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CROSS-BORDER TRADE POLICIES AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT: *The creation of artificial boundaries by colonialist generates desire for cross-border trade as potential instrument for economic integration and development in West Africa. There appears, however, contradictions in states' policies in Africa which tend to overlook the inviolable boundaries compelling the need for economic interaction across the border for economic development. Paradoxically, neighboring states in Africa, more often than not, capitalize on the trade differences along the border to restrict economic interaction rather than promoting it. Nigeria has recently found itself in the dilemma of either outright trade protection for her economy or liberalizing its trade in the midst of smuggling-induced neighboring countries. Consequently on August 19,2019 President Muhammadu Buhari closed Nigeria's borders with Benin and Niger, declaring that the time had come to end rampant smuggling from those countries. This paper offers a critique of Nigeria's Border trade policies over the years. The paper intends to challenge the predominant protectionist tendencies among the policy makers in the country. It argued that policy makers in Nigeria should first take measures to refurbish our national economy and then engage all the stakeholders in regional decision making and implementation mechanisms for proper regional trade policies. This will go a long way in providing a framework for intra-regional trade so that the regional environment will encourage more of Nigeria's trade with its ECOWAS neighbours vis-à-vis sustainable economic growth in the region. If ECOWAS is to succeed in achieving sustainable development in the region, then Nigeria will be the biggest beneficiary; hence, her need to sacrifice more.*

KEYWORDS: Cross-Border Trade, Policies, Sustainable Economic, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Upon all that a country possesses (both human and material resources), it must relate with other countries, as no country will survive in isolation. This necessitates the involvement of countries in international trade. Nigeria, Benin and Niger Republic are neighboring countries located in the West African sub-region. The trade between these countries could be traced back to the Trans-Saharan trade since the medieval period. The countries benefit from each other economically. The trade network is built mainly on agricultural produce, domestic utilities and other goods.

The relationship between Nigeria, Niger and Benin has its genesis in the Trans-Saharan trade that led to the formation of important markets such as the Damagran market in Niger Republic and Kano market in Nigeria. This means there were trade relations between what is today known as Nigeria and the Republic of Niger as well as Benin long before the influx of the colonialists. Before the creation of Nigeria, Niger and Benin international boundaries by colonialists, border crossing was not difficult. However, due to colonial rule and the subsequent creation of sovereign states, it became extremely difficult to cross the border. The citizens of the three states can no longer cross the border freely, as they used to do during the pre-colonial era. However, due to difficulties associated with formalities of border crossing, people are forced to resort to informal means in order to engage in social and commercial activities. Herein lays the rationale for the growth and development of informal economic relations among Kamba-Gaya and Mallanville border communities. Other factors that led to the emergence of informal trade relations are: the socio-cultural and anthropological relationship or ties and the bond of trust between the ethnic groups that spread across the sub-region. Other factors that facilitate the conduct of informal trade between Nigeria, Niger and Benin include the shared religious belief (Islam), common interest, involvement of political activities across the border, the acceptability of naira and convertibility of CFA Franc for settling trade transactions.

However, this relation is much more within the framework of the desire of the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) to promote the economic and social development among the member states as well as the integration of their economies with a view to achieving an increased measure of self-sufficiency and sustenance. The sub-regional organization has given the merchants and traders from both countries the opportunity to freely engage in commercial activities. The ECOWAS protocol also allows free movement of goods and services into the member countries, the essence of which is to facilitate easy conduct of the trade. The reality, however, is different as the security personnel at the border are not only corrupt, but can easily abuse their authority to intimidate the common man or extort money from them.

It is important to stress that informal cross-border trade is a well-organized business in which highly placed citizens within the three states are involved. It thrives just because of the nature of the boundary administration on both sides of the international border as well as the nature of manufactured items such as drugs, petroleum products, second hand vehicles and spare parts which constitute the major trade items that are smuggled across the border on a daily basis. An appreciable percentage of these items of trade pass through numerous bush paths at night. Indeed, the exact quantity of these goods cannot be ascertained because it is not recorded officially, since the operation of the trade usually bypasses the law enforcement agents at night before getting to their destination.

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Overview of Nigeria's Border Trade Policies

The two most important epochs that have profound impacts on cross-border trade networks in the region during the period are the oil boom in Nigeria and Structural Adjustment Programs in the sub-region. The oil boom of the 1970s increased the Federal Government revenue. The increase in the country's revenue as a result of the boom has pushed up the prices in Nigeria, stimulating sales from the neighboring countries. During the same period, trade between Nigeria and other neighboring countries intensified. These dynamics became even stronger after Structural Adjustment Programs had been put in place. Although SAP reduced market distortions, they ended up making life precarious for West African populations and caused people to resort increasingly to products from cross-border informal trade. According to one estimate, informal activity accounts for up to 64 percent of Nigeria's GDP as a result of obstacles that impede trading through formal channels (Golub, 2012: 196). Furthermore, unlike other markets that primarily owe their importance to the size and qualifications of their labor pool, border markets are dependent on the business opportunities offered by their peripheral location which further encourage informal trading activities.

A streamline of argument developed over the years is that informal cross-border trade has not only affected the official economic system but also development in various African states. Nigeria as the strongest economy in West Africa is the worst hit by the economic uncertainties in the region. With the current economic difficulties in most of the African countries, epitomized by global oil price crash in 2015, it has become very important for a developing country like Nigeria to tackle the menace of informal sector trade which denies them revenue since very little import duties are paid on the massive flow of goods into and outside the country. According to the study conducted by Chatham Royal Institute, Nigeria's economic position in the region is substantial. The report further states that:

> The region's economies are still expanding, with 4 per cent growth in real GDP projected for 2015, despite the decline in international prices for the oil, minerals and tropical crops that West Africa sells to the world. And for no country are these imperatives greater than for Nigeria, which is not only Africa's largest economy, accounting for well over half the GDP of ECOWAS, but also the most populous sub-Saharan country. It is the unmistakable giant in this regional narrative, a nation with extraordinary potential, opportunity and transformative capacity (Chatham Royal Institute, 2015, p. 1).

With a domestic market of about 180 million people and a manufacturing base far outstripping that of any neighbour, Nigeria has the scale and weight to become the engine of trade growth across the entire region. Despite the reduction in personal spending power of Nigerian consumers, the country already generates vast cross-border trade involving networks of sophisticated activity across a diverse range of commodities. Similarly, because of their role in economic development and especially as conduits for illegal trade, border markets are stimulating debate on the role of state policies in their growth.

While cross-border studies have tended to concentrate on the growth of the trade over the years, they provide a conceptual framework and a wealth of empirical insights which open new possibilities for a clearer understanding of the role of border markets in the economy of developing countries. Cross-border trade had been categorized in the literature into two types: namely the formal/official and informal/unofficial (Balami, 2011, p. 85). The formal or official cross-border trade is documented in government records as regards its scope, route, volume

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and other important variables of the trade. It serves as a source of revenue; there are also national trade policies that provide the framework that regulate the trading activities or transactions (OECD, 2008). The informal cross-border trade, on the other hand, is that aspect of the trade in goods that were exchanged across the borders either by bypassing the official customs checks and recording points or passing through these customs points while ensuring goods are under–valued, mis-specified or unrecorded (Meagher, 2008).

There has been a significant increase in cross-border trade in recent years particularly in manufactured and petroleum products in West Africa (Hashim & Meagher, 1999; OECD, 2007; Meagher, 2008). With the trade liberalization reforms in Nigeria, local currencies were devalued and consequently, consumer goods became too expensive for most of Nigerians. This led to the rise of poverty profile in the country and greater participation in the informal cross-border trade. The country's poverty profile has risen over the years from 27.2 per cent in 1980 to 65 per cent in 1996 (UNDP, 2009). The country's north-west zone comes second to north-east in the poverty figures rate. The north-west zone had 37.7 in 1980, 52.1 in 1985, 36.5 in 1992, 77.2 in 1996 and 71.2 per cent in 2004 (Ibid). By these statistics, the zone falls within the United Nations definition for a Least Developed Country (LDC), although the nation itself is classified as Low Income Country (LIC).

This harsh economic condition pushed people to engage in smuggling as a panacea to economic insecurity. The country's high import tariffs and import prohibitions have also contributed significantly in impeding legal trade and providing incentives for smuggling across the country's borders. Nigeria heavily protects some of its products especially those facing strong competition. In fact, the country's import barrier was categorized as among the highest in the world (IMF, 2005; WTO, 2005; USAID, 2014). Research conducted by Africa Development Bank (2012) also indicates that the cost of doing business in Africa is the highest in the world (Terravarinton & Raballand, 2009). As a result of Nigeria's tariff protection policies especially in the 1990s, some of her neighbors, namely Benin and Niger began to operate as "entrepot states" for products that are subject to import bans or highly taxed in Nigeria. Related to the above is the harassment meted on the people crossing the border; according to a study conducted in 2010, out of twenty-five roadblocks mounted at the Nigeria-Benin border area within 10 kilometer radius border crossing point, only five are legal while the remaining twenty are illegal (USAID, 2010).

Others look at the growth of the new political, social and economic classes and structure as catalysts for the transformation of cross-border trade in the region (Hashim & Meagher, 1999). Abdoul and Marie (2007) identify the underlying factors of economic and demographic forces that sustained trade relations between the countries in the sub-region. According to their study, the development of trade relations between southern Niger and northern Nigeria stems from two major activities: trade in local products and transit. The flow of goods from Niger to Nigeria included commodities and manufactured goods from Lomé and Cotonou. The increase in the traded goods, especially the manufactured goods, has been also confirmed by the study carried out by SWAC/UNICEF in 2006. The volume of the trade between Nigeria and her neighbors has increased since the 1990s (OECD, 2001). Nigeria becomes a destination market for goods imported into the region from the world market. Similarly, research conducted by Walther, Tenuke and Kuepie (2012) discovered that a substantial percentage of imports to Niger from the world market ended in Nigeria unrecorded.

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In fact, the literature that deals with the growth of cross-border trade in West Africa is generally divided into three parts each addressing the question of why this kind of trade persists especially amidst liberalization policies. The first saw cross-border trade as a tool for economic protest by the common citizens of the countries concerned (Oculli,. 1996). These common citizens, it is argued, are those who are excluded by post-colonial elites in Africa from benefiting from their corrupt "politics of the belly", by passing the state and denying it an avenue for collecting transaction taxes (Oculi, 1996; Balami, 2003). The second views it as a tool of "integration from below" by non-state actors where political leaders have failed to achieve genuine economic and political integration in Africa despite the existence of formal regional associations from the top (Egg & Igue, 1993; Hashim & Meagher, 1999). Walther (2014) argues that the function of trade networks is constrained by the historical origin of the traders engaged in cross-border activities. His finding reveals that in those markets where trade has followed the recent liberalization of commerce and where most of the traders are from outside the region, national borders are likely to exert greater influence than in those regions where trade has developed since pre-colonial without major disruptions (Walther, 2014). The third opinion explains the growth of cross-border trade in the context of an expression of resilient pre-colonial African solidarity which had survived artificial and divisive colonial boundaries and political walls of balkanization (Asiwaju, 1989; Barkindo, 1989; Asiwaju, 2003; Egg & Igue, 1995). This view involves a shift of focus from the two above to a more empirical concern with the history, organization and commodity composition of cross-border trading activities. This perspective has also highlighted the critical role of a number of structural features of cross-border trade which would not necessarily be eliminated by liberalization policies.

The approach in these studies is now offering a new perspective in understanding the role of borders in the field of economic development (Anderson, 2007). Despite being considered artificial obstacles generated by colonization, a popular perspective of the colonized, borders are now seen as avenues of new opportunities for many economic actors who benefit from the disparities in economic policies of the neighboring countries. The "state" is perceived by the border actors as a stumbling block to their economic interests. They are therefore involved in dialogue and de facto cooperation with their counterparts working on the other side of the border to circumvent state regulations. The point here is that even if local border actors are united by a common historical tie and anthropological form of relations, they still remain separated by official languages, currencies, and distinct laws and regulations. As a result, the sort of trading activities in these border markets remains very much in the main at unofficial level and provide an intriguing example of bottom-up regionalization based on intense historical legacies. Hence, according to Hissen (1981), 'border areas' or 'borderlands' are sub-national areas whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to international boundaries. This makes them serve not really as boundaries, but as an inter-state pathway, a conduit, an incentive for the movement of goods and people (Asiwaju, 2003). Similarly, the socio-cultural and anthropological relationship or ties and the bond of trust between the same ethnic groups that spread across borders further negate the assumed function of the boundary. The implication of this to the border inhabitants was that they traded among themselves without any restriction. Attempts to enforce restrictions more often than not failed and even triggered more informal crossings of goods and persons. This further demonstrates the artificiality of the arbitrary boundary demarcation, and further points out that the organic link between the border communities in Africa was not destroyed by the international boundary. It can be therefore argued that, border markets consolidated the functions of

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boundaries as economic gateways that are very difficult for the state to control. The attempt to enforce strict border control, most of the time, leads to an increase in informal cross-border trade or smuggling. The next section discusses the role of border markets as conduits of smuggling activities in Nigeria.

Nigeria and the Regional Dimension of Border Closure

The creation of artificial boundaries by colonialists generates desire for cross-border trade as a potential instrument for economic integration and development in West Africa. There appears, however, contradictions in states' policies in Africa which tend to overlook the inviolable boundaries compelling the need for economic interaction across the border for economic development. Paradoxically, neighboring states in Africa, more often than not, capitalize on the trade differences along the border to restrict economic interaction rather than promoting it. Nigeria has recently found itself in the dilemma of either outright trade protection for her economy or liberalizing its trade in the midst of smuggling-induced neighboring countries. Consequently, on August 19, 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari closed Nigeria's borders to Benin and Niger, declaring that the time had come to end rampant smuggling from those countries. Economically speaking, both Benin and Niger's economy are dependent on Nigeria for their survival. According to Comptroller General of the Nigeria Customs Service, Hameed Ali, "the borders will remain closed until our neighbors control what goes through the borders and comply with the laws." (http://pmnewsnigeria.com/2019/09/26,)There were mixed reactions on the issue of border closure. While some applaud the government decision, others see unilateral border closure as an action that goes against all commercial and freedom of movement treaties signed under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Some further argued that the action cast a shadow over a historic free-trade agreement, signed by 54 out of 55 African countries that reached a key operational threshold just five weeks earlier. Nigeria officially operates 84 border control posts at the key border crossing points on main roads. However, these official border control posts are dwarfed in number by over 1,499 illegal or unauthorised routes in and out of the country. The likely effects of the border closure by Nigeria can lead to sharp but temporary drops in the re-export trade but also increase in smuggling across these illegal routes.

In addition to the above, the rise of poverty profile in the country over the years has contributed to greater participation in the informal/illegal cross-border trade. These economic difficulties pushed people to engage in smuggling as a panacea to economic insecurity. The country's high import tariffs and import prohibitions over the years have also contributed significantly in impeding legal trade and providing incentives for smuggling across the country's borders. Nigeria heavily protects some of its products especially those facing strong competition. In fact, the country's import barrier is among the highest in the world. As a result of Nigeria's tariff protection policies, especially in the 1990s, some of her neighbors namely Benin and Niger began to operate as "entrepot and transit" States respectively for products that are subject to import bans or highly taxed in Nigeria.

Impact of Border Closure

Cross-border trade between Nigeria and her ECOWAS neighbours has not been a regulated trade, but has facilitated the movement of industrial goods to countries of the ECOWAS sub-region (Golub, 2012; Walther, 2014). Some of the borderland markets are periodic in their operations and attract many traders from the border and hinterland communities (Usman & Sama'ila, 2019). Majority of the borderland communities have close cultural and historical

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links to each other. The markets provide the communities with vast opportunities for economic or commercial exchanges and a forum to discuss peculiar issues that are important to the development of cultural practices and traditions on both divides of the border. Some of the important and notable markets are mainly located on the side of the Nigerian border and they include Maigatari, Zangon Daura, Jibia, Illela, Kamba and a host of others.

Most of the essential manufactures originate from Nigeria being the most industrialized and economically strong member of ECOWAS. Nigerian products have ready markets whenever traders take them to the border markets and others in the interior of Niger republic. Local products feature prominently in the border markets hence supplies of livestock and legumes from Niger republic are brought to the markets destined for the interior of Nigeria. The presence of traders of diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious affiliation gives the border markets their international outlook. Domestically, the closure of the borders led to harsh economic conditions for Nigerian communities at the frontiers. The banning of certain commodities from cross-border trade, such as petroleum products 20 km away from the border and rice, led to the increase in the price of goods, food items, and transport fare. Cross-border restriction has also affected the economy of communities on the side of the Nigerian border. Many of these communities sourced their income from formal and informal trade and other commercial activities carried out by the importers and exporters at the borders. Furthermore, social interaction has also been affected by border closure because people are restricted from crossing the boundary to visit their relatives on the other side of the divide, particularly the Niger republic which is a landlocked country, which can only be entered by air or land border.

In Nigeria, the border closure has affected import and export businesses in Nigeria, with dire consequences for food security and employment in the country. With regards to food security management, one of the most intense West African trade corridors, the cross-border corridor from Kano in northern Nigeria to Maradi in southern Niger passing through Katsina, has been included in the cross-border integration process implemented by the ECOWAS Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP) (Cross Border Diaries, 2008). This portrays the impact of the border between Niger Republic and Nigeria; this further implies that the border closure by the Nigeria's government has dual effects for Nigeria and for the neighbouring countries. Most of the border communities and Nigerians who are into cross-border commerce were into deep economic crises since the closure of the border in August, 2019. Import and export were strictly through seaports and airports which only billionaires can afford. Apart from economic impact, the closure of the border has enabled the border security personnel to concentrate on the movement of people via seaports and airport to check the movement of illegal weapons and terrorists in the region.

The border closure which has been imposed by the government before the COVID-19 has been officially justified on the basis of the ECOWAS protocol and sovereign national (economic) interest. However, border closure, according to some analysts, violates the provision of ECOWAS protocol on free trade. The policy has virtually been economically harmful to Nigeria's neighbours especially Benin and Niger Republics (BBC Hausa, 2020). The irony of the border closure and later the lockdown have together added to the food crisis in Nigeria because the agricultural sector has not been able to meet the food needs of the country. Food items like rice, vegetable oil, fish, *garri* (mashed dry cassava), maize, millet and sorghum and other popular food varieties are virtually out of reach for many families. People are frustrated by soaring inflation of food prices which keeps increasing by the day, which forces many families to go hungry. It is reported that in July, inflation related to the prices of food stands at

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30% (AIT, 2020). Lack of cash or savings in banks is very common among the poor which makes it difficult to buy food under the harsh restriction of movement because of border closure and COVID-19.

Between 2007 to the present, deposits in Nigerian banks, according Soludo (2020), have drastically reduced from an average of $2,500 to $1,300 which he attributed to depreciation of the Naira, the national currency (AIT, 2020). There were obvious mixed reactions on the issue of border closure. While some applaud government decisions on the basis of economic and security crises, others see unilateral border closure as an action that goes against all commercial treaties signed under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Some further argue that the action casts a shadow over a historic free-trade agreement, signed by 54 African countries that reached a key operational threshold just five weeks earlier. Nigeria's border closure has done little to tame the activities of bandits who operate freely across the borders of the two countries. Cattle rustling, kidnapping and other related trans-border crimes appeared to have increased significantly between May, 2019 and June, 2020.

It might also be worth mentioning that there has been an increase in the activities of Boko Haram terrorist group, banditry and other criminal activities in recent times around the country, despite the closure of Nigeria's land borders. This brings to question the security merit of the border closure, while it should spark a more holistic conversation on border control measures, taking into cognizance the endless informal border entry points across the country, where smuggling still thrives. We can perhaps come to a reasonable conclusion that the land border closure policy is not a sustainable measure for economic growth; neither does it solve the adduced problems of insecurity in the medium and long terms (Premium Times, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the existing social, economic and political problems in Africa. The pandemic has complicated the social and economic predicaments of many countries across the globe. COVID-19 border policies have further complicated problems for African cross-border trade. Border closure in many countries in West Africa has interrupted progress towards economic integration. Most border closures have been imposed with little knowledge of the present reality of some aspects of cross-border trade. For instance, border restrictions on travel can be particularly costly for livestock producers practicing nomadic systems - seasonally moving livestock between grazing grounds. This occurs between Sahelian countries including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria (IFPRI, 2020). Beyond their immediate economic costs, these measures threaten the basic mode of operation of pastoral agriculture.

Similarly, the introduction of exceptional measures on border closure provides a breeding ground for the abuse of power. In many border areas of Nigeria-Niger, it is a common practice for law enforcement officials to set up checkpoints along trade corridors to collect bribes (Field Trip, 2020). As recent measures have slowed down road transport in West Africa, this predatory behavior has increased in intensity. Furthermore, the report from IFPRI (2020) indicates that most of these measures were imposed with little warning, taking local populations by surprise and leaving them to contend with the fallout. With informal trade interrupted, many people have had little opportunity to find alternative livelihoods. For many families, the absence of income for even several consecutive days can have devastating effects on poverty thereby creating room for banditry (Oral Interviews, 2020).

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The vast majority of the population in Nigeria's North-West lives in abject poverty with more than 60 per cent living below one US Dollar per day without easy access to health services and facilities (Africafocus, 2020). Nigeria's border closure and the COVID-19 lockdown have contributed to the upsurge of banditry in Nigeria's north-west. Cutting down the major source of people's income must have increased the chances of participating in criminal activities such as banditry. Chukwuma Soludo, a former governor of Nigeria's apex bank, was one of the voices who put up strong arguments against the imposition of lockdown in Africa because of its counterproductive effects on the economy. Lockdown 'template' was adopted from the West which consists of 'a coterie of defensive measures' some of them include border closure, opening of isolation centres, imposing 'stay at home' orders or lockdown, social distancing, introduction of welfare package in form of palliatives for the vulnerable people; and a stimulus package to cushion the effects of the pandemic on the economy (Soludo, 2020:2).

In Nigeria and indeed in large parts of Africa, it is impossible to determine the length of time required for lockdown to be effective checking the spread of COVID-19. Almost 80% of the population depends on income generated on daily toil for sustenance or what is called from 'hand to mouth'. Thus, prolonged lockdown only created opportunities for extortion by security officials of the violators of lockdown orders, especially for traders along the borders (Usman, 2020). Furthermore, the impact of lockdowns in most of the regional and border markets between Nigeria and Niger had counterproductive effects because of some peculiarities of the socio-economic activities across the two countries. Petty traders, commercial drivers for urban and rural transport, artisans, the small-holder farmers were hard hit by the lockdowns. The lockdowns have badly affected the supply of manufactured products to the markets along the border areas. During the peak period of the lockdown, the rainy season, farming on the lowland was used for the cultivation of some cereals and vegetables in the northern part of Nigeria and the neighbouring areas of Niger Republic. While food supplies to the border areas of Niger were not completely stopped, its transportation into the remote areas was not all that easy because of insecurity along the border perpetrated by the bandits in the midst of the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Based on the complexities and thriving pattern of cross-border trade and its forward and backward linkages with other sectors of the national economy, government should always consider regional approach to border related issues as an alternative measure to curb smuggling and insecurity. It is more beneficial for the country to break from trade policy thinking that depends on protectionist measures and import restrictions and develop a more creative approach giving particular priority to the encouragement of cross-border export and import trade with its neighbours in ECOWAS. Diplomatic measures could be taken to force neighboring countries to abide by protocols governing trade across borders and should adopt common documents for cross-border transactions and clearance of cargo, vehicles, including traders and business people. This is because history has shown that border closure has never provided a lasting solution to Nigeria's economic and security problems. The position of Nigeria as an engine of the regional economy in West Africa with more than 50-60% of the population and industrial potentialities of the region respectively, make it an indispensable regional power in West Africa. In spite of the economic crisis and uncertainties epitomized by the global oil price crash in 2015, Nigeria's economy has shown that the country is not only Africa's largest economy, accounting for over half the GDP of ECOWAS, but also the most

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populous sub-Saharan country. It is the unmistakable giant in this regional narrative, a nation with extraordinary potential, opportunity and transformative capacity.

Policy makers in Nigeria should first take measures to refurbish our national economy and then engage all the stake holders in regional decision-making and implementation mechanisms for proper regional trade policies. This will go a long way in facilitating intra-regional trade so that the regional environment will encourage more of Nigeria's trade with its ECOWAS neighbours to take place on formal terms with more officially recorded transactions. Concrete measures could then be taken to put things on track and then diplomatically force the neighboring countries to abide by the protocols of free movement of persons and goods. Furthermore, critical measures have to be taken to provide easier and more supportive conditions for cross-border trade, particularly to small and medium cross-border traders. If ECOWAS is to succeed in creating a vibrant common market in the region, then Nigeria needs to sacrifice more.

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