerns about the validity of the concept of spill-over, Neo-functionalism was exposed to criticism, a significant portion of which was self-criticism. Neo-functionalism was deemed to be obsolete in the 1970s when European integration experienced difficulties and the type of gradual integration envisaged by neo-functionalism did not occur. Neo-functionalism projected a continuous development of political integration, which did not occur by the 1970s.

France's rejection of European institutions in the mid-1960s resulted in a more cautious period in the growth of the European Community, as well as an understanding of the importance of political leaders as barriers to integration. Indeed, with the Community experiencing multiple crises, one could claim that the integration process had taken a step back (Moravcsik, 1993).

This pause in regional integration processes could not be explained by the theory. Some neo-functional objections are related to the idea of intergovernmentalism. This term arose from international relations theory, notably realism, which holds that governments are the most significant and dominant players in the international arena. It describes the process of integration as "the convergence of national interests of nations." Intergovernmentalists have challenged neo-functionalism because it minimises the importance of nationalism and sovereignty consciousness as barriers to integration (Hakan, 2019).

France's "empty chair" policies under President Charles de Gaulle, Britain's policies under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and, more recently, Britain's choice to quit the European Union, demonstrate the continuing significance of these opposing influences. Despite its criticisms, neo-functionalism was chosen as a paradigm for this study because it remains an effective instrument for analysing regional integration strategies. Since the 1990s, there has been a resurgence of interest in neo-functionalism theory as a result of global advances in regional integration. These have been consistent with the projected spill-over impact of neo-functionalism.

In West Africa, following the ambitious integration drive of the ECOWAS subregion towards the achievement of its Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) geared towards liberalising trade, by abolishing customs duties levied on imports and exports and the elimination of non-tariff barriers among member states for the establishment of a free trade area at the community level, it is interesting to investigate Nigeria's motivation for closing its borders to member states in light of the neo-functionalism theory.

Thus, this theory is a good lens through which this research can explain Nigeria's 2019 border closure and its implication on West African Regional Integration.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 Hegemons and Hegemonic Behaviour in Regional Trade Agreements

Regional integration involves neighbouring sovereign states within a specific geographical location that have put measures in place to create regional blocs to enhance their rate of interaction across several spheres including economic, security, political, social, and cultural issues (Vickers, 2017). Regional economic integration among countries is formalised with the

signing of treaties known as Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) which are “reciprocal preferential trade agreements” between two or more countries to promote trade liberalisation by enabling the free flow of goods and services across the countries involved (WTO, 2022).

Aydin (2019) employed the Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST) to explain the importance of hegemony in global economic integration. The HST was introduced into International Relations (IR) in 1973 through the works of Charles P. Kindleberger, Robert O. Keohane, Robert G. Gilpin, and Stephen D. Krasner (Aydin, 2019). The HST states that, in global economic integration, the existence of just one state with available resources in terms of power and motivation is vital to ensuring a stable world economy. They argue that although it is the collective responsibility of member states to gather resources to ensure trade liberalisation, the meagre contributions of less developed countries are insufficient to attain such (Aydin, 2019). From the behavioural perspective, Nye (2004) described the hegemon as the state with the power to spell out the regulatory measures and the framework for the international economy. Hegemonic behaviours are expressed by hegemony in the formulation of RTAs in regional economic integrations including the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The NAFTA was a trade treaty that was signed in 1992 between the United States of America (U.S.A), Canada, and Mexico to promote trade liberalisation across the North American region (Bondarenko, 2022). In the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S.A faced a hegemonic recession due to a decrease in its iron ore deposits and as such, utilised NAFTA as a tool to abate this hegemonic decline as well as the emergence of a multipolar world order of competing nations and industries (Ciccantell, 2001; Bluestone and Harrison, 1982). The U.S.A. negotiated NAFTA based on its economic situation and sought to boost its employment rate, economic growth, and competitiveness in the global economy through the reliable supply of oil and natural gas

from Canada and Mexico (Clinton Administration Statement on the NAFTA, 1993). Moreover, NAFTA enabled the U.S.A to reorient the political economies of Mexico and Canada in its interest (Campbell, 1993; Ciccantell, 2001; Chatzky, McBride, and Sergie 2020).

The United Kingdom (UK) joined the EU in 1973 and left on 23rd June, 2016, after a referendum where the majority of the voters supported “Leave” rather than “Remain” and this process was termed Brexit (Salter, 2018). The UK left the EU due to certain immigration, economic, and trade policies that the UK felt violated its sovereignty (Salter, 2018). In a form of an addition to Nye’s (2004) definition of hegemony, the neo-Gramscian theory which explains the concept of hegemony and counter-hegemony acknowledges that hegemony employs consent rather than coercion or domination (Airas, 2017; Dell, 2022). Robert Cox, an ardent proponent of the neo-Gramscian theory, shared the view that hegemony thrives on “motivational power, ideas, and institution” and the absence of these things may inhibit the survival of the hegemony (Cox, 1981). Cox again described counter-hegemony as a form of rejection of the “material power, ideas, and institutions” referred to as “common sense” (Cox, 1981). In this case, the EU was the hegemony whereas the UK through Brexit was a counter-hegemony.

1.8.2 National Interest, States, and Sovereignty

Mwanawina (2011:465) described state sovereignty as “the supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power by which an independent state is governed and from which all specific powers are derived”. As a result, sovereignty both confers and limits authority, enabling nations to pass laws and make policies for their inhabitants without intervention from outside parties and preventing states from exerting dominance over one another (Maftef, 2015; Grooves, 2010; Agbegunde, 2021). The concept of modern sovereignty evolved in the 16th and 17th centuries

with the works of Niccolo Machiavelli, Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, John Lock, and Jean Jacques Rousseau among others (Oji and Ozioko, 2011).

Globalisation, which is the extension and amplification of cross-border political and economic interaction has led to a reduction in national governments' ability to control and influence their economies. It is frequently observed that multilateral organisations like the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) exceed their jurisdiction by advocating for universal standards for international integration, which in turn changes the parameters of state sovereignty, such that governments are now more resolute in managing national politics to conform to the demands of global market forces to enable them to remain in power (Oji and Ozioko, 2011).

In African regional economic integration arrangements such as the African Union (AU), state sovereignty is considered a key deterrent to achieving regional economic integration in Africa (Olaniyan, 2008; Adetula, 2004; Jiboku, 2015). Ideally, member states in the African regional integration blocs are expected to cede their national sovereignty and relinquish their national policies or interest to the supranational authority for the strengthening of regional economic integration, however, this is not the case (Olaniyan, 2008).

National interest is defined by Morgenthau as “the protection of physical, political, and cultural identity against encroachments by other nation-states” (cited by Dinesh, N.D.). It is ideal for countries to consider their national interests before they make any decisions within or outside their countries. Owing to this, a considerable number of countries such as Germany, and China have attributed certain selfish actions of theirs to the national interest (Dinesh, N.D.).

Olaniyan (2008) describes how maintaining national identity is a component of sovereignty and how most African states in regional economic integration are characterised by the tendency to uphold their national sovereignty in high esteem such that they would breach their loyalty to the regional economic blocs to ensure the attainment of their national interests. The 2019 Nigerian border closure is a clear example of this because the basic motive of regional integration which is trade liberalisation or free movement of goods services, capital and labour across the West African region was inhibited.

There is an inverse correlation between how state sovereignty is viewed and acknowledged in terms of globalisation and regional economic integration (which is just a matter of geographical location) such that sovereign states consent to, and allow international political and economic institutions to interfere in their domestic governance to enhance globalisation, but are unwilling to cede this same national sovereignty to the supranational authority of the regional blocs they are willingly a part of to enhance regional economic integration. This could simply be a result of the benefits accrued to them by these international institutions, however, actual reasons for this should be delved into and corrected if possible.

1.8.3 Borders in Africa/West Africa

The scramble for Africa by their colonial masters has led to the unplanned and uneven partitioning of the African countries. The Conference of 1884–1885, which established the laws for the European portion of the continent, is where the concept of colonial political geography in Africa originated (Ieuan, 1986). Colonial borders have persisted through the change from colonies to sovereign states with few exceptions (Ieuan, 1986). According to Wilks (1986), the competing colonial powers gave little thought to the human geography of Africa as they hurried to define the frontiers of their respective colonies in the frenzy of activity

that followed the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. Wilks (1986) contends that "partitioned Africans" have tended in their normal activities to ignore the boundaries as dividing lines and notwithstanding the many communication, commerce, educational, and ideological systems, currencies, and other restrictions imposed initially by the colonial regimes and later by the new national governments, social ties between them were able to continue roughly as they had before the partition.

Due to the colonial division of Africa, which resulted in an unequal distribution of the continent's mineral resources, landmass, population, water bodies and other resources among nation-states, certain African countries are now landlocked, which has increased their dependence on the other colonised nations on the continent (Michalopoulos et al,2016). West African countries like Ghana, which is known for its cocoa, gold, timber, bauxite, diamonds, and more recently, natural gas, among other resources, have an unfair advantage over landlocked nations like Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso because of their larger landmasses and abundance of resources like coal, natural gas, tin, and bauxite (Austin, 2010). In West Africa, relationships between Nigeria and Cameroon are irritated by border incidents like the Bakassi Peninsula controversy (Akinyemi, 2014). Each of the nations in Eastern Africa has at least one border dispute with a neighbour (Okumu, 2010). The border regions with the highest levels of unrest are those between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Eritrea and Djibouti, Somalia and Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Chad, the Central African Republic and Uganda, and Kenya and Uganda (Okumu, 2010). In frontiers where mineral resources are being sought after or exploited, conflicts over territorial claims, delineation disagreements, lawlessness, security advisories, and heated political exchanges between governments are becoming increasingly frequent. Instances include the Elemi

Triangle, which is contested by Kenya, Sudan, and Ethiopia, Migingo Island in Lake Victoria, and the Albert Basin (Okumu, 2010).

Ethiopia and Egypt have recently engaged in conflict over water security concerning the Nile River. While Ethiopia wants to dam the Nile to produce energy, Egypt asserts that the dam will reduce the amount of river flowing to its boundary (Swain et al, 1997). In Southern Africa, the borders of Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia have some unresolved border issues. Borderlands, where mineral resources are being discovered or exploited, are increasingly rife with land claim issues, delimitation conflicts, lawlessness, security warnings and intense political exchanges between countries (Amupanda, 2021). Rising nationalism, population, and environmental pressures may exacerbate the situation unless an army of indigenous peace practitioners works closely with available Pan-Africanist leaders and statesmen to resolve tensions (Amupanda, 2021). These disputes, caused by the ambiguous nature of unplanned demarcation of borders in Africa, the presence of transboundary resources, and security-related issues, coupled with other political issues, have hindered the overall development of the countries on the continent.

1.8.4 Trade Integration in West Africa

Trade can be explained as the economic relationship between two different or the same entities. It could be within a region or an inter-regional relationship. The fragmentation of the African continent makes the countries interdependent on one another because the resources needed for development are unequal and unevenly distributed, with some countries having the lion's share. This is conclusive with Hartzenberg's view that "the majority of African nations have tiny populations and low per capita incomes, which harms their marketplaces" (Hartzenberg, 2011). Since the colonial era, the European Union has been the largest partner of trade, investment, and development for African countries due to the colonial bond between them

(Hartzenberg, 2011). However, it is noted that trade among African countries has not been as expected, despite their closeness geographically (Brenton, 2012).

The need for regional integration in Africa has been acknowledged as being crucial to addressing the problems of many African nations' weak economies and their frequently arbitrary borders, which pay little attention to the allocation of the continent's natural resources (Brenton, 2012). However, in addition to being tiny and impoverished, the majority of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) economies (15 of them) are also landlocked, which is a significant contributor to high trade transaction expenses and more broadly to the expensive costs of conducting business in Africa (Hartzenberg, 2011). As a result of inadequately developed cross-country linkages, it has been noted that transport prices in Africa are relatively high (McCord et al., 2005). Numerous rail, air, and road networks on the continent are still disconnected (Economic Commission for Africa, 2004: 2). Nonetheless, there is a sizable amount of cross-border trade between African nations, but it is limited to unofficial channels and is not recorded in official statistics (Brenton, 2012).

The creation of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has revitalised regional and global integration efforts in Africa and drawn attention in particular to the necessity of taking decisive action to address the continent's many problems using the tool of an economic integration strategy (Maiyaki, 2017). Trade practice has demonstrated over time that when states compare their strengths and shortcomings, it creates opportunities for specialisation and the growth of economies of scale, and ultimately lowers the cost of production (Bala, 2017).

The EU serves as the model for West Africa's economic integration approach. The Economic Community of Western Africa States (ECOWAS) Treaty presents a collection that is strikingly comparable to the EU Treaty in many ways (Bala, 2017). Owing to globalisation, the EU's integration process has a significant potential to affect other economies, particularly West Africa, with its immature and underdeveloped integration experiment (Bala, 2017).

Trade integration in West Africa is seen as a significant tool for the economic development of small and large countries in the region. The ECOWAS was founded by 16 nations in 1975 with the eventual goal of creating an economic community (Aryeetey, 2001). Its mission is to promote economic integration across the West African region (Hartmann, 2013). Nigeria is the largest ECOWAS member state in terms of population, GDP, and trade volume. With a population of almost 160 million, the nation makes up more than 50 per cent of the ECOWAS market, and its \$432.3 billion GDP as of 2020 (Lawal, 2019). Moreover, ECOWAS has been of enormous benefit to Nigeria; some of these benefits include an increase in tax revenue, expansion of Nigerian multinational companies, opportunity for Nigeria's small and micro enterprises to advance into the world market, a larger market for Nigeria's intermediate goods to mention but a few (Osabuohien, 2017).

1.8.5 Summary of Literature Review

Scholarly work on hegemony and hegemonic behaviour in regional organisations; issues of sovereignty and national interest as well as borders has received tremendous attention in the regionalism transition literature. These issues are considered immutable dynamics in international relations and hence appear regularly in various writings. This work's central thesis is to appreciate border closures in West African integration, a matter which is not very common among the 15 signatories to the ECOWAS Protocol. The closest writings on border closures

pertain to issues of sovereignty, territorial disputes and recently maritime disputes between Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire. It is clear that border closures to develop a state's internal economy within ECOWAS are rare due to the very nature of the ECOWAS which permits the free movement of goods and persons, and well ranked as one of the RECs with remarkable mobility within the African trade integration index. This study, which looks at how Nigeria's border closure may affect trade integration in the Economic Community of West African States, is motivated by contextual and issue gaps that the literature revealed.

1.9 Research Methodology

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with a comprehension of the methodologies employed throughout the study, which is a crucial aspect of this study. This section described the research design, Target population, sample procedure and size, data sources, and other methods used to attain the study's objectives. These included data collection instruments, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and any ethical considerations raised during the research.

1.9.1 Research Design

The qualitative research method was employed for this study. Qualitative research is a type of research that uses non-numerical data to interpret and analyse opinions. Qualitative research is defined as the research method which focuses on the interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings to make sense in terms of meanings people bring to these settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is exploratory and seeks to explain the reasons for the operations of a particular phenomenon in a specific context (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thus, qualitative research has to do with undertaking in depth studies of human phenomena and understanding them from the perspectives of the individuals concerned.

Despite criticism that it is subjective, the qualitative research method is the most appropriate for this study because it offers ample information and fundamentals for a better understanding of this study's research problem's field (Khalid et al., 2012). Despite its shortfall, the qualitative method has been selected for conducting this research because it is considered the most appropriate to address the aims of the study as its methods would allow for an in-depth understanding of what the ECOWAS integration means and the implication of Nigeria's border closure in 2019-2020 will have on it.

Case studies are highly valuable in the investigation of intricate and diverse matters, as they allow for the examination of real-world scenarios and the generation of comprehensive insights. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), these tools are frequently utilised across diverse disciplines such as social sciences, business, psychology, and education. A case study is a research methodology that entails doing a comprehensive and meticulous examination of a particular people, group, organisation, event, or phenomena. The research approach utilised in this study is qualitative in nature, with the primary objective of attaining a full comprehension of the specific issue being investigated (Yin, 2013).

In the context of a case study, it is customary for researchers to gather and scrutinise various forms of data, including interviews, observations, documents, and historical records, to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the situation at hand. The acquired data frequently exhibits a high level of richness and depth, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the case's context, procedures, and outcomes (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The process of analysing a case study entails the interpretation and comprehension of the gathered data, the identification of patterns, themes, and linkages, and the formulation of conclusions or suggestions derived from the results. Case studies have the potential to yield valuable insights into situations, so providing significant contributions to the development of theory. Additionally, they can offer practical implications that might aid in problem-solving or guide decision-making processes (Yin, 2013).

This study employs a case study methodology as it enables researchers to conduct an in-depth examination of a specific case, hence facilitating an exploration of the intricacies, complexity, and distinctive characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation. The provision of abundant and intricate data facilitates the attainment of a holistic comprehension of the case. Additionally, it allows the researcher to analyse the contextual factors surrounding the case. Through an examination of the wider social, cultural, economic, and political contexts pertaining to the case, the researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how these elements exert influence and contribute to shaping the phenomenon under investigation. Hence, the case study is considered the most appropriate to address the aims of the study as its methods would allow for an in-depth understanding of what the ECOWAS integration means and the implication of Nigeria's border closure in 2019-2020 will have on it.

1.9.1 Target Participants

While doing this research, assistance was received from individuals who are well-versed in the topic of regional integration on the African continent. They consisted of a specialist in integration from the Nigerian High Commission in Ghana, specialists in integration from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, a specialist in integration from the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, and specialists in integration from the ECOWAS Commission.

1.9.2 Sampling Technique and size

For the study's participants, the researcher used the non-probability sampling technique to arrive at the targeted participants. Non-probability sampling is non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria which allows the researcher to easily collect data. Specifically, the purposive sampling method was used. The purposive sampling technique enables the researcher to select the most productive sample for the study (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling was employed in selecting experts who have an idea of the ECOWAS integration processes and the implications Nigeria can have on its success or otherwise.

The sample refers to a subset of individuals within the population being investigated (Banerjee et al., 2007). In the qualitative study conducted by Larkin et al. (2021), participants were selected from a range of three to sixteen individuals. On the other hand, Mason (2010) discovered in a more recent investigation that a range of 5 to 50 participants is adequate for achieving data saturation. In accordance with the specified criteria, a total of four individuals were selected as respondents or participants for the present research. The inclusion of a diverse range of sample sizes in this study facilitated the formation of broad conclusions that can be applied across different cases. Additionally, this approach prevented the researcher from being overwhelmed by excessive data and enabled the recognition of individual participants within the sample, rather than treating them as anonymous entities within a larger collective (Robinson, 2014). The sample respondent for the study was 5, they included a specialist in integration from the Nigerian High Commission in Ghana, specialists in integration from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, a specialist in integration from the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, and specialists in integration from the ECOWAS Commission.

1.9.3 Sources of Data

The sources of data for this research are two – primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are that information collected from the field which happens to be in its original character. Kothari mentions that there are several methods of collecting primary data and these include the observation method, interview method and questionnaires, among others (Kothari, 2004). Experts on Trade from the Nigerian High Commission, Ghana's Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, the ECOWAS Commission, and other specialists on the subject of integration on the African continent were contacted to collect primary data.

Secondary data were also employed in this study which involved already existing literature sourced from books, journal, articles, official reports of the ECOWAS and Nigeria's Ministry of Trade, and other publications by scholars in the field of politics and integration were retrieved from the internet as well as the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) library and the Balme Library.

1.9.4 Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from the selected participants. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher outlines the subject areas to be covered, but responses from participants guide the direction of the interview. The semi-structured interview provided guidelines to achieve accurate and comparable qualitative data for analysis (Stuckey, 2013). This was done with the aid of an interview guide with a structured open-ended question. All interviews lasted for 30-45 minutes.

1.9.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

While carrying out an analysis of the data, thematic analysis was utilised. According to Patton (2002), thematic analysis is any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a

volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning. The interviews recorded were transcribed verbatim for easy analysis. Transcribed data were carefully read, and important aspects of the data were then analysed along with developed themes in support of the research's objectives.

1.9.6 Ethical Considerations

According to Wallace and Sheldon (2015), ethics is argued to be procedural elements regarding merits and integrity, justice, beneficence, and respect with an emphasis on truly informed consent to mitigate against any form of risk in doing research. This ethical consideration was implemented through the consent of the respondents who noted the purpose of the study and the option to remain anonymous to mitigate against risk throughout the research. Moreover, information from participants were duly protected confidentially.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The sample size for this study was on the lower end of the spectrum, which is a limitation of the study. As a result of the fact that the qualitative research approach permits a relatively smaller sample size, the results of the study may be subject to varying interpretations.

1.11 Organisation of the Study

There are a total of four chapters in this study. The Introduction can be found in Chapter One. The ECOWAS Integration Policy is broken down and analysed in detail in Chapter Two. In the third chapter, the ramifications of Nigeria's decision to close its borders in 2019 on the integration of West African countries are discussed. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations are outlined in Chapter Four along with a summary of these sections.

CHAPTER TWO

ECOWAS INTEGRATION POLICY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) from its formation, outlining its aims and objectives, challenges, and some relevant protocols. Furthermore, it delves into the problems of borders in West Africa (border conflicts, smuggling, territorial disputes). This chapter also examines the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) and its challenges.

2.1 History, Aims and Objectives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS for short, is a regional organization that brings together all 15 countries that makeup West Africa. On May 28, 1975, in Lagos, Nigeria, a treaty was signed that officially created the organization (Abe, 2012). Members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) comprise the countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. In the year 2000, Mauritania parted ways with the organization and became a member of the Arab Maghreb Union. Only four countries, namely Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Ghana, are considered to have economies that fall into the lower-middle income range; the remaining countries are among the least developed in the world.

The organisation was founded with the goals of forming an economic and trade union and assisting the countries that make up its membership in achieving individual and collective self-

sufficiency. As a jumping-off point, it was meant to assist economic integration and growth in West Africa. (Abe, 2012). The primary goals are to foster cooperation and integration within the context of the framework of the West African economic union. This is a part of a larger project that aims to improve the lives of West Africans and maintain economic stability to assure Africa's overall growth and progression (Quartey et al., 2017).

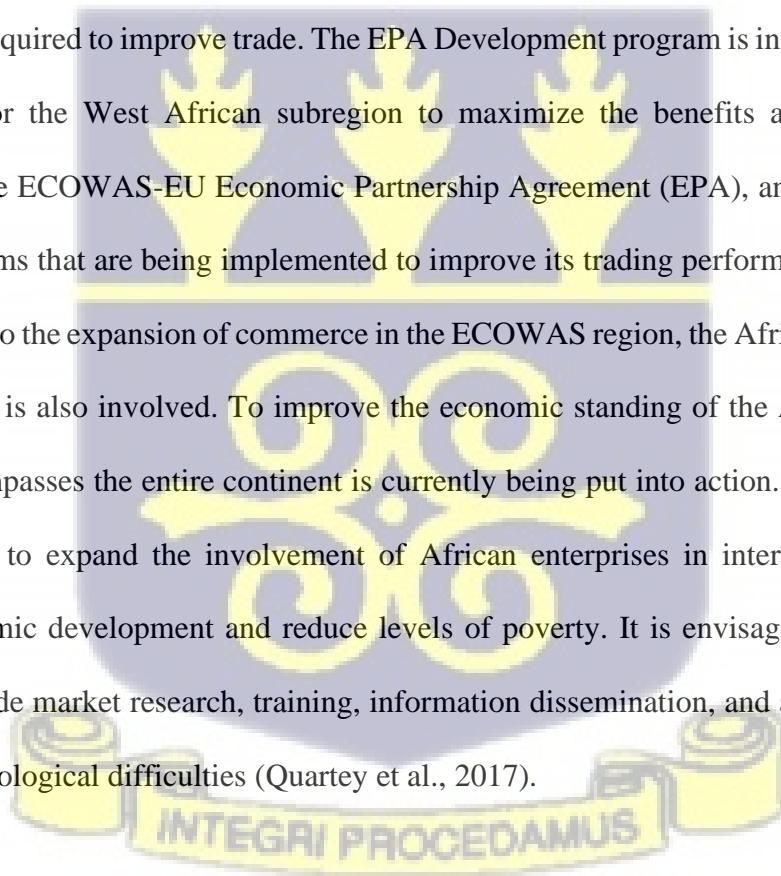
On 24th July, 1993, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) revised the ECOWAS Treaty, which had initially been envisioned as a regional economic accord to integrate and develop the economies of West Africa. It was hoped that this would eventually result in West Africa forming its economic union and becoming economically self-sufficient. Because of this, there will be increased economic stability and linkages between the many states that are members of the organization. In a manner analogous to that of the EU, the 15 states that make up its members work together politically and economically under an institutional structure that is based on treaties. (Abe, 2012).

As the member states of West Africa work to integrate their economies, economic union in the region is becoming increasingly likely. The Treaty had as one of its primary objectives the enhancement of the quality of life of its constituents, the maintenance and enhancement of economic stability, the promotion of collaboration among its members, and the advancement and development of Africa. The achievement of the objective can be accomplished in stages according to Article 3.2 of the Treaty. It is of utmost significance to work toward the establishment of a common market through the liberalization of commercial activity. The establishment of a Free Trade Area (FTA) at the community level requires the removal of non-tariff barriers between members; the adoption of a common external tariff and the establishment of a common trade policy with third countries; the removal of obstacles to the

free movement of people, goods, services, and capital between members; and the establishment of an economic union through the adoption of a common external tariff. The WTO's economic, political, and legal goals are all accounted for in the agreement (Abe, 2012).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plans to institutionalize various policies and procedures to boost the region's overall exports. Since 1979, member nations of ECOWAS have been working toward the achievement of this objective by putting into effect the Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). The ETLS did not begin collecting data on industrial items until the year 1990. The new rules of origin define goods as having "rules of origin" if all their raw materials are produced in the same place. However, products that do not fall into this category but need the usage of components that have a value-added that is at least thirty per cent more than the price of the finished product can also be considered for eligibility. Harmonization of tariffs and the establishment of an external trade agenda was both necessary steps toward achieving economic unification in West Africa. These steps helped the liberalized market grow more robust. The leaders of ECOWAS concluded in 2006 that the best way to get this process rolling was to establish a customs union in January of the same year. Through the implementation of the Common External Tariff (CET), customs transactions and procedures have become more open and transparent, as well as less time-consuming (Quartey et al., 2017). If there were no hiccups during the installation phase, the CET was anticipated to be completely functional in January of 2015. Two additional recent innovations in the West African subregion's trade policy are the West African Common Industrial Policy (WACIP) and the Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP). In the context of an improvement project for agriculture, the latter is centred on irrigation, natural resources, sustainable development, and farm management, amongst other areas of agriculture. On the other hand, the WACIP is a strategy with a longer-term focus that aims to improve the industrial

sector of the sub-region to increase its part of world trade. The fundamental objective of this program, which seeks to diversify and expand the industrial production base of the subregion, is to raise the rate of raw material processing to 30 per cent by the year 2030. Under the new strategy, it is anticipated that the level of trade within the region will increase by 13 percentage points, to a total of 40 per cent (Kollie, 2022). As a result, the purpose of economic policy is to foster economic growth and development over the long term by developing a regional economy that is both competitive and harmonious with the economy of the world. To accomplish this objective, numerous policy actions are currently being done. As part of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Aid for Trade program, regional committees have been established to supervise the coordination of donor financing to construct the essential infrastructure required to improve trade. The EPA Development program is intended to provide the platform for the West African subregion to maximize the benefits and opportunities presented by the ECOWAS-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and it is one of the flagship programs that are being implemented to improve its trading performance. In addition to contributing to the expansion of commerce in the ECOWAS region, the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) is also involved. To improve the economic standing of the African region, a plan that encompasses the entire continent is currently being put into action. The objective of the program is to expand the involvement of African enterprises in international trade to advance economic development and reduce levels of poverty. It is envisaged that the focus areas will include market research, training, information dissemination, and advisory services regarding technological difficulties (Quartey et al., 2017).



The ECOWAS area, on the other hand, has taken several notable strides forward since the organization was first established. The average annual growth rate of regional commerce between Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal was 18% between 2005 and 2014. This

growth occurred between 2005 and 2014. Commodities including oil, iron, bauxite, manganese, and gold are the key forces behind ECOWAS's economic activity in the form of trade. Important agricultural items include things like coffee, cocoa, cotton, rubber, and fruits and vegetables. Other products that are more regularly offered in the region include things like dry grains, roots and tubers, and products from animals (Kollie, 2022).

In this way, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stands out from the other Customs Unions (CU). The Treaty was first created to foster greater economic cooperation and development among the countries that signed it. Its original mission has been expanded to consider the more politically fraught objective of ensuring that peace and security are preserved throughout the region. The European Union (EU) is the only international organization that has tried to create a permanent peacekeeping force that has effectively intervened in crises involving its member nations. The ECOWAS was able to restore and keep the peace in the member states that had been ripped apart by conflict thanks to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, also known as ECOMOG. To round out its provisions, the Treaty includes several non-trade-related principles. These include the promotion of peace and security in regional areas, cooperation among parliaments, involvement of civil society, protection of the environment, cultural exchange, and resolution of disputes. ECOWAS is distinguished from other CUs by these one-of-a-kind provisions. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made it easier for the average person to gain access to the benefits that come with trade liberalization. All the obstacles that might have delayed the progress of the region are removed as a result of the member states' faster economic growth. (Abe, 2012).

2.2 The Issue of borders in West Africa

According to Carter and Post, borders are demarcations that are jointly recognized and (mostly) observed by all parties involved (Carter and Post, 2017). It is said that a border is unstable when “its integrity is habitually breached by a non-trivial subset of the population,” which results in negative externalities for the states that are located on either side of the border. According to this point of view, stable borders are those that are successfully monitored and managed both physically and mentally. On the other side, the inequality in economic conditions can have a domino effect, leading to instability at the borders because of an increase in transnational crime and the collapse of border control (Maigari et al., 2020).

Therefore, the boundary embodies the actual manifestation of a nation’s sovereignty in the physical world. Because nations are accountable for managing their internal affairs, it is expected of them to exercise control over the entry and exit of illegal substances and items, as well as persons who move through unofficial channels, into and out of their respective nations. Control that is conducted at the boundaries of a nation is referred to as “border management,” which is an umbrella phrase. It encompasses the facilitative side of border operations, which tries to promote quick movement with minimal intervention for authorized people and commodities.

The security side of border operations is responsible for preventing unauthorised crossings of the border. The enforcement of these authorities is difficult since it needs prompt and accurate identification of groups to collect the resources necessary to deal with possible border crossers. This occurs regularly since border towns typically have a diverse population and consistently increasing amounts of business as a direct result of their location. There are frequently many things in common between communities on both sides of the border, such as a similar language,

a shared tribal identity, and even blood relatives. This is especially true for Native American groups, which often share the same ancestry (Gerstein et al., 2018). Another defining characteristic is the fluidity, or changeability, of the functions that boundaries play over time. This characteristic is significant because it illuminates the structure and pattern of interactions that exist between different domestic and international systems (Kratochwil, 1986). Consolidating well-defined borders is one of the three primary criteria that are essential for establishing stable states and societies in today's world; the other two key criteria are developing a national identity and forming state institutions. To elucidate and put legitimate governmental intentions into action, identifying, and gaining a knowledge of the geographic area in which such authority is to be exercised is necessary. Every nation is interested in extending its borders so that it can exercise more control over a larger area of land. Unconsolidated borders, combined with insufficient political institutions and unfinished nationalist projects, have historically been a recipe for instability and violence. As a result, the development of stable borders has been regarded as a prerequisite for the construction of stable governments and states (Laremont, 2005).

They may have more in common with each other than they do with the countries to which they are nominally affiliated. The intermingling of people from both sides of the internationally recognized boundary has resulted in the development of distinctive cultures in many of these regions. They are also very responsive to changes that come about because of alterations in enforcement, security measures, and tariff rules (Gerstein et al., 2018). Measures to close the border may run into violent opposition. Communities located close to the borders of Nigeria and the Republics of Niger, Benin, Chad, and Cameroon have a culture that is strikingly like this one. Since Nigerians and people from other countries coexisted in the villages along the border for many years before European colonialists separated the two groups for

administrative, economic, and political reasons, it may be difficult to tell a Nigerian from a person from another country.

Without a shadow of a question, the boundaries that separate the many nations that makeup West Africa are porous. This theory is supported by Okumu's essay, in which he argues that the porous character of West African borders makes them an excellent location for smugglers to operate. According to him, various illegal enterprises and issues affecting society, such as prostitution, have profited financially from people crossing the border illegally (Okumu, 2011). However, Okumu's thesis is one-sided when it comes to the porousness of borders as a possible explanation for people trafficking. This is because Okumu ignores other factors that act as drivers and pullers. The rise of globalization is seen by criminals as an opportunity to extend their businesses and make more money from sources that are outside of their typical area of influence. This is the case even though globalization is the primary cause of cross-border crimes (as Julins (2002) and Akinyemi (2013) point out), but criminals view the rise of globalization as an opportunity. Additionally, Julins suggests that the high standard of living in Western Europe and North America contributes to the rise of transnational organised crime. This opens the door for all sorts of illegal activities, from narcotics to prostitution to currency exchange (Julins, 2002).

On the other hand, De Andres maintains that nations both import and export criminal behaviours. (Akinyemi, 2019). The issue of transnational and subregional crime in West Africa is discussed in a report that was issued in 2004 by the UN Secretary-General. This report served as the basis for identifying the following problems that are plaguing the subregion: the persistent weakening of the security sector; the proliferation of roadblocks; the presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW); the movement of large numbers of refugees; and the

occurrence of forced displacement and human rights abuses. In his discussion of the anarchy caused by transnational crime, Wafula Okumu argues that the problem requires immediate attention and the establishment of an acceptable structure for border management, as well as a concerted effort to address the problem in the spirit of regional and continental integration. Okumu bases his argument on the necessity that the issue necessitates immediate attention and the establishment of an acceptable structure for border management (Okumu, 2011). Human trafficking is a major problem in West Africa, notably in countries like Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, which serve as hubs for travellers heading to countries like Nigeria and Gabon. Abduction of children, purchase of children from families with limited incomes, bond placement as debt repayment, temporary placement for a minor cost in exchange for presents, and enrolment in a domestic service program at the request of a child's parents are all examples of this practice. (Veil, 2008 quoted in Akinyemi, 2019, stated that).

A similar argument is made by Aderanti Adepoju, who claims that Nigerian women who are trafficked to Europe for prostitution frequently pass-through Ghana. The fact that many young women and girls are trafficked into neighbouring nations to be exploited there is a glaring indication of this practice. At the same time, other young women are coerced into working as prostitutes in other locations around Europe. He asserts that Senegalese women are subjected to human trafficking and forced into prostitution throughout Europe, South Africa, and the Gulf States (Adepoju, 2005). However, the bloody conflict in the region is a big factor that contributes to the problem. As a result of the fighting, women from war-torn nations like Sierra Leone and Liberia have been forced to become prostitutes in Mali. It's been suggested that women travelling from Anglophone African countries use Mali as a transit point on their trip to Europe. This is one view among several.

A pivotal moment in the development of trade liberalization in the region was the establishment of a free trade area and common market by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during the preceding three decades (ETLS). However, there has been limited success in increased levels of international trade being translated into lower tariffs, and this success has been unevenly distributed among areas (Donaldson., 2018; Lebrand, 2021). In addition, despite the potential benefits of increased regional trade, West African commerce has underperformed in terms of regional integration even though expanded regional trade might benefit the region (Calderon et al., 2015). Inadequate transport services and infrastructure leading to high transport costs, a high rate of informality, and an increase in conflicts that have affected the region in recent years are all possible explanations for the lack of regional trade. The existence of non-tariff barriers and other border frictions is another possible explanation for the lack of regional trade. Several viewpoints support the policy of a government to close and restrict land boundaries, and these viewpoints have been presented. These factors could be economic, political, or even security-related, depending on how the situation now stands. Countries that have problems with their internal security often restrict the movement of individuals along their borders. This is done for a variety of reasons, including putting a stop to transnational criminal activity and the smuggling of illegal weapons. This information served as the foundation for Resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2001) passed by the UN Security Council (UN, 2004). This resolution is simply one thread in the larger tapestry that is being woven to combat global terrorism and proliferation, and there have been many different formal and informal mechanisms put into place to do so. However, it has been brought to our attention that the resolutions appear to be divorced from the realities that exist in the Global South (Bergenas, 2011).

According to Ullah and Kumpoh (2018), boundaries are a major factor in the formation of political systems in Southeast Asian countries. The position of the border influences commerce, safety, and migration. The political, ethnic, religious, economic, demographic, and geographical diversity of Southeast Asia has significant ramifications for neighbourly relations, commerce, border constructions, migration, and refugee movements across all of the countries in the region. These ramifications include movements of people seeking asylum. According to Ullah and Kumpoh, the nature of the boundaries that separate two countries determine the degree to which those countries are connected in terms of the potential for security threats, trade, and the mobility of their populations. According to the findings of the research, states can formulate border policies for a variety of reasons, including political, economic, and security concerns, depending on the context. Because borders define more precisely where one nation ends and another begins, concerns regarding migration and displacement of people against there will also centre on borders. The border is significant to the lives of hundreds of thousands of Burmese people since it is a zone that can either be a place of peril or safety. There will be no improvement in predicaments such as the one the Burmese people are experiencing in Thailand, where a refugee camp has become a de facto permanent solution, until countries that control their borders come up with measures to guarantee the safety and freedom of refugees (Margesson, 2011).

Hoffmann and Melly (2015) noted, however, that one of the challenges facing ECOWAS as a regional economic bloc is persuading the governments of the area to abandon the use of governmental technical standards as a form of protectionism for their domestic industries in favour of a harmonised and liberalized regional strategy that will, in the long run, foster trade opportunities, boost growth, and create jobs. This is one of the challenges that Hoffmann and Melly (2015) noted as being the challenges facing When it comes to branded drugs that are

already available in another ECOWAS state, for example, the adoption of national rules to govern border movement by a country provides only a minimal level of protection while opening the door for opportunities for smugglers and officials looking to make money off rent. This became abundantly obvious once Nigeria shut down its land borders, as, before the embargo, active traffickers were able to import and export a greater quantity of legally purchased products. Due to the inadequacy of the regional economic organization known as ECOWAS to prevent the smuggling of illegal goods and weapons into the country, Nigeria was obliged to restrict its borders, despite the apparent benefits that cross-border trade and travel bring Nigerians. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, which emphasizes cross-border initiatives as a means of reducing conflicts, fighting cross-border crime, and enhancing social welfare, among other concerns, has not been able to quell the increased insecurity in the West African corridors that have been brought on by Boko Haram and other splinter groups of Islamist terrorist organizations that are using the region as a haven. According to Lamptey (2013), the member states of ECOWAS do not have a uniform approach to the formation of policies, notably at the national and sub-regional levels.

2.3 Land border relations between Nigeria and its neighbours before the border closure.

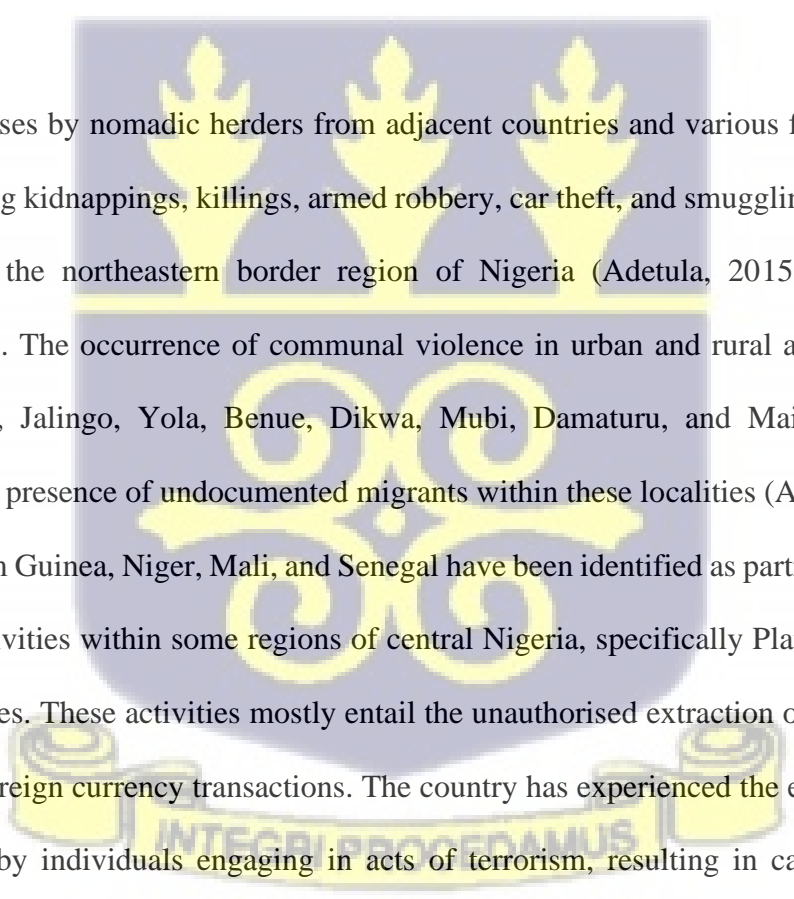
Nigeria shares a border spanning 1,049 kilometres with Niger to the north, 87 kilometres with Chad to the north, 1,690 kilometres with Cameroon to the east, 773 kilometres with Benin to the west, and an additional 853 kilometres of maritime border with the Atlantic Ocean, referred to as the Gulf of Guinea, along its southern coastline (Ogunnubi, and Awosusi, 2022). The populations of these countries primarily consist of individuals of African heritage, with Nigeria being the most populous among them. Agriculture is a prominent sector in the economies of various countries, including Nigeria and Cameroon, despite their exploration and utilisation of alternative sources of foreign income, such as petroleum, gold, bauxite, and other mineral

resources. Nigeria is often regarded as one of the most industrialised countries. Except for Cameroon, the remaining neighbouring countries of Nigeria are affiliated with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

According to a report published by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), there exists a total of more than 1400 unauthorised pathways along the four land borders shared with neighbouring states (Ogunnubi, and Awosusi, 2022). This situation presents a range of socio-economic challenges at the national level, as it enables the unhindered entry of smugglers, cross-border criminals, and traffickers into the country (Babatola, 2015). The borders of Nigeria exhibit inadequate monitoring and surveillance, with limited patrol efforts and a lack of effective technical systems, such as Close Circuit Television Camera (CCTV) or other electronic surveillance methods, to thoroughly inspect products and individuals entering or leaving the country. Prior to the implementation of the border closure in 2019, there was a prevalent influx of smuggled and prohibited commodities, notably rice and vehicles, into the nation through numerous illicit and permeable routes. This illicit trade significantly contributed to a substantial decline in revenue generated from import duties. Despite assertions made by security agencies such as the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), and the Nigeria Armed Forces (NAF), among others, regarding the implementation of routine operational inspections and patrols along the borders, these endeavours have proven ineffective in deterring transnational criminals and smugglers operating on both sides of the border. This can be attributed in part to the vastness of the nation's boundaries and their permeability, as well as insufficient security staff.

The existing national security challenges presented by Boko Haram militants and Fulani herdsmen can be attributed to the unstable conditions brought about by Nigeria's border

diplomacy efforts aimed at fostering positive relations with neighbouring countries. Most of these individuals engaged in acts of terrorism and banditry are from the adjacent states of Niger and Chad, among other regions. They exploit the permeable border to infiltrate various Nigerian border villages. According to Adetula's (2015) research, the individuals affiliated with religious extremism and held accountable for perpetrating acts of terrorism in Nigeria are from the Sahel and Western Sahara regions. The introduction of foreign religious beliefs poses a challenge to the secular nature of the Nigerian state. The author asserts that the individuals causing significant destruction in Nigerian urban areas, settlements, and rural areas are primarily Libyan nationals who dispersed throughout various African nations after the downfall of the Gaddafi administration.



Land rights abuses by nomadic herders from adjacent countries and various forms of violent crimes, including kidnappings, killings, armed robbery, car theft, and smuggling, are recurring occurrences in the northeastern border region of Nigeria (Adetula, 2015; Olagbaju and Awosusi, 2022). The occurrence of communal violence in urban and rural areas, namely in places like Jos, Jalingo, Yola, Benue, Dikwa, Mubi, Damaturu, and Maiduguri, can be attributed to the presence of undocumented migrants within these localities (Adetula, 2015). Individuals from Guinea, Niger, Mali, and Senegal have been identified as participants in illicit commercial activities within some regions of central Nigeria, specifically Plateau, Nasarawa, and Taraba States. These activities mostly entail the unauthorised extraction of solid minerals and unlawful foreign currency transactions. The country has experienced the establishment of fortified bases by individuals engaging in acts of terrorism, resulting in casualties, forced displacement, the disruption of economic activities, and the depletion of national resources. Instances have been reported when individuals from nearby nations unlawfully acquire Nigerian citizenship and improperly participate in the nation's general elections. The closure

of the country's land and sea borders ahead to the 2015 general elections was implemented as a measure to prevent the entry of unauthorised individuals from surrounding states who may have had intentions to participate in the electoral process (Adetula, 2015).

Based on the findings of the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in 2013, it is observed that Nigeria is responsible for approximately 70% of the illicit trade of light weapons and ammunition within the West African region (Ogunnubi, and Awosusi, 2022). These weapons are primarily acquired from both the global market and other West African countries through collaborative efforts between Nigerian nationals and illegal immigrants. The transportation of these weapons occurs through Nigeria's inadequately secured border. The Nigerian military has successfully intercepted and confiscated substantial quantities of firearms and ammunition. The high incidence of smuggling and the deliberate avoidance of import charges give rise to economic difficulties, while violations of international rules and treaties regarding border crossings erode the nation's integrity and economic stability. The circumvention of the ECOWAS convention by neighbouring governments, particularly the Benin Republic, is evident as rice and other items imported from Asian and European countries are illicitly smuggled into Nigeria through unofficial border routes. This smuggling activity is facilitated by the geographical proximity of Cotonou to Lagos. Due to the impact of Abuja's border diplomacy on Nigeria's national security and its struggling economy, the government has implemented border closures on many occasions. The regional response to this phenomenon has typically been characterised by significant outcry, as was observed under the Obasanjo administration in 2003. Despite the reopening of borders, the government has not undertaken a comprehensive reassessment of its overarching security strategy and the potential economic ramifications. In August 2019, President Buhari implemented the closure of the land borders as a measure to stimulate the struggling economy and address issues related to cross-

border criminal activities. Despite the presence of both internal and external controversies surrounding this decision, which can be seen as undermining the longstanding Afrocentric foreign policy of prioritising Africa's interests, the Nigerian government maintained its composure and continued with the decision to close its borders.

2.4 The ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS)

The ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme is an essential component of the ECOWAS Free Trade Agreement (ETLS). The ETLS is the principal instrument for the integration of markets and trade in West Africa, which also includes the growth of industrialization, investment, and entrepreneurialism; this is the ETLS's primary objective. The Eastern Trade Ladder System (ETLS) intends to facilitate increased trade between the member nations of the bloc. It is anticipated that a trade-induced market opportunity will stimulate regional economic growth, thereby producing additional labour and capital to satisfy the requirements of regional market participants (Shuaibu, 2015).

By the terms of the ECOWAS treaty, this objective seeks to do rid of customs tariffs and any other fees that have the same impact on imports and exports. In addition to this, it intends to do away with quantitative and administrative barriers to trade among its members (Treaty of Lagos, 1975, as cited by Ade, 2012). It was ratified by the ECOWAS in the year 1983. In 1990, it came into being with the strong support of Ghana and Nigeria, both of which intended to sell industrial products to the region and develop bilateral trade with it. Ghana and Nigeria are both members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Tariffs won't apply to handicrafts and raw agricultural items under the new plan (expanded to industrial products in 1990). On the other hand, the ETLS has stringent Rules of Origin for both industrial and artisanal manufactured goods, as well as products derived from agriculture, livestock, mining, and fishing. It developed a compensation system even though there was neither a monitoring

nor a review process; this was done to offset some of the member states' tariff income losses that they would experience initially (Karaki & Verhaeghe, 2017).

Under the ELTS, trade restrictions such as tariffs and taxes will be done away with. Its primary objectives are to strengthen trade linkages within the sub-region of West Africa and to make it easier for unprocessed items and traditional handicrafts to move freely within the region without being subject to customs tariffs or other levies. In addition to this, the progressive removal of customs charges and taxes that have a comparable effect will be adopted, and it will be applied to industrial items that originate in the member states of the Community. Trade will be liberalized in two stages, and both customs duties and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) will be merged during the first phase (Bankole & Olasehinde, 2012).

The total liberalisation of trade in three categories of goods and across three categories of nations is the goal of the second phase. The three product categories include unprocessed commodities derived from animals, minerals, and plants; however, these products do not qualify for compensation for revenue lost as a result of other member states' imports of these products. Yams, cocoyam, and plantains are all considered to be types of live plants. Other types of life plants include vegetables and edible fruits. There is also honey that is natural (Bankole & Olasehinde, 2012; Oguanobi et al., 2014).

They consist of traditional handicrafts, some of which may or may not be required for the use of the tools and resources that the craftspeople themselves create. This category includes footwear, gaiters, and other similar items, in addition to sandals. Some examples of sandals included in this category are light sandals with leather bottoms, leather babouches, and Turkish

slippers. In addition to that, it consists of hides and skins, handbags, wallets, purses, and other leather things such as toiletry cases. (Bankole & Olasehinde, 2012).

The third group of products is comprised of industrial goods that were produced within the community. This transaction includes companies and items that have been agreed upon by ECOWAS in the industrial sector. Consequently, the ECOWAS secretariat in each of their respective nations is required to register them. They need to fulfil all the requirements to be accepted into the ETLs and meet the standards for items that originate in the community. This means that they need to fulfil all of the requirements. It is necessary to have export declaration forms as well as certificates of origin (Adegboye et al., 2020; Bankole & Olasehinde, 2012).

As part of the agreement, it was planned for the ETLs to be put into effect over a period of ten years, with a zero tariff and duty rate being adopted in all member states by December 2000. For instance, the ECOWAS Commission discovered that the implementation of the ETLs was less than satisfactory. It was essential to the success of the ETLs deployment that aiding measures be available, such as the compensation mechanism that was mentioned above. The progress of the ETLs came to a halt when the machine in question was eliminated. To find a solution to this problem, the ECOWAS established a National Approval Committee (NAC). It is now possible to get approval for ETLs items at the national level rather than the regional level, which helps to develop a sense of communal ownership among the countries who are participating. Because of this, the implementation of ETLs started to expand once more before beginning a gradual decline. (Karaki & Verhaeghe, 2017).

2.4.1 Limitations and difficulties in the ETLS implementation

Since it was first developed, the ETLS has not been able to live up to its full potential. Many scholars from within and outside of the region have hypothesized that the exceptionally low rate of FTA utilization is due to several obstacles. According to Ayemibo and Salas (2021), one of the most significant obstacles to the FTA's full utilization was the problem of insufficient information regarding the ETLS. As a result, businesses in the region had a low understanding of the scheme. It would have been beneficial for the few businesses that were utilizing the plan to spread the news about its many advantages. Despite this, the terrible experiences that they had while attempting to use it have caused exporting enterprises in the region to shun the usage of it (Deloitte, 2017, as cited in Ayemibo and Salas, 2021).

Amah and Ken-Nwachukwu (2016) have brought to light the issue of qualified local enterprises that lack ETLS knowledge by bringing attention to the matter. According to the findings of their investigation, a lack of understanding about the scheme's specifics and the process of registering products to take advantage of the multiple benefits offered by the FTA is a big obstacle for local enterprises. The assertion made by Ogu et al. (2016) that there is insufficient sensitization and awareness of the strategy is supported by their findings.

Not only are the companies who should be exporting unaware of the arrangement, but also the government officers that work at the borders of the ECOWAS member countries. According to Ogu et al. (2016) and Amah and Ken-Nwachukwu (2016), this is a primary priority among these government entities, as is evidenced by the demand for payment of taxes made by the border authorities of various member states. (Ayemibo, 2019). Similarly, some qualifying businesses have either never heard of ETLS or have no idea how to take advantage of the benefits it offers; those who have registered their products and are trying to use the FTA are being discouraged by the illegal and numerous roadblocks that have been erected by border

officials (Ken and Aniekan, 2013). In addition to causing delays, the entities in question use these barriers as a means of extorting illegal truck fees, which drives up the overall cost of transportation. According to Ranganathan and Foster (2011), illegal roadblocks and checkpoints cause delays in the transportation of freight because they force vehicles to come to a complete stop for extended periods. In addition, the ETLS gap assessment that was conducted in 2009 by the West African Trade Hub of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stated that government authorities harassed truck drivers when they were stopped at roadblocks. According to the findings of a report published by the International Trade Centre (ITC, 2016), a significant number of bottlenecks in import-export procedures in the ECOWAS region frequently occur at the Customs authorities. These bottlenecks are caused by insufficient and obsolete equipment, delays in customs clearance, and excessive bureaucracy. The utilization of the West African Free Trade Agreement is additionally hindered by non-tariff barriers such as product registration, packaging rules, product certification, technical inspection and testing, quantity restrictions, and import-export licensing (Ayemibo, 2019).

There has been a lack of national political will to implement the regional integration agenda that has been collectively agreed upon, even though ECOWAS Member States have placed high importance on regional integration, particularly trade integration, for which the ETLS was supposed to be the fundamental tool. It had been anticipated that the ETLS would be fully operational by the year 1990, given that it was first implemented in 1979; nevertheless, after three postponements, it has not yet been completed. The political will of African leaders to advance regional integration is sometimes used as a proxy for regional and continental decisions and agreements rather than their commitment to implementing those choices and agreements at the national level. This is because regional and continental decisions and

agreements are made at a higher level of governance than national decisions and agreements. The process of domestication has been ineffective, and there is a wide gulf between the widespread acceptance of programs and the limited extent to which they are used (Fajana, 2018). The elimination of tariffs on products that meet the eligibility requirements and come from Member States is a precondition for the effective implementation of the ETLS. The removal of tariffs as a source of government revenue has had unfavourable effects on the budgets of some nations, making it impossible for those nations to carry out the plan in its entirety. ECOWAS includes a mechanism for compensating member countries for revenue lost as a result of the liberalization of trade; however, this mechanism has not been utilized to its full potential. Countries that do not have direct taxation and do not have the means to collect it have relied largely on indirect taxes to pay their governments. These indirect taxes include things like import fees. This is because many countries have sizable informal economies. (Fajana, 2018; Shuaibu, 2015).

The lack of an effective and efficient communication system at the borders is often a hurdle to the implementation of the ETLS. It is not possible for customs agents stationed at the borders of member states to quickly access the data that has been electronically entered about the qualified enterprises and items that have been registered. The process of verifying a company's or product's documents at the border to determine whether or not they are suitable for import is time-consuming and vulnerable to abuse. It should not come as much of a surprise that the number of enterprises participating in the ETLS, which has been around for a long time and was intended to be an essential instrument in the process of West Africa's market integration, is so low (Shuaibu, 2015).

The inability of ETLS to influence intra-ECOWAS trade is further constrained by the absence of adequate trade-related infrastructure, trade information, and trade finance, as well as the absence of economic diversification and complementarity among the Member States. Concerns that some of the products covered by certificates of origin are repackaged goods from Europe and Asia may be one reason for the low volume of products from ECOWAS member countries entering the massive Nigerian market. However, it's also possible that "ECOWAS countries do not have manufacturing bases of any significance from which Nigeria can benefit," which would explain the low volume of products from ECOWAS member countries entering the market. (Fajana, 2018; Onyia, 2020).

Other challenges that Amah and Ken-Nwachukwu (2016) mentioned as contributing factors to the limited utilization of the ETLS include concerns about sovereignty and the absence of legal status for the ETLS. These sovereignty issues enable the border officials of some ECOWAS member states to deny exporters access to the full benefits of the ETLS. This is the case even though the exporters' products have been registered with the ETLS and have a Certificate of Origin (CoO), which should enable them to export the goods duty-free to other member states. In addition, companies that have been harmed but do not have sufficient legal standing have discovered that it is difficult to seek compensation for their losses. According to the analysis conducted by Deloitte, it has also been hard to acquire things with COO duty-free privileges (2017).

According to the findings of the study, customs and border protection agencies regularly cause delays in aiding with the clearance of transit trucks at the entry and exit borders of member states, even when the Certificate of Origin is recognized (Ayemibo, 2019). The lack of a sufficient system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the ETLS as well as a

legal framework for dispute resolution and the enforcement of rights and obligations under FTA agreements and protocols is another factor that is working against the expansion of intra-ECOWAS trade. The absence of a legal framework is exacerbated by the presence of each of these variables. It is not a coincidence that the vast bulk of exports from Africa is comprised of agriculturally based items of the most fundamental sort. It makes no sense to claim that the countries of Africa consciously chose to be dependent on the countries of Europe either. This is a stupid notion. Both represent the triumph of Africa as well as the aspiration, hope, and inventiveness of Europe. It is not apparent why European nations decided to recognize the independence of African nations. According to this school of thought, the fact that multinational corporations have devised effective and low-cost methods of exploitation against developing nations means that these nations are now in a position to be used as a platform for further exploitation and the continuation of neo-colonialism. To put it another way, this may have been the impetus behind the economic colonial methods utilized by ECOWAS (Ezeogidi, 2020). The bulk of the countries that make up ECOWAS are primary producers, and the majority of their income comes from taxes placed on imports and exports. The exceptions to this are a few countries, such as Nigeria, that rely on government subsidies. For example, in 1974, the percentage of Ghana's budgetary income that came from taxes on exports and imports was somewhere between 52 and 53. When it comes to trade liberalisation, how will these member states be compensated? The fact that the Treaty stipulates that a fund would be established for compensation, development, and mutual assistance does not change the fact that it is still a problem (Adekola and Agbonkhese, 2014). For example, import substitution policies have been implemented to assist West African nations in the development of their economies. However, as more machinery (along with raw materials, replacement parts, and expatriate workers) is imported, more foreign exchange reserves are being depleted, which results in a negative balance of payments. As a result, the only way to bring down the current account

deficit is to raise the amount of essential agricultural products that are produced, which requires an increase in the amount of reliance placed on these products (Ezeogidi, 2020). In addition to the problems that were discussed earlier, one of the concerns that are frequently voiced among the ECOWAS member states is the possibility that more prosperous nations will have an unfair advantage. Senegal and the other landlocked states have the lowest population and the fewest natural resources compared to Nigeria, which has the highest population and the richest natural resources among the landlocked nations. The reluctance of Senegal to ratify the Lagos Treaty was because the country was concerned that Nigeria, with her prospective wealth, would bully other signatory states (on May 25, 1975). The level of commerce that takes place between the member states is still in its infancy, and the benefits of regional integration will be severely constrained until the obstacles that stand in the way of free trade are eliminated. On the other hand, the customs union is working toward the elimination of these obstacles. It is difficult to predict how successful these massive arrangements will be in the years to come (Adekola and Agbonkhese, 2014).

2.5 Conclusion

The chapter offered a perspective on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) from its beginnings, explaining its objectives, ambitions, and obstacles, in addition to some essential protocols. In addition to that, the chapter went into depth on the topic of territorial boundaries in West Africa (border conflicts, smuggling, territorial disputes etc.). An evidential insight into the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme and its obstacles was presented as the chapter came to a close, so preparing the groundwork for an analysis of the research problem in the following chapter, which will delve into the implications of Nigeria's border closure on ECOWAS integration.

CHAPTER THREE

NIGERIA, THE ECOWAS AND TRADE INTEGRATION

3.0 Introduction

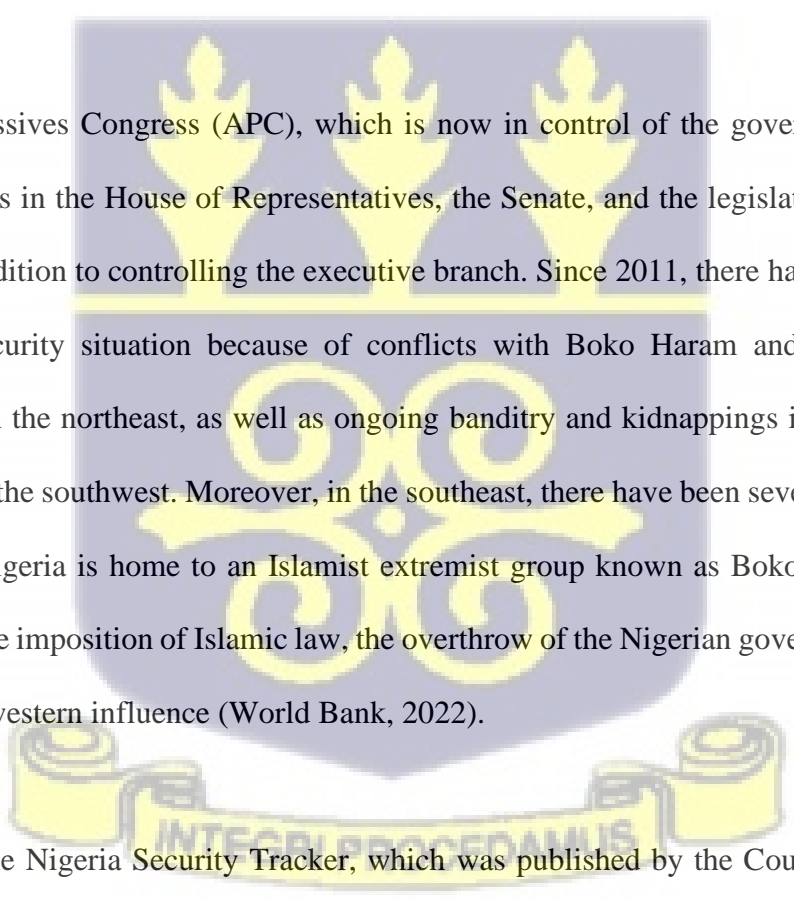
This chapter examined the effects of the closing of Nigeria's borders on regional integration, particularly on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), using a thematic approach. The study's objectives are broken down in great depth in this chapter. Findings are presented and discussed in the context of the reviewed literature and based on interviews with trade experts at the Ghanaian Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), the Nigerian High Commission in Accra, and the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja. In-depth interviews were a key component of the qualitative research method, which was employed to gather information.

3.1 Country Profile of Nigeria

Because of its vast population (202 million people), which makes it one of the most populous countries in the world in terms of its young age demography, Nigeria is a prominent player in West African politics (World Bank, 2022). In an interview with an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the respondent indicated that:

Because Nigeria alone accounts for more than 200 million of the roughly 350 million people in West Africa, the market size of Nigeria is so significant to the ECOWAS that it immediately makes the region an extremely competitive place to do business.

There are people of many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds living in the Federal Capital Territory and the 36 individual states that make up the federation, with Hausa-Fulani making up 29 per cent of the population, Yoruba making up 21 per cent, Igbo (Ibo) making up 18 per cent, Ijaw making up 10 per cent, Kanuri making up 4 per cent, Ibibio making up 3.5 per cent, and Tiv making up 2.5 per cent (University of Birmingham, 2020). Seventy per cent of the population is employed in agriculture-related activities (farming, fishing, and forestry), followed by the service sector (government activities, communications, transportation, finance, and all other economic activities that do not produce tangible goods), and the remaining ten per cent of the workforce is employed in industry (mining, manufacturing, energy production, and construction) (Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).



The All-Progressives Congress (APC), which is now in control of the government, holds a majority of seats in the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the legislatures of most of the states, in addition to controlling the executive branch. Since 2011, there has been a shift in the nation's security situation because of conflicts with Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations in the northeast, as well as ongoing banditry and kidnappings in the northwest and portions of the southwest. Moreover, in the southeast, there have been several high-profile kidnappings. Nigeria is home to an Islamist extremist group known as Boko Haram, whose goals include the imposition of Islamic law, the overthrow of the Nigerian government, and the elimination of western influence (World Bank, 2022).

According to the Nigeria Security Tracker, which was published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Boko Haram was responsible for the deaths of nearly 15,000 individuals between May 2011 and December 2015, while skirmishes with Nigerian security forces were responsible for the deaths of another 12,000. (Amao, 2020). There is still bloodshed related to

the separatist movement taking place in the southeast of the region. As a response to the conflict, the security forces of the Nigerian government have been accused of using brutal tactics, such as the burning of entire neighbourhoods that were thought to be Boko Haram strongholds, the isolating of prisoners, the carrying out of targeted killings, and the arbitrary detention of people. The Nigerian military declared victory over Boko Haram in February of 2016, and the 'mop-up phase of the insurgency began at that time, which made it possible for captives to be released. (Ogunnubi and Okunade, 2020).

At its peak, the COVID-19 epidemic cost Nigeria's GDP USD 16 billion, which is equivalent to 34.1% of the country's total economic output, with the services sector absorbing the brunt of the economic hit. Even though agriculture is the primary source of income for most Nigerians, the country's total agricultural output decreased by 13.1 per cent, or \$1.2 billion (Andam, 2020). In the year 2020, as the rest of the globe emerged from a recession caused by a pandemic, Nigeria's economy began to improve; nonetheless, the nation's macroeconomic stability continued to erode (World Bank, 2022). According to the World Bank, several factors, including global commodities shocks, a depreciating currency, trade restrictions, and monetisation of the deficit, are causing inflation to soar and putting millions of Nigerians at risk of poverty (World Bank, 2022).

Because Nigeria's oil production has dropped to historic lows since 2021 and gasoline subsidies have eaten up a bigger share of the nation's overall oil income, the country has been unable to benefit from the rise in the price of crude oil. According to the government, the situation was caused by massive pipeline theft that occurred across the Niger Delta (George, 2022). In 2018, 53 million of Nigeria's total population, which is equivalent to 25 per cent, was categorized as being at risk, while 83 million, which is equivalent to 40 per cent, were labelled as being poor.

Because the rate of population increase in Nigeria is continuing to exceed the rate at which efforts are being made to eliminate poverty, the country is projected to have 7.7 million more people living in extreme poverty between the years 2019 and 2024. (Okorie and Enwere, 2020; Olawoyin, 2022; World Bank, 2022).

Some concerns could hurt the economic outlook, such as more losses in oil output and increased instability. Although it is anticipated that the economy will develop at an average rate of 3.2 per cent in 2022–2024, some concerns could hurt the economic outlook. (2022; Olawoyin). If difficulties in obtaining foreign currency and keeping a steady supply of cash are not resolved, instability in the macroeconomy may have an impact on other parts of the economy outside the oil industry. Along with this unpredictability, ongoing pressures on the budget and the debt are also expected to be present. This is due to several factors, including decreased inflows and decreased revenue production (Olawoyin, 2022).

Despite recent major improvements in both social and economic conditions, the country is only ranked 150th out of 157 on the World Bank's 2020 Human Capital Index (World Bank, 2022). Reducing the nation's reliance on oil and diversifying the economy are two of the many significant challenges still facing the nation in terms of its development. Other significant challenges include addressing the nation's inadequate infrastructure, developing powerful and efficient institutions, resolving issues related to governance, and enhancing public financial management systems. It has been difficult to reduce poverty in the country because of the country's ongoing economic and opportunity inequalities. There is a correlation between low employment prospects and high rates of poverty, as well as regional inequality and social and political turmoil. Because of the country's high standard of living, it is expected that an additional 8 million Nigerians will have slipped into poverty between the years 2020 and 2022.

(Olawoyin, 2022). To help relieve the problem, the governments of some states have decided to invest in the education of girls. For instance, during the last ten years, the money allocated to education in Kaduna State has significantly expanded. The number of pupils has more than doubled from 1.1 million in 2015 to 2.1 million as a direct result of this (Abdullahi, 2019).

3.1.1 Nigeria's border and its relations with neighbouring countries

The pursuit of diplomatic solutions has always been at the forefront of Nigeria's foreign policy. The Pan-Africanist ideology that serves as the basis for Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy is one that the country hopes will assist it in achieving regional supremacy through bilateralism, multilateralism, regional tolerance, and economic commitment (Amao 2012; Ogunnubi and Awosusi, 2021). In an interview with the fifth respondent, an official from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, he indicated:

The foreign policy of Nigeria towards ECOWAS after its establishment was to consolidate on its developed Afrocentric doctrine of foreign policy that Nigeria was familiar with in the international ground since before the formation of ECOWAS, as it's the essence that subscribes the idea of Nigeria to take the lead in the newly inceptive organization to preserve its resourceful leadership status in the sub-region.

Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960, and ever since then, it has kept diplomatic relations with its immediate neighbours as well as the rest of Africa on a friendly and cooperative footing. Since the nation became the most populous on the continent, the government has put in a lot of work to improve its standing in the eyes of the rest of the world by pursuing policies in international relations that are befitting of her status (Kleiner, 2006). Nigeria has been a driving force behind the founding of the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) as a means of advancing its economic interests within the West African sub-region through the cultivation of strong diplomatic contacts. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been beneficial to Nigeria's national interests because it has fostered the expansion of the region's economy through increased commerce and strengthened linkages between member states (Ogunnubi and Awosusi, 2021; Omodele, 2021). Nigeria has maintained a long-standing peace with her neighbours and has been a proponent of regional and international involvement in West Africa and elsewhere through the promotion of commercial, political, and economic cooperation (Amoussou, et al., 2020).

Cameroon is located to the east, the Benin Republic to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Chad to the northeast, and the Niger Republic to the northwest. Nearly everyone in these countries is of African descent, with Nigerians being most of the population. Agriculture continues to be the foundation of Nigeria's and Cameroon's economies, despite the discovery of new foreign currency sources including petroleum, gold, bauxite, and other mineral resources (Omodele, 2021). Because of these long-standing connections, commercial activity across Nigeria's land boundaries has always been unrestricted and fruitful. Industrialization is at its highest level in Nigeria, which compares favourably to other emerging countries. Every country that borders Nigeria is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), except for Cameroon (ECOWAS).

To further Nigeria's economic interests through the medium of regional diplomacy, the country of Nigeria contributed to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Omodele, 2021). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has helped Nigeria's economy flourish and has strengthened its position in the world arena by

fostering greater economic links (Aluede, 2017). In addition to keeping open lines of contact with her neighbouring nations for a very long time, Nigeria has done this so that she can encourage the expansion of business and trade in the region. West Africa and the rest of the globe have benefited from the country's greater commitment to regional and global challenges through improved commercial, political, and economic cooperation (Omodundi et al., 2022). Nigeria is vulnerable to attacks carried out by citizens of the countries that are its closest neighbours. They continue to be subject to invasions because their borders are porous and may be breached with relative ease, and because the countries of West Africa do not have a coordinated and consistent strategy for their boundaries (Omodele, 2021). The relationship between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours has always been predicated on national borders that were drawn by Nigeria's previous European colonial masters in a fashion that was not only inaccurate but also inefficient (Aluede, 2017). As a result of these incursions, there has been an increase in the smuggling of illegal products, human and gun trafficking, mercenary activities related to religious conflict, and other sorts of unlawful movements, all of which nearly always take place. Because of the current increase in transnational crimes and overall criminal activity, Nigerians are understandably anxious about the safety of their country's borders. Given all these problems, it's hard to understand why the federal government has placed so little emphasis on border security. On 19th August, 2019, the government of Nigeria issued an emergency order to halt the movement of goods and services over her land borders, an action that has been notoriously dubbed a "land border closure." The government of Nigeria claimed that the country's economy required protection and therefore the "land border closure" was necessary (Omodele, 2021).

Daily economic and political contacts between Nigeria and its neighbours have been troubled by several issues, some of which include disagreements at the country's borders, fraudulent

trade in commodities, an increase in counterfeiting, and competition for cheaper items imported from other countries. Nigeria's relations with her neighbours are becoming increasingly strained as those neighbours continue to express their vehement opposition to the extension of the land border restriction.

3.1.2 Reasons for Nigeria's border closure

Nigeria is a consistent importer of finished goods and services from all over the world, including food from both Europe and Asia. The export of mineral fuels accounted for 87 per cent of the total value of Nigeria's merchandise exports in 2019, which totalled 54 billion US dollars (Omale et al., 2020). Most of Nigeria's exports consist of primary metals, fruits, nuts, tobacco, cocoa, oil seeds, and raw hides and skins. Tobacco is also a major export. Despite this, it has been claimed that Nigeria imported items from other countries in 2019 for a total of \$47 billion. This represented a 30 per cent rise over the levels seen in the previous year's imports and a 40 per cent increase over the levels seen in 2015. In recent years, the commodities such as rice and wheat, equipment, and computers, as well as mineral fuels such as refined oil, have been the most popular types of goods imported into Nigeria. The increasing demand from the people cannot be met by the capabilities of the indigenous industrial sector. The amount of money that Nigeria spends annually on imported food and beverages has climbed steadily over the past few years, rising from more than US\$3 billion in 2015 to more than US\$4 billion in 2017. (Okorie and Enwere, 2020; Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics). The primary reasons for the closure of the border between Nigeria and other countries have been attributed to a wide range of circumstances.

The purpose of Nigeria's border closure was to reduce the number of products that were smuggled into the country, as well as to stop the illicit importation of foreign rice, particularly

rice from Asia, and the exportation of cheap petroleum (Abiodun, 2021). Additionally, it was intended to put an end to the illegal importation of goods that were not manufactured in a country that is a participant in the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS). The second respondent, an official from the ECOWAS Commission indicated that:

They suspect people are smuggling things that are not classified.

The Nigerian government also maintains that the shutdown was necessary to fortify the country's agricultural industry and quicken the rate at which national output is rising (Omale et al., 2020). The most recent closure of the Nigerian border has been largely linked to the country's ambition to increase agriculture and lessen its reliance on crude oil to achieve economic independence. This goal was accomplished by closing the border. Research indicates that throughout the period from 2013 to 2017, the amount of rice produced domestically climbed to 8.9 million tons (Abegunde and Fabiyi, 2020). On the other hand, it is not enough to satisfy the needs of the 200 million people that reside there. The second respondent indicated that:

With over 200 million people, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa.

This translates to a big market when applied to the economy.

As a result of the shortage and the limits on imports, the price of local rice remained high, which led to a substantial amount of smuggling of rice from other countries into Nigeria, primarily from Thailand and India (Olorunb et al., 2019). The government of Nigeria has always maintained the position that the decision to seal the nation's borders was arrived at after considering both economic and security concerns.

The government has asserted that the border was sealed off for reasons related to national security. Along with the movement of Boko Haram militants comes an increase in illegal activities such as logging, poaching, mining, cattle rustling, oil bunkering, armed robberies, banditry, trafficking in small guns and light weapons, trafficking in children and women, trafficking in small guns and light weapons, and trafficking in small guns and light weapons (Dewalt, 2019; Omale et al., 2020). In a speech highlighting the priority the government places on ensuring the safety of its citizens, the Comptroller-General of Nigeria Customs offered the following philosophical justification:

When it comes to security, all laws take a back seat, we want to secure our nation, and we want to make sure that our people are protected. You must be alive and well for you to begin to ask for your rights. Your rights come when you are well and alive (Ali, 2019).

The first respondent, an official from the Ministry of Trade and Industry ascribes this explanation to him:

Smuggling of weapons, foreign rice, and other items raises major national security concerns, but if those worries were legitimate, nations could witness that things are as they are. Smuggling affects development policies on the ground, the homegrown policies. Allowing guns into your country is incredibly dangerous, especially if you are battling terrorism.

Since terrorists struck the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, concerns about the nation's security have been front and centre. Migrants from the Republics of Chad and Niger have been known to engage in violent armed conflict with Nigerian security forces on multiple

occasions. In Nigeria, fanaticism and extremism of a religious kind are being imposed using force (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012). The second respondent noted that:

I think Nigeria had good reason to block its borders, but regrettably, Benin served as the country's principal entry point. In my opinion, Nigeria would have resolved the Benin issue differently if it could have done so without having to close its border, but it was necessary for the sake of national security.

The third respondent, an official from the ECOWAS Commission also added:

Nigeria's measures based on national security have a real justification. Arms trading and smuggling of foreign rice have devastated the Nigerian economy and led to the loss of lives etc. how do you go and tell Nigeria to stop?

The importance that the Federal Government attached to safety is made clear in the previous paragraph. Because of this, the federal government may believe that blocking the borders of the country is an efficient way to push the necessary law enforcement institutions in Nigeria to collaborate and reconsider their strategy for combating smuggling. Because of allegations that the government of the Benin Republic violated transit cargo seals at its ports by trans-loading commodities intended for Nigeria and, as a result, enabling smuggling, Nigeria closed its border with the Benin Republic (Abiodun, 2021; Ali, 2019; Okorie and Enwere, 2020). The first respondent indicated:

Benin was primarily responsible for closing Nigeria's border for as long as they did, which prevented trade inside the ECOWAS and across the entire continent.

Owing to its proximity to Nigeria and its position as a transit point for a range of items, the Republic of Benin has been identified as a key smuggling transit route in the West African

region. This is since the Republic of Benin functions as a transit point (Omale et al., 2020; Yoroms, 2010). The third respondent highlighted the following:

They didn't say they were doing it to punish Benin, but they wanted to stop them from bringing guns and allowing Asians to bring their rice into their market when Nigeria. had a programme to support their local farmers to grow rice. I think these are genuine reasons.

Experts believe that the similarities in history and culture of the border communities between Nigeria and Benin are to blame for the growing problem of smuggling between the two countries (Omale et al., 2020). This should not be the case because similar cultural norms and identities beyond border towns should make it possible for deeper regional integration and collaboration among West African governments.

3.2 Implications of Nigeria's border closure on West African Integration

The continuous battle over border closure issues and their impact on the Nigerian economy have heightened concerns regarding trade integration across the continent. This is because all the affected products suffered considerable price rises as a result of the border closures. As a direct result of the closure of the border and the country's social and economic interactions with its neighbours, the consumer price index increased from 13.2 per cent in August 2019 to 14.09 per cent in October 2019, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics. This increase came about as a direct result of the closure of the border.

The third respondent noted that:

Currently, we lack interventions to handle shocks and overcome unforeseen difficulties. Systems don't respond to outside factors. Although we have effective

policies and programs, our reaction to outside shocks is extremely weak, undermining our progress.

As has already been mentioned, the closure also sends a negative message to the nations that are in the surrounding areas. This occurs at a time when the nations of Africa are working to promote regional trade through the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). This agreement seeks to improve Africa's global competitiveness by promoting regional value chains and trade within the continent. Therefore, access to continental markets, industrialization, and innovation will all improve, which will hasten both the advancement of social norms and the expansion of the economy (Cofelice, 2018). In doing so, it violates ECOWAS rules, which call for a unified tariff to be applied to all items that are imported from outside the region. Even if Nigeria were to successfully shut its border by exploiting loopholes in ECOWAS's regulations, this unilateral and self-serving measure would prohibit the two nations from working together in the future or from developing closer economic connections (Isan, 2020).

The first respondent noted that:

Nigeria was able to close its borders under ETLs, but under the AfCFTA, it might be more challenging because member nations could utilize the WTO or the AfCFTA's dispute settlement mechanisms against it. Nigeria may nevertheless shut its borders if it cites national security as the justification.

The Economic Community of West African States' ambitions to develop a unified currency will suffer a serious setback as a result. The shutdown also exemplifies the unforeseen challenges that have been experienced while waiting for the single market that will be established because of the AfCFTA.

In addition, the closure of the border might have a huge influence not just on the politics of the region but also on its security. To combat the Boko Haram insurgency, which has already claimed the lives of over 35,000 people, Nigeria is dependent on the regional military cooperation of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Isan, 2020). The African Union Peace and Security Council have delegated the mission of preserving regional peace and security to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a military alliance comprised of five different countries (PSC). The primary objective of the combined force is to eradicate Boko Haram and any other terrorist organizations operating in the region (Casola, 2020). The multinational army is comprised of more than 8,000 soldiers hailing from each of the five countries (Duruji et al., 2019). Because Nigeria abandons such key partners for economic reasons, these nations may be hesitant to offer Nigeria the assistance it will require in the future to deal with its issues. This is because Nigeria has abandoned such allies in the past. This could make it more difficult for countries in the region to cooperate to build an economy that is sustainable on economic, political, and even security levels.

According to the fourth respondent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Nigeria's decision to close the border steadily damaged businesses and exporters in the sub-region as other nations in the region began to react to Nigeria's decision to block the border. Quoting the respondent directly:

Consequently, a few countries in the ECOWAS region and across Africa retaliated against Nigeria by reducing their exports to the area after the country closed its borders. The economies of both countries have suffered because of the retaliatory measures taken, as exports within the ECOWAS area and to other neighbouring countries on the continent have fallen. As a result of

Nigeria's decision to close its borders, these formerly border-open countries are now disadvantaged.

From the above, it is evident that the ECOWAS free trade agreement, which aims to eliminate barriers to trade between African countries, was affected by the closure of the border. With Nigeria's border closed, progress toward achieving the goals of regional and small intra-continental trade agreements has slowed. Ogunwusi et al. (2019) agree, citing sources from the study to argue that Nigeria can no longer count on the same degree of collaboration it enjoyed before the closure of its borders. Both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) free trade deal and the new African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) are both in jeopardy due to the closure of Nigeria's border, as observed by Olumide et al. (2022). Ogunwusi et al. (2019) concur, citing sources from the study to claim that Nigeria can no longer count on the same degree of collaboration it enjoyed before the closure of its borders because Nigeria has closed its borders. According to Olumide et al. (2022), the closing of Nigeria's border is putting at risk, not just the free trade agreement between members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), but also the newly negotiated African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

3.3 Nigeria's commitment to the ECOWAS Integration

Multiple Nigerian governments and their respective top officials have shown varying degrees of dedication to the ECOWAS's goals. Nigeria's main export to foreign markets is crude oil. But just 10% of Nigeria's oil production can be used by the ECOWAS nations (Aworawo, 2016). This hasn't accounted for nearly any of the trade between Nigeria and ECOWAS since 1999. Only about 6% of Nigeria's total exports (which were primarily oil) were to ECOWAS nations in 2000. Most of the oil was distributed to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Although the main

suppliers were Benin, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire, fewer than 2% of Nigeria's overall imports came from ECOWAS (Aworawo, 2016). The country has come up with a strategy to put an end to the persistent trafficking of banned foods and other kinds of unlawful imports. The smuggling of guns and drugs, the trafficking of humans, cross-border insurgency, and other violations of the ECOWAS Treaty on the movement of commodities and persons pose a significant risk to the safety, stability, and economies of countries like Nigeria. Because Nigeria decided to close its land borders, the country's standing in international law as well as its relationships with its neighbours have suffered.

It was revealed in the interview with the respondents on Nigeria's comment on the ECOWAS integration that Nigeria contributes a lot to keeping ECOWAS alive. Their contributions ranged from financial support to contributions of troops to ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) activities. The interview was about Nigeria's comment on the ECOWAS integration. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has received more financial support from Nigeria than any other member. The monetary assistance that she provides to ECOWAS is distributed as follows: mandated payments, additional voluntary contributions, and direct help to member nations (Osondu, 2015). For Nigeria to maintain its membership in ECOWAS, it is required to pay monetary contributions known as statutory financial contributions. ECOWAS was founded on the principle that all member states would have the same legal standing inside the organization. This means that all member states would have the same legal rights and responsibilities.

The second respondent stated:

Nigeria, the biggest economy with about 50% of the total ECOWAS market share and over 50% of the region's GDP, plays a critical role in advancing the integration agenda of ECOWAS.

The fourth respondent added:

The country hosts three big ECOWAS institutions: the ECOWAS Commission, the Community Court of Justice, and the Community Parliament. Nigeria contributes about 50% of the Community's budget through the Community Levy. Nigeria contributes the most troops to the region's peace-keeping efforts.

The fifth respondent also indicated that:

Nigeria, which has the largest economy in ECOWAS, is crucial to the region. They are the Commission's main funders in addition to being important founders.

As can be seen, Nigeria has shown that she is committed to the integration of ECOWAS, and the rest of the sub-region acknowledges the leadership role that Nigeria is playing even though her economy is struggling. This sentiment was reinforced by Osondu (2015), who said that successive governments in Nigeria had utilised valuable resources to prop up the group at the expense of the Nigerian people and the advancement of the country (Osondu, 2015). Nigeria was the country that contributed a significant amount of the necessary money, even though the majority of ECOMOG's operational expenditures were intended to be funded by the ECOWAS member nations (both human and financial).

3.4 ECOWAS' response to Nigeria's border closure

The closure of Nigeria's borders violated her agreement with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which states that no quotas, customs taxes, or quantity limits may be imposed on trade between member states for a period of 44 years (Onuka and Oroboghae, 2020; Signé and Van der Ven, 2019). The ECOWAS has set as one of its primary

goals the promotion of free trade among African nations. The ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) is the most important vehicle for West African countries' efforts to integrate their markets and trade. Its primary objective is to promote the growth of businesses, industries, and investments so that West African economies can benefit economically from the integration of large markets (Omodunbi et al., 2022). The agreement on agricultural, artisanal, handicraft, and unprocessed products from Member States gave birth to the ETLS in 1979. It is hoped that products falling under this category will be exempt from tariffs as well as other non-trade barriers and that they will be able to freely transit between member states. Both agreements include Nigeria as a member, and the recent closure of the nation's borders exemplifies Nigeria's lack of commitment to preserving cordial relations with the governments of its neighbouring African nations, particularly about commerce (Omodele, 2021).

In reaction to Nigeria's decision to close its land border, the ECOWAS commission began implementing certain new measures. When the African Union was holding its 33rd summit, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established a committee to review the land border closure with Nigeria and report on its impacts on all the countries that were affected by it (Abayomi, 2019). Because the closure of the borders was preventing the West African region from developing into a prosperous, peaceful, and borderless region, the speaker of the ECOWAS parliament urged the Nigerian government to open the borders in September 2019 by the rules established by the organization. During the discussions, several recommendations were made for the government of Nigeria, including those about border trade and a long-term strategy to combat transnational crime and smuggling. (Rodl and Partner, 2019, as cited in Omodele, 2021).

Some respondents, however, concluded that the ECOWAS Commission was limited in its ability to take further action, mostly because of flaws in the ETLS rather than just because the nation concerned was Nigeria. This explained why the ECOWAS didn't take many actions in response to the crisis. The first respondent indicated that:

The ETLS has a framework that describes how complaints should be handled, but it is ineffective. There are ultimately no solutions when specific methods are used, and discussions are held.

The second respondent noted:

We have developed a sanction regime for political and security issues. If we can enforce this, we need to have robust sanctions for economic issues and get the countries to agree to them.

Also, the fourth respondent added:

The ETLS must be reviewed, and it must be done in such a way that those who cause pain must be made to pay for it.

The fourth respondent alluded that:

In any case, even if the ECOWAS was to sanction Nigeria, on what basis were they sanctioning them? As far as I know, the rules spell out what is to be done but cannot be used to sanction Nigeria. Going to the ECOWAS Court is the worst thing that can happen. What else is there to do? The conclusion is that despite having numerous protocols, the ETLS lacks effective dispute settlement mechanisms. The protocols are also a bit weak in terms of sanctions. Again, with Nigeria's calibre, it would have been difficult to sanction.

The ECOWAS works based on consensus; therefore, the high authorities of the ECOWAS decided to resort to mediation and negotiation with all parties concerned. Sanctions are a measure that is taken only as a last option.

The first respondent added that:

The concerns are more important than just how big or strong you are. There was a legitimate cause for what Nigeria did, hence there was no justification for the ECOWAS to even decide to punish Nigeria rather than engage them to find solutions.

The second respondent indicated that Nigeria's status has nothing to do with the responses from the ECOWAS. Quoting the respondent directly:

No. this is because there is no sanction regime, whether small or big. Benin also closed their border. As we speak, Benin is still preventing goods from Togo, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire to cross its territory into Nigeria. Now that Nigeria has opened, Benin has closed. And Benin is one of the smallest.

The third respondent was also of the same opinion:

If it were a smaller member state, I don't think the approach would have changed. There have been similar situations involving smaller states and the ECOWAS used the approach of mediation. In 2016, Senegal closed all its borders with the Gambia. The ECOWAS sent a fact-finding mission to the 2 countries and held discussions with them on the matter. The two countries eventually resolved their differences, and the borders were re-opened.

The fifth respondent added:

According to them, the smuggling of unwanted goods into their market has affected their local industries. I wouldn't say the border closure was Nigeria taking advantage of its might because every country would want to maximise their opportunities as much as possible and ensure that its best interest is served. If other nations had been in Nigeria's position, they undoubtedly would have taken similar measures to safeguard their markets. Ghana's GIPC Act, which reserves specific economic activity solely for Ghanaians, is an excellent example.

The sixth respondent also added that Nigeria was not sanctioned because of the status of the country. Quoting the respondent directly:

This is because the ECOWAS lacks a thorough dispute resolution framework for trade conflicts, and most problems are resolved through diplomatic channels. For instance, a Ghanaian task team was established to travel to Nigeria in 2019 when Nigeria closed its border to talk with their Nigerian counterparts to find a peaceful resolution to the issue.”

The seventh respondent added:

The ECOWAS may not be able to sanction Nigeria because of its market size. However, the ECOWAS Court of Justice has expressed displeasure at member states' non-compliance with its judgments and orders and has drawn up a list of sanctions for defaulters.

The first respondent also added that:

No, because there isn't a robust dispute resolution process or sanctions system.

When it comes to Benin's non-compliance with the ETLS Protocol, the

ECOWAS is still unable to resolve the situation. The task force team led by H.E.

Dr Ibn Chambas was the furthest they got, and it did not accomplish much

beyond bringing the parties together to try to find a solution.

From the above comments from the respondents, the challenges with ETLS played a role in how the ECOWAS Commission reacted to the closure of the Nigerian border. The ETLS may have been a helpful instrument for boosting commerce across the region, but because it does not have any supporting procedures, its impact has been reduced. A lack of economic diversification and complementarity across Member States, as well as inadequate trade-related infrastructure, information, and financing, as well as an appropriate system for settling disputes, are all problems that need to be addressed. This assertion is supported by research conducted by Fajana (2018), which demonstrates that the absence of a legal framework for the resolution of disputes and the enforcement of rights and responsibilities by FTA agreements and protocols is to blame for the problem. According to Gupta (2015)'s argument, the fact that the trade liberalization program is not operationalized on a country-by-country basis also accounts for the low level of intraregional trade and the difficulties that come along with it in the ECOWAS area.

3.5 Alternate measures Nigeria could have adopted instead of the closure of the border

Given how important it is to put a halt to any unlawful activity that may occur on the nation's borders, the question of whether the border should be closed has frequently been brought up in the debate. The government should take several measures to cut down on smuggling and boost

domestic capacity to boost national productivity. These measures include implementing land reforms, expanding access to micro and microcredit for entrepreneurs, increasing the availability of affordable and reliable electricity, and incentivizing private sector investments.

The first respondent indicated that:

The issue boils down to the issue with the control system of Nigeria itself. They suspect people are smuggling things that are not classified. The solution is to strengthen their border checks. The goods pass through the border and unapproved routes and don't fly. Make it strict. If you catch anybody, deal with them. So, the weakness in the system usually leads to such inefficient solutions. Instead of closing the border, they could have strengthened their system by using electronic surveillance systems, increasing customs officials at the border etc. That way, you can fish out about 5% smuggling into your country and allow the 95% to continue to trade. But if you block your border, you block 100%. It does not make sense.

According to the responses, there is a need for Nigeria to enhance its institutional framework so that it can better enable commerce with the rest of the world. This would need to address concerns such as customs officers being corrupt or slack about following trade procedures, installing tools such as border scanners, and modernizing port infrastructure to make it easy to trade across maritime boundaries (Abegunde and Fabiyi, 2020). A more effective ability to coordinate with one's neighbours and at one's operational land borders is made feasible by an integrated framework. Fourth also respondent added:

From the origin, talking to the country to ensure that illegal goods do not cross their border. You can sit in Benin customs or whichever country's customs and ensure the same.

The third respondent indicated that:

Transnational crime on the Nigerian Beninese border has been affected by the shifting trends in the application of Afrocentrism, the policy of good neighbourliness, and the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons and products. To stem the tide of transnational crime along the Nigerian-Benin border, tough foreign policy must be implemented, and strong border administration is maintained.

From the above, Nigeria's existing system of closed borders is insufficient. Isah (2020) concurred with this assertion and added that when constructing domestic infrastructure, it is best to keep costs to the public and deterioration of trade relations with neighbours to a minimum. He noted that this is especially important to keep in mind when attempting to maximize efficiency. Instead of advocating for the closing of Nigeria's borders, he called for the harmonization of tariffs across West Africa. He said that this would help diminish the incentives for smuggling, which would be beneficial. According to his point of view, what is required is the implementation of a regional economic policy that makes use of the comparative advantages held by each country to boost manufacturing production and encourage commerce within the region (Isah, 2020). Abiodun (2021) mentioned that Nigeria and other African states need to share ideas and methods to battle transnational crime and illegal migration across their territory. He said this in the context of fighting illegal migration. To effectively implement an interdiction strategy, it is necessary to make a concentrated and methodical effort to prevent illegal trafficking across Nigeria's numerous open borders.

3.6 Conclusion

Nigeria is a major participant in West Africa due to its massive population (about 202 million) and young age demographic (one of the largest in the world). Nigeria has lived in harmony with her neighbours and fostered regional and global participation through trade, political, and economic cooperation in the West African area and beyond. Border disputes, fraudulent trafficking of goods, the rise of counterfeiting, and competition for cheaper foreign items are all ills that the everyday economic and political history of trade deals between Nigeria and its neighbours. Analysis of the data from respondents' interviews indicates that Nigeria closed its border partly due to security and economic-related issues, the federal government may view closing the country's borders as an efficient tool to push the necessary law enforcement agencies to coordinate and re-strategize their fight against smuggling in Nigeria. The ECOWAS commission decided to resort to mediation and negotiation with all parties concerned instead of sanctions. The closure sends a bad message to neighbouring countries at a time when African nations are striving to increase regional commerce through the implementation of the African Continent Free Trade Area Agreement (AFCFTA). The closure of the border may also have far-reaching consequences for the politics and security of the surrounding area as the country partly relies on regional military cooperation with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to combat the Boko Haram insurgency. Despite having legitimate reasons for closing the border, Nigeria could have resorted to other means to resolve the fundamentals that led to the decision to close its borders. By addressing issues like customs personnel being corrupt or lax about enforcing trade protocol, implementing tools like border scanners, and modernising port infrastructure to make it simpler to trade across maritime borders.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings of the research, as well as the conclusions, lessons learned, obstacles faced, and some recommendations for policymakers about regional integration within the West African sub-region. The conclusions of the research are based on the interviews that were conducted, and they include some observations and recommendations made from the research.

4.1 Summary of Findings

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects that Nigeria's closure of its borders had on regional integration, and more particularly, the effects that it had on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). To accomplish this goal, a study was conducted to analyse the implications of Nigeria's border closure on West African Integration. Additionally, the study investigated Nigeria's commitment to the ECOWAS Integration. Furthermore, the ECOWAS' reaction to Nigeria's decision to close its border was analysed, and finally, other actions that Nigeria could have taken in place of closing the border were researched. The summarised and notable findings of the study are shown here. These findings are based on interviews with respondents and secondary data retrieved from the existing body of research.

- **Implications of Nigeria's border closure on West African Integration**

The study found that the ECOWAS free trade agreement, which strives to eliminate barriers to trade between African countries, was harmed by the closure of the border. This was one of the implications of the border closure. As a result of the closure of Nigeria's border, there has been

a slowdown in the progress made toward accomplishing the objectives of many regional and smaller intracontinental trade agreements. The respondents were unanimous in their assessment that the free trade arrangement between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the new African Continental Free Trade Agreement was in peril as a direct result of Nigeria's decision to close its border.

- **Nigeria's commitment to the ECOWAS Integration**

Multiple Nigerian governments and their respective top officials have shown varying degrees of dedication to the ECOWAS's goals. It was revealed that Nigeria contributes a lot to keeping the ECOWAS alive, more than any other member, Nigeria has provided financial support to the ECOWAS. From hosting some key institutions of the ECOWAS Commission to supporting the majority of the ECOMOG's operating costs that were supposed to be covered by the ECOWAS member states, it was Nigeria that provided a lot of the necessary resources (both human and financial). Despite the country's struggling economy, the rest of the subregion acknowledges the leadership role that Nigeria is playing as a result of her shown commitment to the ECOWAS integration process.

- **ECOWAS' response to Nigeria's border closure**

The closure of Nigeria's borders was a violation of her agreement with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which states that member states will not impose quotas, customs duties, or quantitative limits on trade with one another. It was disclosed that in response to the closure of the border, the ECOWAS Commission engaged in negotiation and attempted to develop a consensus to convince Nigeria to open its border. The Commission established a committee to look into the closing of the land border with Nigeria and to report on its impacts on all of the countries that were affected by it. The speaker of the ECOWAS

parliament urged the Nigerian government to abide by the organization's rules by opening the borders. Due to the deficiencies in the ETLS, the respondents were unanimous in their belief that the ECOWAS could not impose sanctions. They went on to say that the ETLS would have been a helpful instrument for promoting commerce within the ECOWAS area, but the fact that it does not have any supporting procedures has made its impact less significant. A lack of economic diversification and complementarity among the Member States, as well as inadequate trade-related infrastructure, information, and financing, as well as an appropriate framework for addressing disputes, are some of the issues that plague the ETLS.

- **Alternate measures Nigeria could have adopted instead of the closure of the border**

Given how important it is to put a halt to any unlawful activity that may occur on the nation's borders, the question of whether to close the border has been discussed rather frequently. The respondent disclosed that instead of Nigeria closing their border, they could have resorted to other available means to reduce smuggling and increase domestic capacity for the country's increased national productivity, the government should take several steps, such as implementing land reforms, expanding access to micro and macro-credit for entrepreneurs, increasing the availability of affordable and reliable electricity, and incentivizing private sector investment. In addition, the respondent revealed that the government should take several steps, such as increasing the availability of affordable and reliable electricity. There is room for improvement in Nigeria's institutional structure, which would allow the country to better facilitate trade with the rest of the world. This would need to address concerns such as customs officers being corrupt or slack about following trade procedures, installing tools such as border scanners, and modernizing port infrastructure to make it easy to trade across maritime boundaries.

4.2 Conclusions

It is clear from what has been stated above that the closing of Nigeria's border has slowed down the progress that has been made toward reaching the aims of regional and intra-continental trade accords. The closure of Nigeria's border from 2019 to 2020 had a palpable impact on the progress towards achieving the objectives set forth in various trade accords. The border closure posed a substantial challenge to the principles of regional integration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The disruption in intra-regional trade threatened the ideals underpinning ECOWAS's efforts to promote economic cooperation and integration among member states. The closure of Nigeria's border also cast a shadow on the nascent African Continental Free Trade Agreement, jeopardizing its aspirations for a unified African market. Nigeria's pivotal role in the AfCFTA discussions rendered its border closure a matter of continental significance. This study revealed the limitations of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the ECOWAS Commission's mechanisms in addressing such border closures. The inability to enforce sanctions and the lack of robust dispute resolution mechanisms impeded the ECOWAS Commission's response. It is evident that while Nigeria's commitment to ECOWAS integration is recognized, the decision to close its borders may not have been the most conducive approach. Alternative, a more pragmatic solutions could have been explored to address Nigeria's concerns while preserving regional and intra-continental trade dynamics.

4.3 Recommendations

The study puts forward the following recommendations:

1. **Enhanced Technological Surveillance:** To address the challenges of border control failures, countries should invest in modern technology by deploying electronic surveillance equipment at various checkpoints. This technology should be integrated

into a comprehensive border control strategy, encompassing national border control agencies, neighbouring countries, and relevant international organizations. To ensure the preservation of national interests, governments should seek both multilateral and bilateral collaborations with their counterparts.

2. **Adoption of Coordinated Border Management (CBM):** In lieu of resorting to periodic border closures, nations should adopt effective border management strategies. One such approach is the implementation of the Coordinated Border Management (CBM) program, developed jointly by the World Bank and the World Customs Organization. This approach fosters efficient border control, monitoring, and protection while facilitating international and regional integration.

3. **ECOWAS Outreach Initiatives:** The Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should embark on comprehensive outreach initiatives. These initiatives should focus on educating member states about the benefits of regional market integration and cultivating strong advocates for regional cooperation. The 'how' of these initiatives should involve information campaigns, stakeholder engagement, and educational programs.

4. **Transparent Product Eligibility Determination:** To rebuild trust among member states, ECOWAS should establish a transparent and inclusive framework for determining product eligibility and awarding Certificates of Origin under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). This process should involve clear criteria, stakeholder consultation, and regular reviews.

5. **Monitoring and Enforcement Framework:** The Commission should develop a robust framework for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the ETLS. This framework should also include mechanisms for mediating disputes, enforcing agreements, and providing remedies for non-compliance with ETLS standards. The 'how' aspect of this framework should encompass the establishment of specialized committees, dispute resolution mechanisms, and reporting mechanisms.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

University of Ghana

Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy

The purpose of this interview is to help me collect data to help with my research, "The 2019 Nigerian Border Closure and its Implications on West African Regional Integration".

You have been selected because of your expertise and knowledgeable in the field of regional integration on the African continent. This interview is expected to last for 30-45 minutes depending on your time or schedule. The expectation at the end of the interview is to help assess the implications Nigeria's border closure had on regional integration, specifically the implications on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Interview Guide

1. How well have we done with the movement of goods and services in West Africa?
2. The Abuja Treaty created the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the ECOWAS being one. Would ECOWAS achieve full integration by 2034?
3. Integration rests on the shoulders of some big players. In ECOWAS, Nigeria is the hegemon. How has Nigeria accelerated ECOWAS integration?
4. Nigeria closed its borders in 2019, affecting trade and movement. Is Nigeria taking advantage of its hegemony in ECOWAS?
5. States are supposed to be united under an Integration system. In your view, does ECOWAS, via its policies, promote unity among its members?
6. Integration works with the idea of border-lessness, but borders remain an obstruction to integration through the Nigerian example, what can ECOWAS do?
7. What could be the possible reasons why ECOWAS could not sanction Nigeria?
8. If it were a smaller State, would ECOWAS have reacted?
9. Are the laws too lax in ECOWAS?

Appendix B

Profile of Respondent

First respondent – 1st Official from the Ministry of Trade and Industry

Second respondent – 1st Official from the ECOWAS Commission

Third respondent - 2nd Official from the ECOWAS Commission

Fourth respondent – Official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

Fifth respondent – 2nd Official from the Ministry of Trade and Industry

Sixth respondent - Official from the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority

Seventh Respondent – 3rd Official from the Ministry of Trade and Industry

