The Political Economy of President Muhammadu Buhari's Border Closure and its Impact on Nigeria's Development

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Abstract

This paper examined the political economy of President Muhammadu Buhari's Border closure to Nigeria's Development. While no nation is an "island," nations do rely on one another for some sort of cooperation, or other nations tend to bind together through border dismantling to ensure integration and cooperation. However, when borders are closed, there is always a political and economic impact on the development of these nations, which this paper attempts to identify in relation to how it affects a country's development. The explanatory design was chosen to provide analysis for the study, and the secondary technique of data gathering was employed for data collection. The theoretical framework of this research utilized the Elite theory for analysis of the subject matter of this paper. The implications drawn from this study is that the closure of border by President Muhammadu Buhari had consequences on the political economy of Nigeria. Economically, prices of commodity skyrocketed and politically, the relationship between Nigeria and her neighbours became uncordial. The difficulties with Buhari's border closure, as this paper demonstrates, forced the paper's presenter to make recommendations. She suggested that, rather than closing the border, it should be heavily secured, and that the executive should consult the legislature before deciding whether to close the border. Additionally, she suggested that activities along the border be regulated in the interest of national development.

Keywords: Political Economy, , Border Closure, Nigeria, Development.

Introduction

The border shutdown between Nigeria, Benin, Niger, and Cameroon in August 2019 came as a surprise and was implemented without official consultation with the governments of these neighboring nations. The intention was to halt the flow of any goods—aside from oil— from import to export. The closure was a component of Nigeria's economic plan, which was described in its 2017–2020 Economy and Recovery Growth Plan, to address cross-border commodities' smuggling, boost local production, and protect producers. Between the period from 2015 to 2023, the amount of money that is smuggled across the border between Nigeria and Benin is 110 billion naira. Its goal is to increase trade within Africa by 16% (Tahiru, 2019). Nigeria formally has 84 designated land borders, but there are more than 1400 unauthorized boundaries in the nation (Enehikhuere 2019). As a result, the borders were to remain closed until January 2020 (Unah 2019). This disruptive policy was designed to be a partial embargo on trade through the land borders, while allowing imports and exports through air and sea channels (Proshare, 2019). Smuggling of products, particularly rice (worth over 13 trillion tonnes) into Nigeria and gasoline (6.6 million litres) out of Nigeria, is well-known along Nigeria's borders (Unah, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this law was to stop the illegal export of gasoline from Nigeria and to combat the ongoing smuggling of products and food items, particularly rice, into Nigeria from neighboring nations.

Regardless of household income, the majority of Nigerian houses regularly consume farm produce, such as rice, which is arguably the most popular staple food in the country. Other staples in Nigerian cuisine include yam, beans, and garri, which is produced from cassava tubers. The majority of Nigerians prefer to eat imported parboiled rice, particularly Thai rice, whose grains appear longer and slimmer than locally produced rice, even though there is some locally made rice available in the market (Kazeem 2019). Experts claim that the short grains of rice found in the area could be healthier than processed parboiled rice (Williams, 2018). Even with the health advantages of local rice, most people still choose consuming imported rice with long, thin grains (Ikenwa 2019). In addition to being more aesthetically pleasing, imported rice is also favored over locally produced rice due to its lower cost (Equere 2018). Due to manufacturing inefficiencies, local rice in Nigeria is typically more expensive than imported rice. Other contributing causes to the high cost of local rice include a deficient transportation system, a lack of mechanical inputs, and insufficient funding.

Furthermore, the majority of Nigerian rice farmers are small-scale operators who struggle to obtain low-interest financing needed to upgrade their agricultural practices and increase yields (Ndukwe 2017). For instance, small-scale farmers cannot pay the interest rates that local commercial banks demand on loans, which can reach 30% (Ndukwe, 2017). After accounting for 12% inflation, the 30% interest becomes roughly 18% in actual terms. Nigeria's native rice supply cannot keep up with the country's growing demand due to its expanding population. As a result, millions of metric tonnes of rice are imported into Nigeria each year (FMARD, 2016). Nigeria is one of the world's biggest rice users; in 2016, the country's overall demand and consumption reached 6.3 million metric tons, but only 2.3 million metric tonnes of rice were produced domestically, leaving 4 million metric tonnes of rice up for import (Abbas, Agada, and Kolade 2018). According to Abbas, Agada, and Kolade (2018), rice consumption in Nigeria is expected to reach 36 million metric tons by the year 2050 due to the country's high demand for the grain and ongoing population increase. However, rice is a staple diet throughout the West African region, not just in Nigeria.

Methodology

The secondary technique of data collection used in this work helped to gather pertinent information by looking through articles, research studies, textbooks, and journals to provide context for the work. The paper was conducted in FCT, despite the fact that FCT was not a border town to any country. The reason for choosing FCT was primarily that it serves as the hub for all decisions, policies, plans, and programs pertaining to border management and administration. The explanatory design was used to explain the fundamental concepts required in this paper and to ensure that the body of work was rich through the sources of secondary data.

Conceptual Clarifications

The following concept was analyzed and such concept are Political Economy, Border Closure and National Development

Political Economy: Political economy is an interplay between politics and economy and its resultant effect to growth and development. The economy aspect of politics is a complicated web of interconnected trading, consumption, and production processes that ultimately decide how resources are distributed among players. The requirements of people residing in and using the economy are met by the production, consumption, and distribution of products and services. A country, a region, a single industry, or even a single family can all be included in an economy. An economy is a network of interconnected production and consumption processes that ultimately decide how resources are distributed among members of a society. The needs of people residing in and conducting business within an economy are met through the production and consumption of commodities and services. Free market economies, sometimes known as market-based economies, are self-regulatory and enable the production and distribution of goods in response to consumer demand. In economies that are command-based, the production of goods, their quantities, and their prices are set by a government agency. Few economies in the modern world are solely market- or command-based (Chidozie, 2020).

Border closure: Since there isn't a single, cohesive body of theory that explains border dynamics and relations, most theoretical work on borders—including ours—draws from a variety of fields, including geography, international relations, political economy, economics, and public administration. Borders are usually used as a control variable in most international relations research to represent physical proximity and serve as a proxy for conflict and war (Starr and Thomas 2005). Official border status between two states is determined by a number of factors, including economic integration or reliance, historical background, and other more specialized border classifications of border communities residing in border regions. Thus, our method incorporates social, economic, and political components and conceptualizes borderlands through

category classification, as indicated by Oscar's (1994) work. Closed borders, like in the case of North and South Korea, India and Pakistan, and East and Germany before to unification, indicate antagonism between two states and minimal cross-border mobility. States may coexist borderland when tensions have subsided but ties are still distant (e.g. Iran and Iraq; Gr and Turkey). States may form an integrated borderland (like the European Union) or an interdependent borderland (like the US–Mexico) if they have warmer connections and a higher degree of contact. The final two categories differ in that the later type involves more official and deeper movement of people and things between two states in terms of both number and quality (Agencies, 2020).

A border is a line that divides a region politically or physically. In close proximity to the Mexican city of Tijuana, this wall marks the boundary between the United States and Mexico. The words "Not one more death!" are written on the border wall. Reform now! is an appeal for changes to immigration laws. The white crosses stand in for the people who lost their lives trying to enter the United States from Mexico. A border is a line that divides geographical territories, either actual or man-made. Political boundaries are delineated by borders. States, counties, provinces, cities, and towns are divided by them. A border delineates the territory within the jurisdiction of a specific governing entity. A region's government is limited to enacting and enforcing laws inside its boundaries. Boundaries shift with time. Violence is often used by residents of one territory to annex another. Land is peacefully exchanged or sold at other times. After a battle, territory is frequently divided up by international agreements (Abbas, Monday & Kolade, 2018).

Limits can occasionally lie along natural limits such as mountain ranges or rivers. For instance, the Pyrenees Mountain range forms the border between France and Spain. The Rio Grande River serves as the border between the United States and Mexico for a portion of its length. Lake Chad is divided by the boundaries of four African nations: Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Travel and migration are impacted by boundaries, especially national ones. Individuals may not be permitted to enter a neighboring country, although they are typically free to travel within their own borders. Neighboring nations may have undefended borders if their political structures and levels of wealth are comparable. For instance, nationals of any of the 27 member nations of the European Union are free to travel throughout them. The only five EU members that demand passports or ID cards be presented at the border are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania, and the UK (AFDB, 2019).

National Development: The act or process of expanding, improving, and progressing in a physical environment society is called development. The many ideas of development include economic expansion, improved welfare and human development, modernization, the abolition of reliance, dialectical transformation, and capacity building, according to Abbas, Monday, and Kolade (2018). According to the United Nations (1986), development is an all-encompassing process that encompasses economic, social, cultural, and political aspects. Its goal is to continuously enhance the well-being of the global population and every individual based on their meaningful, active, and free participation in development and the equitable distribution of the benefits that flow from it. Development is, in its broadest meaning, the process of utilizing society's productive resources to raise the standard of living for the lowest members of society (BOI, 2018). Development is essentially the process of improving a person's overall situation in a variety of areas, including social, psychological, political, economic, and cultural relationships. Therefore, a sustainable improvement in the standard of living for the people who live in a particular social space—typically a nation state—is the ultimate goal of development (Gadoni & Angulucci, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Elite Theory of the state serves as the foundation for the theoretical examination. The theory was chosen because it provided enough explanation for the state's policymaking process. The writings of Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), and Robert Michels (1876–1936) are most obviously the sources of elite theory. Among the other classical elite theorists are John Higley, Lowell Field, John Porter, and C. Wright Mills. According to the notion, there are two types of elites: those in power and those who are not. Lastly, they argue that there are two classes of individuals in every society: a class that dominates and a class that is governed. These classes exist in all civilizations, from those that have just recently reached the budding civilization to those that are the most developed and powerful. In summary, they classified the first class as the ruling class and the class that is ruled. The first class is always few, performs all political functions, monopolizes power, and enjoys the advantages that come

with it. The second class, the numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first class in a manner that is mostly legal, sometimes arbitrary, and violent. It provides the first class, at least outwardly, with material means of subsistence and with the instruments that are vital to the political organism (Gadoni & Angulucci, 2013).

Implication of the Elite Theory to Nigeria's development

There are many people without power and a small number of people with it in our uneven society. Public policy in Nigeria is not decided by the vast majority of people; rather, it is decided by a select few especially on border closure.

The few who rule are not representative of society even as it affects Nigeria, which is split into two groups: the governed and the masses. Those with authority are drawn to the elites, while others do not. The theory captures the pluralist perspective on how power is distributed in society. As a result, they went on to say that it is feasible to categorize the population into two main groups, the first of which is presumably composed of members of the highest socioeconomic strata of society when it comes to border closure.

President Buhari's Border Closure Policy

Nigeria was one of the original members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was established in 1975 with the goal of promoting regional integration among West African nations. In order to promote economic stability and growth for West African nations as well as the development of Africa as a whole, ECOWAS seeks to foster cooperation among its member states (Onyekwena and Oloko 2016). Nigeria, however, was not one of the first countries to sign the new Africa Continental Free Trade Area pact (AfCFTA) (Gadoni & Angulucci, 2013).

In June 2015, the African Union initiated discussions for the AfCFTA, and by March 2018, 44 of the 55 member countries had signed the agreement in Kigali, Rwanda (BOI). In order to foster intra-African trade and integration, advance industrialization on the continent, and, most significantly, advance the development of the African continent, the agreement intends to remove tariff and non-tariff trade obstacles among African nations (Cofelice 2018). President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria first expressed reluctance to sign the pact, citing the need for additional time for deliberations before making such a big commitment. Nigeria's concern stemmed from the fact that it is the largest nation on the continent and that its economy might suffer from more trade liberalization across the board. With tariffs removed, the AfCFTA deal is expected to lower input costs for businesses; but, local producers may face increased competition as a result of an influx of low-cost completed goods into the nation (BOI 2018).

After ultimately signing the agreement in April 2019 (Proshare 2019), the Federal Government of Nigeria resolved to close the country's land borders to commerce with all of its neighbors in just four months. The ECOWAS Treaty of Lagos and the AfCFTA Kigali Declaration both allow countries to make unilateral decisions when their domestic economies are threatened, despite critics' claims that closing land borders violates the trade integration that the AfCFTA and ECOWAS seek to achieve. In actuality, there is no legal breach of the agreement (Awogbade et al. 2019).

Since Nigeria closed its borders to safeguard domestic producers and reduce unofficial cross-border trade, which has become increasingly noticeable over time, it is safe to assume that the nation's decision was made without violating any laws. Even though there is no legal

violation, it is crucial to remember that border closures do not promote cooperation or regional integration. There is also no indication that it is straining ties with Nigeria's neighbors. The policy's effects can be examined from an economic perspective, as well as from the perspective of how it may affect diplomatic and political relations with neighboring nations, as well as the balance of power within the regional economic community. This study, however, focuses on the economic effects in Nigeria, particularly as they relate to food costs. This study set out to determine the effect of closing land borders on food costs for products that are directly competing with imports through those borders (Kassa & Albert, 2020).

According to the preferred empirical specification, food costs increased once the borders were closed, including the prices of both import-competitive and non-import-competitive foods. In order to better observe the policy's short-term effects and maintain the parallel trend assumption, the preferred estimation concentrates on the four months prior to and four months following the borders' closure. Prior to the policy's implementation, it was common knowledge that food products subject to import competition typically have higher prices than those that do not, indicating a financial benefit for locally produced non-competitive food products (IRRI, 2019).

The model indicates that following the implementation of the legislation, the average price of food goods subject to import competition increased by 9%, a statistically significant rise. This suggests a shortage of these products without a corresponding drop in demand, reflecting some pressure on the supply of goods that are subject to competition. It indicates that the supply of foreign rice within the nation decreased once the borders were closed, which prompted the majority of consumers to convert to consuming rice that was produced locally. As a result of the increasing demand for locally produced rice, the price of that rice climbed. Because of the sharp increase in their costs shortly after the policy was put into place, it therefore shows that, in fact, some of the food products in the treatment group were being imported into Nigeria over the land borders prior to the border closure (ECOWAS, 2016).

After the borders were closed, there was an average 6% increase in the price of food goods that are not subject to import competition. This demonstrates the substitution effect, which holds that individuals will move to less priced basics when the price of goods subject to competition rises. As a result of the increasing demand for these food items, prices are driven upward. Theseasonality of some food items, for example, may have contributed to the price increase, but it's crucial to remember that the product and time fixed effects in the regression model account for these other factors, bringing us closer to a causal explanation of how the policy affected the prices of these food items (George, 2020).

Surveys conducted since the borders were closed have shown that the percentage of imported rice to locally grown rice in the market has decreased from roughly 70% to 37% (Agencies 2020), indicating that the borders are in fact a channel for the importation of rice into the nation. There are customs officials stationed at the land borders, so they are not entirely unattended when goods are smuggled into the nation. Nonetheless, it is well known that certain customs officers are slack in their efforts to deter smuggling due to factors including bribery and corruption (Cantens and Raballand 2017). Additionally, some of them neglect to record certain goods, particularly agricultural produce, in favor of concentrating on things that generate revenue at the borders (CBN 2016). Therefore, it is crucial that the borders are adequately and strictly manned in order to prevent smugglers, and in order for this to be possible, there needs to be sufficient monitoring of the customs officials at the frontiers. In order to motivate border officers to conduct thorough inspections and stop the unauthorized importation of food goods over land borders, senior immigration service officials and representatives from other pertinent agencies should make sporadic, unannounced visits to the borders (Enehikhuere, 2019).

To help with border security and reduce unauthorized trade across land borders, cooperative border agencies and task groups might be formed with neighboring nations. This will promote unity and fortify diplomatic ties with neighboring countries in addition to causing a decrease in smuggling. In turn, this will raise the actual welfare from trade by increasing the amount of official trade between Nigeria and its neighbors.

Implications of the border closure to National Development

The implication of border closure on national development as it affects President Muhammadu Buhari's administration had both beneficial and bad effects on Nigeria's national development:

Low Flow of Foreign Direct Investment: Through a variety of direct and indirect pathways, foreign investment inflow, and in particular foreign direct investment (FDI), is thought to positively affect the economic growth of a host nation. It increases domestic investment, which is essential for achieving long-term development and prosperity. Therefore, the uninterrupted flow of FDI is disrupted when borders are closed. Furthermore, investors who have made large investments that take a long time to pay off are negatively impacted by the unstable policy of border land restriction. Through a variety of direct and indirect pathways, foreign investment inflow, and in particular foreign direct investment (FDI), is thought to positively affect the economic growth of a host nation. It increases domestic investment, which is essential for achieving long-term development and prosperity. Therefore, the uninterrupted flow of FDI is disrupted when borders are closed. Furthermore, investors who have made large investments valued at $20 million that took a long time to pay off are negatively impacted by the unstable policy of border land restriction (George, 2020).

i. **Increase in Illegal Smuggling of Goods:** Nigeria has porous borders, therefore the government's policy of closing borders has contributed to an increase in the smuggling of commodities into Nigerian markets, allowing traders to evade taxes and excise fees and facilitating illegal smuggling. Customs officials this month outlawed the delivery of petroleum products to filling stations located within 20 kilometers of the borders in an effort to minimize gasoline smuggling. It's possible that smugglers who fail to pay the government the numerous taxes they owe could be costing Nigeria millions of naira. A friend recounting his encounter with the current closure that was implemented exactly at the Seme Border He claimed that Nigeria is "shooting itself in the foot" by closing its borders, and added that the country's administration has given security personnel linked to the borders access to significant sums of money. As night falls, he claims, security personnel would take the money from the would-be traders and unlock the borders for them to cross. $10 million was estimated to be the amount of loss Nigeria incurred as a result of this policy (George, 2020).

ii. **Increase in Inflation Rate:** Inflation has increased since the announcement and prompt execution of the border shutdown in August. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently released its consumer price index (CPI) report, which demonstrated that food inflation increased year-over-year from 13.2% in August 2019 to 13.51 in September 2019 and then from 13.51% in September 2019 to 14.09% in October 2019. Was up 1.33% month over month, with the largest national price increases being seen in frozen fish, bread, cereals, cooking oil/fats, and chicken items. The increase was primarily attributed to higher food prices as a result of border closures to cheaper imported goods, some of which are often found outside of West African and African nations (Enehikhuere, 2019).

Conclusions And Recommendations

This paper concludes by saying that border closure by Buhari's administration did not favour Nigeria due to the over $10 million dollars that was loss as a result of the border closure which was supposed to contribute to national development of Nigeria.

The paper suggests some alternative policy options that the government could consider, such as giving producers more support and effectively controlling the land borders. Nevertheless, it is conclusive that border closures occurred during the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari. It also establishes that, in the presence of informal cross-border trade, border closure may discourage smuggling. However, it consequently leads to an increase in the price of products that face import competition as well as those that serve as substitutes, within the country. As a result, the political economy implications of Ex-President Muhammadu Buhari's border closures are negative for Nigerian national development.

This study only examined the average costs of a few selected food items in Nigeria during the border closure under former President Muhammadu Buhari; more research can be done to examine the effects of the policy on neighboring nations, such as on the income of traders. Additionally, as we have only looked at the direct price impact, it would be interesting to look at the time lag until the policy's effects are seen, particularly for food products that are not subject to import competition. Regarding the effect the policy had on the relationships between the nations, the consequences for Nigeria's diplomatic ties with its neighbors can be further investigated, as can the effect on the dynamics of power within the ECOWAS region. In summary, the recommendation was that, rather than closing borders, they should be heavily secured, and the executive branch should consult with the legislature to determine whether or not to close borders. Additionally, activities near borders should be regulated in the interest of nationaldevelopment

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