



## Nigeria's Foreign Policy, A Possible Panacea to Fighting Domestic Terrorism

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### Abstract

*This study examined Nigeria's foreign policy vis-à-vis the fight against domestic terrorism in Nigeria, in order to ascertain whether Nigeria's foreign policy was able to assist in the fight against domestic terrorism in Nigeria within the period of the study. The study is guided by a research question such as: Does the use of land border closure technique contribute in reducing smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation in Nigeria? The study adopted Neo-functionalism theory of integration as its analytical framework understanding the discourse on how Nigeria's foreign policy was able to assist in the fight against domestic terrorism in Nigeria. Therefore, we stated our hypothesis that: the use of land borders closure technique contributed in reducing smuggling small arm and light weapons (SALW) proliferation in Nigeria, which often stimulate terrorism in Nigeria. The research also utilized the documentary method for collecting data and employed content analysis to analyze information derived from secondary sources. Finally, we recommended amongst other things, that there should be observation and implementation of land borders closure technique into Nigeria's foreign policy as a legal framework of curtailing smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in the country.*

**Key Words:** Foreign-policy, Killings, Porous-border, Proliferation, Smuggling.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, terrorism is not a recent occurrence but rather an enduring global concern that has consistently influenced intellectual discussions in the post-Cold War international system (Awodola & Ayuba, 2015). Terrorism, as a worldwide threat, has expanded across borders and multiple continents, notably affecting Africa, extending from the West Coast to the Central African regional bloc, with its detrimental and catastrophic consequences on society. Additionally, since the restoration of democracy in 1999, Nigeria has experienced a variety of terrorist groups, including the Niger-Delta Militants and Adaka Boro in the Niger-Delta region, Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen in the North-east, and most recently, banditry in the North (Adibe, 2017; Asaju & Egberi, 2015; Lugard, Zecharia, & Ngufwan, n.d). The country was also confronted by terrorist attacks and mayhem arising from the insurgence of the groups on the other hand. Therefore, the rapid spread of terrorism in Nigeria, with reference to the most recent banditry across the regions and all the states of federation causing evil onslaught, attacks, mayhem and killings of defenseless and unarmed innocent citizens in the recent time appears alarming. For instance, in 2009 which is remarkable with the eruption of Boko Haram in Nigeria recorded an over 500 deaths and other collateral damages (Ubi, 2020).

This following several onslaught on Christmas eve. For instance, according to Maiagwab and Uzodike (2012, p. 1):

Boko Haram's onslaught on Christians began with a series of attacks in Yobe state late 2011, where about 100 people died. On 25 December 2011, Boko Haram carried out a suicide bomb attack on St Theresa Catholic Church in Madalla (near Abuja), in which 44 Christians were killed. The sect also claimed responsibility for bomb attacks that killed about 80 people around Jos on 24 December 2011 (Christmas Eve). On 26 February 2012, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for another attack on Christians at Christ Church (COCIN) in Jos, which killed three and injured about 38. On 11 March 2012, it attacked St Finbarr's Catholic Church also in Jos, killing 19 people. In addition, about 20 Christian students (and a professor) were attacked and killed by Boko Haram at Ado Bayero University, Kano, on 2 May 2012. In another assault that demonstrates a direct focus on Christians, Boko Haram stormed into a church service in Maiduguri and killed five Christians including the priest. Still in Maiduguri, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was found at St. Michael Church in the Railway Quarters. It was detonated with no casualty before the worshippers congregated for their weekend services. But on 3 June 2012, a Boko Haram suicide bomber drove a car into Harvest Field Church of Christ in Bauchi, killing nine people and injuring 35 others. There were also thematic attacks on Christians on 5, 6, 10, 11, and 24 January and 17th June 2012 in Maiduguri, Adamawa, Plateau, and Kaduna states. Together, those targeted bombing acts have created not only a tense national environment in which Christians feel and believe that they have come under Islamist siege but also a growing sense of many observers that Nigeria is poised precariously at the precipice of political and social catastrophe (Maiagwab & Uzodike, 2012, p. 1).

Similarly, apart from the horrific attacks on the worship centers claiming wonton of lives and other collateral damages as narrated above by Maiagwab and Uzodike, it was also observed that the group attacks other crowd based public places, cities and villages. For instance, it is observed the group indiscriminately attacked and sacked Pemi village in Borno State on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, leaving not less than 11 people dead, kidnapping many others in the process (BBC, 2020). Before the recent narrated attacks, Boko Hara had earlier in 2014 attacked and kidnapped over 200 students of Chibok girls in Borno State (BBC, 2020).

Furthermore, in the recent time, another terrorist group—Fulani herders emerged, wrecking serious havocs, attacking and sacking communities, villages, killing, raping and kidnapping majorly rural dwellers. This is group and its terrorist activities are not just peculiar to a particular region of the country just like that of Boko Hara which operates basically within Northeastern part of country. Thus, Fulani herders terrorist attacks are indiscriminately across all the regions, zones, states and communities of Nigeria. To this effect, Adamu and Ben (2017, p. 28–29) observed that in the recent time that “Middle-Belt region has become a battle ground between Fulani herders and farmers”. They further noted that Benue State, in particular, has consistently been a focal point for such internal carnage and terrorist attacks, resulting in a staggering toll of over 4,333 deaths between January 1, 2014, and August 31, 2017. Astonishingly, their observations revealed that “a total of 14 out of 23 Local Government Councils in Benue State were completely overrun and attacked, leading to the death of over 4,333 individuals, predominantly Christians. Additionally, more than 195,576 Christian homes and 30 churches were destroyed, accompanied by numerous cases of sexual harassment and assault, as well as other collateral damages” (Adamu & Ben, 2017) (cited in Sule, 2021, p. 543). Again, there another killings of over 500 people in February, 2016 in the Agatu area of Benue state, and displacement of an entire community of over 30 000 population (Ojo, 2017; and World Watch Monitor, 2020), this therefore resulted in the ever witnessed *black Friday* in Benue state in 2016.

Furthermore, this terrorist attacks have uncontrollably intensified within the period under review, with several communities and regions been viciously attacked. Instances of violence have been reported in various locations, including Agatu in Benue State, Akure in Ondo State, the Bukuru area in Plateau State, the Oke Ogun area in Oyo State, Gassaka and Bali local government areas in Taraba State, Uzouwani L.G.A in Enugu State, Oguta L.GA in Imo State, Ohaukwu L.G.A in Ebonyi State, and Akuku Toru L.G.A in River State, among others (c.f., Obi, Chinweze & Onyejebu, 2018; Onyejiuwa, 2020; and Okutu, 2021). In a similar vein, Ogunbiyi (2018) contended that wherever they go, sorrow, tears, and blood follow them. As a result, the geographical intensity, escalation, and widespread nature of these incidents have not only heightened tensions among ethnic groups in the country but have also given rise to severe humanitarian challenges, undermining socio-economic development. There is a pervasive fear of being subjected to violence, including the threats of killings, kidnappings, or sexual assault (International Crisis Group, 2017). This situation led to Nigeria being ranked second globally in deaths from terrorism in 2018, according to the 2019 Global Terrorism Index, with a 33% increase in attacks and deaths attributed to Fulani herdsmen (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019).

As a result, Nigeria conducted a series of security exercises in collaboration with its immediate African neighbors, including Chad, Benin, Cameroon, and Niger Republic, as part of its foreign

policy efforts to address the situation. These security exercises proved effective and served as an alternative solution to the crisis. The participating countries perceived insurgency as a global threat to peace and a danger to their individual countries in the sub-region, leading them to establish multinational military actions. Governments collaborated through entities like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and the European Multinational forces, among others (Alufoge & Duruji, 2020). Facing challenges like militancy, political conflict, drug and human trafficking, ethno-religious crises, trans-border crimes, and insurgency, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria collectively established the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). This force aimed to combat illegal activities across their borders, particularly addressing the actions of the insurgent group Boko Haram (Alufoge & Duruji, 2020). Additionally, the United States played a role in the fight against terrorism in the region. At the request of the Nigerian government, the USA deployed drones to survey the Sambisa forest in search of the abducted Chibok girls. Notably, 12 US troops were sent to Nigeria to train 650 combatants, with additional equipment and financial assistance provided by the US to support the fight against insurgency (Alufoge & Duruji, 2020). France also made significant contributions, providing transport aircraft, armored vehicles, fighter jets, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and financial aid for amenities development. Furthermore, some members of the Multinational Joint Task Force received military training from French armies (Alufoge & Duruji, 2020, p. 798).

Therefore, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) launched its first significant operation in 2016, achieving noteworthy success in the process. As documented by Alufoge and Duruji (2020, p. 798):

Despite major challenges, the Task Force recorded major strides against the Boko Haram. Starting in the month of June of 2016, and ending in November of the same year. The operation was held in Borno State and other parts of the LCBR, it entailed integrated military actions from the member States. The success of the Gama Aiki to liberate areas that were under the control of Boko Haram has been able to boost the morale of the Task Force.

In November 2015, before the major operation initiated by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2016, the MNJTF launched a successful strike against Boko Haram. This resulted in the surrender of approximately 250 Boko Haram fighters, with the Cameroon faction of MNJTF effectively countering a significant number of fighters. The task force achieved success in freeing hostages, recovering weapons, and dismantling Boko Haram training camps. These actions led to a reduction in incessant bombings by terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram, and a notable decrease in terrorist activities. The United Nations (UN) commended the Lake Chad Basin countries, through the MNJTF, for their efforts in curbing terrorism and insurgency in the region (Ubi, 2020). The MNJTF played a crucial role in liberating communities that were under Boko Haram's control, such as Gore Blangafe, Gore Mahamat, Kirta-Woulgo, Segui, Damboure, and Chaugry. These liberated communities are currently under the protection of the task force. Additionally, the MNJTF significantly weakened Boko Haram's capabilities, resulting in a reduction in attacks on civilians from 2000 in 2015 to 573 in 2018 (Ubi, 2020). The task force

actively engaged and neutralized members of the insurgent group and other terrorist groups in the region. Operations in the Cross Kauwa Lake Chad area led to the killing of 52 Boko Haram fighters in April 2019 and 5 in Borno state on March 31, 2019, among other successful operations. The unilateral policy of land border closure by the Nigerian Government in 2019 also contributed to success by reducing the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) through the policy of beggar-thy-neighbor (Alufoge & Duruji, 2020). In summary, the study explores how Nigeria's foreign policy has played a crucial role in the fight against domestic terrorism from 2015 to 2021.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Terrorism resulting in indiscriminate incessant killings, kidnapping and raping are predominantly founding features of state failure in most developed, developing and underdeveloped nation-states of the globe, this which is not exception in Nigeria as one of the developing nations in the world. Obviously, since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed variance of terrorist groups unleashing terror attacks and mayhem in the society. Thus, resulting in the daily flow of the blood of the vulnerable, innocent, armless and defenseless citizens of the state, and other collateral damages on one hand, sacking and displacing various communities and cities on the other hand due to proliferation SALWs by the privileged opportunists in the society. It is against this premise that Anaele and Dayi (2022) argued that no nation is an island unto itself and cannot assume to be balanced in all, thus, needs to relate with one another political, economically and otherwise in order to compliment its weakness against internal and external aggression. They further maintained that, it is against this reason that "nations enter into diplomatic ties (which may possibly take the shape of bilateral or multilateral interactions) to obtain the collaboration and support of other states that are located beyond their borders" (Anaele & Dayi, 2022, p. 440). In agreement to the above, it is observed that the purpose of a nation's foreign policy is be in partnership with each other in order to curtail borders crimes such as smuggling of SALW, illegal goods, trafficking of persons, especially women and children, and migration of illegal aliens who exacerbating banditry, terrorism as means of economic engagement in the country (Mohammed, Karaure & Rao, 2019). Hence, Nigeria's interactions with its African neighbors have consistently been guided by the principle of good neighborliness. This approach involves collaborative efforts to effectively manage borders, preventing smuggling activities, and curbing the proliferation of illicit trade. The aim is to discourage the unlawful possession of arms and other activities that could pose threats to societal order. In agreement with the above, Grace and Amiriheobu (2019, p. 4) argued that terrorism is an unfortunate experience that is a threat to national security and capable of undermining national development of a country.

Thus, in attempt to curtail the excessiveness of terrorism in the country, Nigeria therefore leveraged on her foreign policy through which integration and cooperation is made possible. Certainly, Nigeria collaborated with its immediate African neighbors, including Chad, Benin, Cameroon, and Niger Republics, through the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). This collaborative effort resulted in significant success, including the killing of 52 Boko Haram fighters in April 2019, the neutralization of 5 in Borno state on March 31, 2019, and the

arrest of over 216 Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria and Cameroon. Additionally, more than 240 individuals surrendered to the MNJTF in 2016 (Alufoge & Duruji, 2020). Furthermore, the country also resorted in a unilateral decision of beggar-thy-neighbour policy in form of land borders closure in 2019 against her immediate African neighbours.

Akin to the above, it remarkable to acknowledge that scholars have extensively explored the root causes of terrorism in the country, while others maintained that terrorism is an ugly experience threatening the national security and undermining national development of the country. However, none was able critically explain how Nigeria could leverage on her foreign policy as a possible channel to fighting domestic terrorism, through cooperation with her immediate African neighbours. Against this backdrop, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- Does the use of land border closure technique contribute in reducing smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation in Nigeria?

**H1:** The use of land border closure technique contributed in reducing smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation in Nigeria.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative data-based research approach, utilizing the documentary method of data collection. The documentary method involves gathering relevant documented and written materials already in existence, even though these data were not specifically produced for the direct use of this investigation. Nevertheless, they prove highly useful for the study. Data were sourced from various documented materials, including books, book chapters, journal articles, official documents, newspapers, magazines, internet materials, and unpublished papers. Additionally, content analysis was utilized to analyze the documented materials generated through secondary sources of data collection. This structured technique involves the construction of a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories by the researcher(s), which are then used to analyze documents. The frequency with which each category is observed in the studied documents is recorded. Content analysis serves as a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Udeh, Eyikorogha, Ekoyo & Obiagu, 2021).

### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In examining the impact of land border closure on reducing the smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation in Nigeria, and the contrasting influence of the policy of good neighborhoodness and the observance of human rights in armed conflict contributing to the escalation of terrorism in the country, the study adopted the Neo-functionalism theory of integration as its analytical framework. This theory was originally introduced by Ernst Haas in 1958 in his book titled "Uniting of Europe," this theory was formulated to facilitate the integration of European communities and their economic institutions. It commenced with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) as the initial stage of regional integration. Subsequently, the European Atomic Energy (EAE) and the European Economic Community (EEC) were introduced as part of this evolving integration process, particularly following the success of the ECSC in

addressing economic concerns within the European community post-World War II (Ubi, 2017; Onuoha, 2008; Bache, 2001). Neo-functionalism emerged as a response to the perceived inadequacies of the functionalism theory in addressing the comprehensive issues related to regional integration in Europe. Both theories share the foundational idea that societies consist of diverse interest groups, and the integration process should aim to satisfy these varied interests (Rosamond, 2011).

Moreover, the Neo-functionalism theory perceives a state as a complex society characterized by diverse needs, values, aspirations, and interests. According to this theory, states sharing common characteristics, needs, values, and experiences can willingly relinquish some aspects of their sovereign authority by cooperating to achieve shared goals and objectives. The theory anticipates that, with time, integrated states will advance from collaborative efforts in specific technical areas of interest to the establishment of a political union, thereby fostering cooperation, peace, and unity among the integrated nation-states. This theory provides a lens through which the study analyzes the dynamics of land border closure and its effects on SALWs proliferation, as well as the implications of the policy of good neighborhoodness and human rights observance on the escalation of terrorism in Nigeria.

Ernst Haas, the founding father of neo-functionalism based his initial thesis on the idea of the transfer of loyalty to a supranational authority that will facilitate cooperation amongst the integrated states. In the same vein, Haas theorized three major assumptions of the theory as follow:

- **Positive Spillover Effect:** The positive spillover effect holds that integration in one sector (eg. Economic) would deepen or create strong incentive for integration in further sector (eg. Political) which would result to an integrated union states.
- **Transfer of Domestic Allegiances:** The theory holds that the process of integration gathers interest groups and associations who is ready to will their allegiances to the supranational institution that will oversee their cooperation
- **Technocratic Automaticity:** Neo-functionalism theory maintains that integration process proceeds to the establishment of a supranational institutions set up to oversee that integration leads to the sponsoring of further integration of the member states and become more powerful and autonomous. (Rosamond, 2001).

Above all, the thrust of neo-functionalism theory with respect to boundaries or differences advocates for the interference of sovereignty from the nation-state to a supranational body through organisational capacity to resolve disputes and build international legal authority.

## 5. THE APPLICATION OF THEORY

Obviously, it is on record that at the dawn of African independence, Africa's development flanks in the unity and cooperation of her peoples or neighbours. The aforementioned perspective underpins the establishment of the African Union (AU) as a continental supranational authority, fostering unity and development through the integration of African nations. Additionally, it extends to the West African sub-regional integration, specifically the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is primarily dedicated to enhancing the economic viability

of its member states. This is accomplished through protocols that facilitate the unhindered movement of individuals, goods, and services across sub-regional borders. The ECOWAS treaty also seeks to bolster trade by fostering cooperation in areas such as customs, taxation, statistics, money, and payments. As part of its trade liberalization scheme, ECOWAS mandates member states to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers, promoting the establishment of a free trade zone within the West African sub-region. Moreover, the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) serves as a broader initiative for economic collaboration among African nations. The overarching goal is to create a unified continental market for goods and services, fostering increased intra-African trade not only within Regional Economic Communities (RECs) but across the entire African continent. The objectives include promoting intra-African trade, eliminating border barriers, and establishing the world's largest free trade area. This collective effort reflects a commitment to regional and continental integration, aiming to unlock economic potential and strengthen cooperation among African nations.

The aforementioned supranational authorities were established on the common believe that no state is an island unto itself, and can effectively achieve development of any sort unto itself without the assistance of the others. Therefore, Nigeria and her immediate African neighbours such Republic of Benin, Republic of Niger, Cameroon and Chad are not exception in this regards; and can as well pursue an integration or cooperation in one sphere of their engagement--security, which may have a spillover effect on another aspect development, such as economic, politics etc. Again, the security integration or cooperation mayor would overlook their colonial and socio-cultural differences and build a strong integrating unit that would stimulate more cooperation and unity between the countries, and therefore engender their national development. For instance, Nigeria up to date remains one of the highest oil and gas producing nation in Africa, upon which most African economy depends on, particularly that of her immediate African neighbours. In the same vein, the Republic of Benin is said to have one of highest automobile industries in the West African sub-region, which Nigeria also depends on; Cameroon and others also have their own comparative advantages which Nigeria relies on as a nation. Thus, Nigeria and these countries could be integrated through their comparative areas of advantages with consensus agreements to have defined bilateral deal capable of curtailing smuggling of any sort, which have denied the countries source of revenue generation due to high rate of smugglings on one hand, and also have undermine the national security and development of the countries on the other hand. This cooperation or integration is capable of curtailing the prevailing culture of smuggling of all kinds of fire arms upon which proliferation of SALWs prevails that encourages for terrorism in Nigeria.

## **6. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **6.1 Land Border Closure Technique and Reduction of Crime of Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria**

Nigeria, often identified as 'the giant of Africa' and acknowledged as the regional superpower in West Africa, continues to contend with substantial national security challenges linked to cross-border or trans-border criminal activities (Mohammed & Rao, 2020). As a result, Nigeria is more vulnerable to security threats than any other country in the West African Sub-Region. Since



achieving independence in 1960, Nigeria has persistently confronted internal security threats arising from cross-border crimes, which include:

Trafficking in arms, persons, drugs; armed banditry, gun-running, vehicle theft, smuggling, touting and duping, illegal or silent migration (i.e. unnoticed or undocumented movements across borders), illegal lumbering, bunkering of petroleum products, and of course the transhumance activities of cattle rearers who move their herds across national borders regardless of any regulations. Others are terrorism, expatriates hostage taking, expatriate quota abuse, violation of immigration laws, document frauds, and financial crimes (Babatunde, 2009) (cited in Mohammed & Rao, 2020, p. 174).

However, the intensity of such security threat emanating from variance of terrorist groups in the recent time alarming, particularly since the return to democratic rule in 1999, this which may be attributed to its geographical location in the sub-region. In relation to this, it is observed that:

Nigeria is a diverse and a vast country covering 923,768 square kilometers with more than 36,450 kilometres of land and maritime borders, and shares land borders with four countries namely, Benin Republic in the West, Chad and Niger in the North, and Cameroon in the East. It shares international water Lake Chad in the North with Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and a maritime border coastline in the Gulf of Guinea or Atlantic Ocean. Along the Western border, Nigeria has 770 kilometres of shared land border with the Republic of Benin, in the North, around 1,500 kilometres with Niger and 90 kilometres with Chad and in the West, 1,700kilometres with Cameroon. Along the Southern coastline it also shares 853 kilometres of maritime border with the Atlantic Ocean known as the Gulf of Guinea. All totaling outstretch of about 4910 km of borders (Stohl & Tuttle, 2009; Nte, 2011; Sunday and Okechukwu, 2014; (Mohammed & Rao, 2020, 174).

This therefore exposed the country to unnecessary security dangers, as illegal migration of alien, smuggling, trafficking of firearms are permissible through these borders, either land or water borders. In the same vein, it is also on record that since after political independence in 1960, Nigeria has remained an active player in region, continental and global affairs. The country has significantly contributed to decolonisation in Africa, and had actively fought for the common rights of the black race globally, as well as having made a laudable contribution to peacekeeping and peace enforcement in Africa in particular and global society in general (Tar & Wapmuk, 2022). Furthermore, the country has also been involved in the fight against global and regional terrorism, protection of environment and climate change. Despite extensive collective efforts in Africa and globally, and the existence of cross-border security agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), among others, the country continues to face severe security challenges stemming from cross-border crimes.

The situation justifies the characterization of Nigerian borders as weak and porous, facilitating various cross-border or trans-border criminal activities such as human trafficking, smuggling, drug trafficking, armed robbery, money laundering, and illicit arms trafficking, leading to the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in general (Tar & Wapmuk, 2022). For

instance, out of the 640 million small arms circulating globally, an estimated 100 million are in Africa, with about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa, 8 million in the West Africa sub-region, and 2.5 million in Nigeria alone (Abdulkareem, 2012 & Adetula, 2015). Similarly, the security situation in Nigeria has gained increased attention due to the country's status and role as a regional superpower. The escalating security confrontations, driven by transnational organized criminality and jihadist activities, especially the Boko Haram insurgency (Mohammed & Rao, 2020), are observed to be motivated by the illegal spread of small arms and light weapons, illegal drug trade, human trafficking, and maritime piracy, among other factors.

The implementation of a nationwide closure of Nigeria's land borders on August 20, 2019, marked the initiation of "Exercise Swift Response," a joint border security initiative. The objectives were to enhance border security, strengthen the country's economy, and address trans-border security concerns, particularly related to groups like Boko Haram and bandits. Coordinated by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the exercise sealed off the land border between Nigeria and Benin Republic. The government also banned the supply of petroleum products within 20 kilometers of all Nigerian borders to counter illegal activities such as cross-border banditry, kidnapping, smuggling, illegal migration, proliferation of small and light weapons (SALW), and circumvention of the ECOWAS Protocol on Transit (Uwugiaren, 2019). The closure aimed to protect Nigeria's interests by preventing illegal smuggling of items like Tramadol, arms, and ammunition from Benin Republic (Royal, 2019).

## **6.2 The Inevitable Adverse Consequences of Unilateral Decision of Land Border Short Down on the Economy of Nigeria**

Following the announcement and immediate implementation of the border closure, Nigeria experienced an increase in inflation rates, primarily attributed to its economic partnerships with neighboring African countries (Omodele, 2021). The most recent Consumer Price Index (CPI) report, covering the period from November 2019 to March 2021 when the border closure was relaxed, reveals a significant surge in year-on-year food inflation rates. This surge in food prices, particularly for items like rice, poultry products, frozen fish, cooking oil/fats, and bread/cereals, indicates a substantial escalation in cost prices on a national level (Omodele, 2021, p. 201). This upward trend contrasts sharply with the usual pattern of decreasing food inflation rates during harvest seasons. Key staple items, including rice, vegetable oil, frozen fish, poultry products, and packed beef, were notably affected by the inflation in food prices following the implementation of Nigeria's land border policy. Rice, being a major national staple, became a subject of constant national debate due to its high demand and the domestic supply's inability to meet public needs (Omodele, 2021). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated that, before the border closure, the local demand for rice in Nigeria alone stood at 7.3 million metric tons annually.

However, the current local production only amounts to 4.8 million metric tons per year, resulting in a deficit of 2.5 million metric tons due to the land border closure.

This deficit underscores that the restriction on food importation significantly inflates food prices, revealing the challenge of domestic supply meeting local demand when borders are closed. Nigeria's heavy reliance on food imports, particularly from Benin and Togo, emerges as a

significant factor impacting the country's economy (Ubi, 2020). The central objective of the land border closure, as highlighted by Omodele (2021), is to counteract smuggling through land borders, with the ultimate goal of enhancing domestic food production and increasing national productivity across various sectors.

### **6.3 Pros and Cons of Nigeria's Unilateral Closure of Land Borders**

Evidently, the closure of land borders is poised to result in a substantial decrease in the trafficking and smuggling of illicit goods, effectively curbing the proliferation of firearms within the country. This standpoint is vigorously argued by certain pundits and government officials who assert that the land border closure is not just a measure to enhance revenue from customs duties and stimulate local production of goods and services, but it is also a strategy to diminish the smuggling of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), which plays a significant role in fostering terrorism in the nation (Ubi, 2020). Consequently, this suggests that Nigeria stands to benefit not only from increased food availability at an affordable cost, more affordable products and services, greater employment opportunities, and an augmented GDP, especially if this strategy is sustained, but also from becoming a more self-sufficient nation on the global stage due to the improvisational aspects spurred by the land border closure. These articulated points collectively represent the positive aspects or pros of Nigeria's land border closure policy.

Moreover, the strategy of border closure is anticipated to strengthen initiatives aimed at combating the fraudulent export of petroleum products and addressing the importation of second-hand clothes, vehicles, rice, and other illicitly smuggled products. Its anticipated outcome includes fostering the growth of local industries (Omdele, 2021). Additionally, the policy's impact is evident in terms of agricultural production, as the closure appears to be a positive strategy for boosting the production and demand for local agricultural produce, which has been overshadowed by foreign products in the country. Since the implementation of the land border policy, there has been a significant expansion in Nigeria's rice production capabilities, as emphasized by Omodele (2021, p. 203). Nigerian rice farmers, in particular, express satisfaction with the government's decision to close the nation's borders. The closure brings them joy as it has provided a valuable opportunity to sell their products without facing competition from smuggled international substitutes. Furthermore, the government's policy decision is expected to enhance local industries by allowing more people to redirect their energy toward agricultural production and other locally produced goods with a brand name 'made in Nigeria.' Therefore, with increased focus on agricultural production, it is anticipated that additional employment opportunities will be generated in the agricultural value chain. This is expected to benefit farmers, distributors, retailers, and merchants, contributing to a reduction in dependency on white-collar jobs.

Continuing from the above, it can be extrapolated that the land border closure policy is not merely a frivolous exercise but rather a substantial and prudent government decision aimed at curbing smuggling, particularly the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition that has proliferated among unprofessional citizens, turning these items into instruments of economic survival and tools for terrorizing society. Ubi (2020) contends that this narrative, which positions the closure as a strategic move to address insecurity, resonates with many. He further emphasizes that while smuggling has been a significant detriment to the Nigerian economy, it has also

adversely affected local industries. To illustrate, reports from the World Bank highlight that in 2015, textiles worth \$2.2 billion were smuggled from Benin Republic, surpassing the value of locally produced textiles, which amounted to \$40 million (Ubi, 2020). On the flip side, despite the numerous benefits associated with the closure of Nigeria's land borders, the policy, like other protectionist measures, comes with drawbacks, particularly regarding the restriction of free movement across frontiers. The primary intent behind the decision to close the land borders was for the Nigerian government to exert considerable effort towards the development of the nation's local economy. This involves empowering the growth of locally made products, supporting local manufacturers, and facilitating price reductions on these goods amidst the deteriorating security situation in the country. However, a major concern arises from the substantial rise in the prices of both locally and foreign-produced food items, especially the widely consumed rice. Omodele (2021) deems the policy a failure within the context of Nigeria's economy, stating that the government's assurances of reduced rice prices seem more like rhetoric than actionable plans. He attributes this perspective to the high inflation rates in the country, with daily increases in the cost of food products in certain regions. Omodele emphasizes the critical issue of either insufficient supply meeting demand or a distribution problem from source to consumers. Akin to the above, Akinkuolie (2020) questions whether the price surge is due to challenges in the supply chain or if producers are arbitrarily raising prices due to limited consumer choices. Given these concerns, the argument is advanced that rather than exclusively concentrating on the volume of imported goods into Nigeria, there should be a greater emphasis on enhancing export conditions and terms to facilitate price reduction. Ubi (2020, p. 21) suggests that Nigeria can take cues from South Africa, which, despite having a smaller population, imports more than Nigeria but balances the equation by exporting more. Hence, a concerted effort to enhance export capabilities could alleviate concerns about excessive importation.

Additionally, there are apprehensions regarding the domestic food production's inability to meet the country's demand. For instance, in 2017, the demand for rice in Nigeria reached 6.7 million tons; almost double the domestically produced 3.7 million tons (Omodele, 2021). This divergence between production and consumption is typically addressed through importation, prompting the question of why Nigeria's case is exceptional in this regard. In response to the aforementioned question, Akinkuolie (2020) contends that the border closure has inflicted significant harm on the consignments of many importers of perishable goods, resulting in substantial financial losses and contributing to inflation. He further asserts that the inability of Nigerians to purchase these imported products has led to increased demand for local products, such as rice and poultry, causing the prices of locally made rice to surge to unsustainable levels. For instance, the price of a 50-kilogram bag of rice soared from N9, 000.00 to about N25,000.00 in 2019 and currently stands at N52,000 in 2022, as opposed to the pre-2015 price of N9,000.

Moreover, the competition with foreign-manufactured products has led to the closure of numerous thriving Nigerian brands and companies, either resulting in downsizing their workforce or relocating to other African countries like Ghana (Omodele, 2021). This situation arises from the inability of Nigerian manufacturers to export their local products, such as cocoa and leather, to other West African markets through land borders. This imbalance in the importation-exportation equation has not only diminished the volume of exports from the

country but has also instilled fear and risk among manufacturers, anticipating potential losses when the borders eventually reopen. Further complicating matters, Nigerian cargoes are facing rejection by ECOWAS states in retaliation to Nigeria's border closure, as it is perceived to violate the ECOWAS protocol to which Nigeria is a signatory. Consequently, the border closure has significantly disrupted trans-border commerce between Nigeria and its African neighbors. Nigerian traders, who play a crucial role in importing vegetables, tubers, livestock, and grains, are no longer engaged in the importation-exportation game with neighboring countries like Benin, Chad, and Niger. This halt in the importation of products intended to balance the exportation of locally produced goods has severely impacted various sectors, this includes the importation and exportation of household products and building materials from Nigeria to other African countries. Notably, the border closure has particularly affected Nigerian traders, jeopardizing the economic sustainability of the people. Countries like Benin, in particular, have experienced significant economic challenges due to the unilateral decision of land border closure by Nigeria (Omodele, 2021).

Furthermore, the adverse consequences of the unilateral shorting the down the land borders against her African immediate neighbours cannot be over emphasised, as it widened the diplomatic rift between Nigeria and the neighboring countries directly affected by the border closure. This has prompted calls for the reversal of the decision, as it contravenes the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of goods and services across the sub-region's frontiers. Significantly, the border closure took place just a month after Nigeria signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which was set for full implementation by July 2020. The AfCFTA aimed to establish the world's largest free trade area, promoting a 60% increase in intra-African trade. Omodele (2021) argues that the border closure raises doubts about Nigeria's commitment to ensuring the free movement of capital, persons, goods, and services under the trade agreement in Africa.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed variance of terrorist groups ranging from Niger-Delta Militants and Adaka Boro in Niger-Delta; Boko Haram; Fulani herdsmen in the North-east; and the most recent banditry ravaging the entire Northern region on one hand. This is not exception in the south-east region, as the unknown gunmen have also taken over the area. This therefore resulted in the various terrorist attacks, killings, kidnapping and mayhem from these various groups in the country. But in attempt to ameliorate the situation and restore relative peace and stability in the society, the country leveraged on its foreign policy, as a possible fighting tool ameliorate the menace of the domestic terrorism in collaboration with her immediate African neighbours on one end, and through a unilateral decision of temporal land borders closure on the other hand. Therefore, the land borders closure aided in curtailing smuggling and proliferation of SALWs and other kinds of ammunition, which often thrive domestic terrorism in the country.

The study was able to validate our hypothesis that:

- The use of land border closure technique contributed in reducing smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation in Nigeria.



The study also revealed that the unilateral decision of land border closure leading to temporal prohibition of movement of persons, goods and services aided in the reduction of smuggling SALWs proliferation in Nigeria.

The study therefore recommend amongst other thing that:

- The observation and implementation of land borders closure technique into Nigeria's foreign policy, as a legal framework of curtailing smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), which stimulate terrorism in the country.

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