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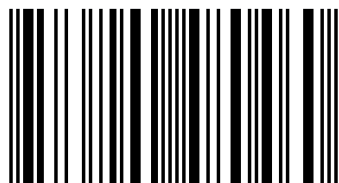


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Cross border flows and security between Nigeria and Benin Republic

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CROSS BORDER FLOWS AND SECURITY BETWEEN NIGERIA AND BENIN

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Abstract

When border fails to perform its required functions, it gives space for different crimes to find their ways into the country and disrupt the national security of the state. This paper therefore seeks to create the vinculum between Cross Border Flows and security between Nigeria and Benin Republic. The changing trend of National and international threats to national security is characterized by the introduction of factors in the internal and external environments in the Nigeria state. For more than a decade now Nigeria and Benin have engaged in diplomatic actions in order to strengthen the propositus of their borders. This is because the borders are used for so many illegal activities, like smuggling of impounded and unlicensed vehicles, proliferations of small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, drug trafficking, illegal movement of persons etc. The data collected was through secondary sources. The study made use of Marxian Political Economy as its theoretical framework.

KEYWORDS: Small Arms and light weapons (SALW), Security, Nigeria, Benin, Smuggling.

Introduction

With respect to Nigeria's relations with her immediate neighbor, Omede (2006), observed that the relationship between Nigeria and Benin Republic has been marred over the years by the frequent occurrences of border clashes between the two countries. The periods between 1969 and the late 1970's in particular, led to a deterioration of political relationship between them. One of the major sources of threats to Nigeria from Benin is derived from the activities of Beninese gendarmes who continuously and forcefully collect taxes from Nigerians along the Nigeria-Benin border villages. Another area of contention is the incessant removal of the Nigerian flag and its replacement by the Republic of Benin flag - a sign of their occupation. In view of the foregoing, one may then contend that Ate and Akinterinwa, (1992:24):

The security relations between Nigeria and Benin have always centered on two issue areas - boundary and military relations. The two overlaps. Boundary relations are important in the first place because of the imprecision which marked the delimitation exercise . . . This setting,

is further compounded by the activities of smugglers and the actions of overzealous functionaries who attempt to enforce legislation beyond their areas of jurisdiction . ..Besides boundary relations, political instability especially in Benin Republic has been important for their security relations. Omede pointed out that Nigeria, in her boundary and military relations with Benin has been perceived by various Beninese governments as a threat because of her (Nigeria's) military superiority within the West African sub-region.

Hence, arms acquisition policies or military deployments by Nigeria within the sub- region are always perceived as a threat by the Beninese. A classical example in this context was the case when Nigeria in the late 1970's acquired the T-55 Russian Tanks. The Beninese government responded by also acquiring such new antitank weapons. The aim of the reciprocal acquisition being to deter, contain and achieve military balance

to the threat posed by Nigeria's constant acquisition of military armaments (Vogt, 1987 cited in Omede, 2006: 10). He noted further that during the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70, the Beninese government under Emile Zinsou was accused (early in 1969) by the Nigerian authorities of allowing the international Red Cross Committee and other relief organizations to use Cotonou ostensibly for sending relief supplies to the secessionists and for breaking the Federal Government of Nigeria's food blockade against the Biafran rebels. This particular incident resulted in the rapid deterioration of relationship between the two countries to such an extent that there occurred a series of border clashes between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin in 1969. However, with the signing in April 1979 of a Military Cooperative Agreement between Nigeria and Benin, the mutual perception of threats and distrust hitherto existed between the two countries seems to have been drastically reduced. He also drew attention to certain activities of some Beninese citizens involving the smuggling of petroleum products and other essential commodities like sugar, beverages, textiles and detergents constitute economic threats to the Nigerian economy. These groups of people are also engaged in piratical

activities along the creeks and swamps between Nigeria and Republic of Benin. What is more important, during the periods of political crisis in Nigeria, the Benin border becomes an easy escape route for erring Nigerian politicians. In spite of their differences however, concerted efforts have been made to improve the relationship between the two countries. Accordingly, the tremendous reduction of tension between Nigeria and Benin was captured thus:

Friction along the two countries' borders had considerably reduced as a result of bilateral meetings held at various governmental levels. Increased cooperation between Benin and Nigeria has led to fruitful joint efforts in policing the borders. Consequently, criminals operating around the borders e.g armed robbers and car snatchers find it difficult to dispose of stolen goods (Shagaya, 1990 cited in Omede, 2006: 10).

As in other regions of the world, the motivations for trans-border movement within West Africa sub-region are many and varied. Ladan (2009: 1) noted that

historical patterns of migration have been reinforced or altered based on pull factors such as economic opportunities and push factors such as the lack of economic opportunities and political upheaval. In addition, environmental degradation further aggravated the pressure for migration from poorer to relatively more prosperous regions within the sub-region". West African states, fully conscious of the benefits that the free circulation of goods and persons would bring to the region, quickly followed up the signing of the ECOWAS Treaty of 1975 with the 1979 Protocol relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment.

The 1979 Protocol and the four supplementary protocols that followed it provide for the citizens of the 15 ECOWAS countries a legal framework for the progressive realization of the rights of entry, residence, work and establishment. Ladan observed that despite the enormous achievement represented by the ECOWAS free movement protocol, migration within West Africa has received much less attention than the migratory movements to North Africa and particularly to Europe.

This protocol is premised on community citizens fundamental Human Rights. Thus, migrants of ECOWAS origin are to enjoy those rights irrespective of their migratory status and whether they are de jure or de facto migrants in country of transit or in the country of destination. They are to enjoy the rights just as citizens of host nations (Addo, 2006:6)

With respect to the Nigeria-Benin border, it is note worthy that in the years immediately following independence, the relationship between both countries was characterized by mutual suspicion and veiled animosity owing in part to the fear of Nigeria's domination by the Francophone countries that make up her immediate neighbours and also by Nigeria's distrust of Benin as a French outpost which could be used by the latter to inflict mischief on Nigeria at the least provocation. This animosity was

fueled by Nigeria's role in the liberation struggles in Africa which sometimes clashed with French interest in Africa and was further aggravated following the role of France and Benin during the Nigerian civil war. Therefore this study assesses the Transborder cooperation between Nigeria and Benin Republic.

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Literature Review

In Madrid Convention the trans-border cooperation is defined as "... any joint actions aimed at strengthening and deepening good-neighborly relations between territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of two or more contracting parties and the conclusion of this purpose all necessary agreements or arrangements.

In the Charter of the Assembly of European regions the term is defined as "interregional cooperation", which can be understood by any of the links established between regions belonging to different countries.

However, it was necessary to improve the categorical apparatus of the concept of inter-territorial cooperation, which was introduced in Protocol No. 2 of the framework Convention (1998). This is due to the fact that international relations can join, depending on national legislation, not only the regions of the sub-national level, but other territorial entities and governments and not necessarily adjacent territory (transboundary cooperation). In this context, "international cooperation" means a

mutually agreed activity aimed at relations between territorial communities or authorities of two or more contracting parties.

Thus, the broad concept is inter-territorial cooperation, which defines the right of any territorial authority to cooperate with any relevant territorial authorities of other states (regions, districts, cities, etc.).

Transnational cooperation is a cooperation between national, regional and local authorities in the framework of programs and projects. This form of cooperation covers a large adjacent area, and includes the subjects of at least two member states of the European Union and / or countries that are not members of the European Union.

Thus, transboundary cooperation is carried out only between neighbouring areas. In other words, cross-border cooperation is a specific sphere of foreign economic, political, environmental, cultural, educational and other kinds of international activities carried out at the regional level and is characterized by the need and opportunities of more active use of the potential of adjacent areas, as well as a number of features, namely the presence of a boundary and the need for its development, the general use of natural resources and, consequently, the general solution of the problems of ecological safety,

the wider mutual intercourse of the population of neighbouring states, and personal relationships of people.

According to the current legislation of Ukraine, the concept of cross-border cooperation is defined as the total action on the formation and deepening of economic, social, scientific, ecological, cultural and other relations between territorial communities, their representative bodies, local executive authorities of Ukraine and local communities, relevant authorities of other states in the framework of their competence, defined by the national legislation

Cross-border cooperation in accordance with generally accepted approach means the neighbouring area cooperation of neighboring states, that means that the determining factor is the presence of a boundary between collaborating territories. In this context it is possible to use the term "inter-territorial cross-border cooperation when cooperation is between border regions or cities, but you can't talk about cross-border cooperation of states that are not neighbours.

According to the thoughts of Ukrainian scientists there are some differences in the interpretation of Art. 1 of the Additional Protocol to the European outline Convention, when conclusions are made about not

necessary presence of boundaries for cross-border cooperation . However, in the preamble to Protocol No. 2 to the Convention it is indicated that cross-border cooperation is implemented between authorities in neighbouring territories, and between foreign authorities that are not neighbours the inter territorial cooperation is used.

There are some differences in the definitions of cross-border cooperation given by the researchers. cross-border cooperation as a specific field of implementation of international relations at the regional level, which is the necessity and possibility of their active use, common border, the need to address issues of environmental security, a broader general communication of the population of neighbouring countries and considerably higher load on the socio-economic infrastructure.

Essentially the cooperation of neighboring territories is defined by both concepts. The first one is more usual for Ukraine, as it was used in conditions when the border was closed enough for a wide currency. It was impossible to create the cross-border associations (Euroregions) and to implement projects to address common problems in adjacent areas either in interstate or interregional levels (Mikula, 2003).

Cross Border Relations Between Nigeria and Benin Republic

Nigeria's policy toward her neighbours had since independence has been based largely on the following four principles, (Omede, 2006: 8).

- The sovereign equality of all African states.
- Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of every African state.
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of other African countries.
- Commitment to functional cooperation as a means of promoting African unity.

Omede also opined that based on these principles, Nigeria has been totally indifferent to the internal political power struggle in other states around her, and that the lukewarm attitude of Nigeria towards her neighbours can also be attributed to feelings of phobia, real or imagined, of French response in case of an overtly aggressive policy against any of those states that have close colonial ties and cultural affinities with France. In addition to the French connection, the following three major reasons impact greatly on the noninterference attitude of Nigeria in her neighbours' affairs:

- Nigeria's respect for the principle of sovereign equality of all states and respect for African states.
- Nigeria's apprehension of threatening the security of her weaker neighbours who might be frightened into the arms of some powerful extra-African forces that could pose a direct threat to the survival and national security of Nigeria.
- Moreover, active interference in her neighbours' affairs could also lead to arms race which Nigeria could not seriously contemplate. An arms race would entail the diversion of the nation's financial and human resources from economic and social welfare needs to defence matters. The policy of non- interference as well as the nonchalant attitude of Nigeria's decision makers was later reviewed due to series of events that unfolded within the subregion. The events, it is imperative to note, resulted among other factors from the role of neighbouring countries in rendering military and humanitarian assistance to the Biafran rebel group during the civil war (1966- 69) in Nigeria.

In ensuring a continued cordial relations and reaffirming the good intentions she contemplates toward her neighbours, Nigeria, in her

“Presentation to the UN Goodwill Mission”, emphasized that border conflict between the country and her neighbours have been largely avoided through the principle of good neighbourliness, policy of cooperative

security and preventive diplomacy which Nigeria cherishes and upholds even at the expense of its own national interest. With respect to Nigeria’s relations with her immediate neighbor to the West, Omede observed that the relationship between Nigeria and Benin Republic has been marred over the years by the frequent occurrences of border clashes between the two countries.

One of the major sources of threats to Nigeria from Benin is derived from the activities of Beninese gendarmes who continuously and forcefully collect taxes from Nigerians along the Nigeria-Benin border villages. Another area of contention is the incessant removal of the Nigerian flag and its replacement by the Republic of Benin flag - a sign of their occupation. In view of the foregoing, one may then contend that (Ate and Akinterinwa, 1992):

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boundary and military relations. The two overlaps. Boundary relations are important in the first place because of the imprecision which marked the delimitation exercise . . . This setting, is further compounded by the activities of smugglers and the actions of overzealous functionaries who attempt to enforce legislation beyond their areas of jurisdiction. . . Besides boundary relations, political instability especially in Benin Republic has been important for their security relations.

He also drew attention to certain activities of some Beninese citizens involving the smuggling of petroleum products and other essential commodities like sugar, beverages, textiles and detergents constitute economic threats to the Nigerian economy. These groups of people are also engaged in piratical activities along the creeks and swamps between Nigeria and Republic of Benin. What is more important, during the periods of political crisis in Nigeria, the Benin border becomes an easy escape route for erring Nigerian politicians. In spite of their differences howevr,

concerted efforts have been made to improve the relationship between the two countries. Accordingly, the tremendous reduction of tension between Nigeria and Benin was captured thus:

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Nigeria's neighbors operate as "entrepôt states" for products that are subject to import bans or highly taxed in Nigeria. For example, over 75% of goods landing at Benin's Cotonou harbor are heading for Nigeria (OECD 2001 and WTO 2004). Customs clearance is estimated to account for about 30% of losses due to corruption in the Nigerian economy. Many Nigerian traders complain of the high numbers of informal traders that reduce the

competitiveness of the formal sector. Many interviewed admitted to smuggling because it is less expensive than working in the formal sector, even as an ETLS registered trader. For example, moving goods from Nigeria to Senegal attracts formal and informal fees that can reach 40% of the cost of the goods, on top of shipping costs. Companies on the ETLS Preferred Trader Program are still examined 100% of the time. The most frequent comment heard in interviews in Nigeria surrounded the pervasive issue of corruption. Addressing all of these problems would increase intraregional competition and trade flows, and make the sub-region more attractive to inflows of foreign investment that seek to serve domestic markets. Given Nigeria's size within ECOWAS (60% of the population, 47% of GDP and over 50% of manufacturing potential), it has a pivotal role to play in the sub-region's integration efforts.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted realism and Marxist political economy as the frameworks for analysis.

The realist approach is one of the most important theories in international politics. Some of its major proponents include Thomas Hobbes and Hans Morgenthau. Its central argument is that nation – states, like most humans are “inherently political predators”. The realist approach places emphasis on power and sees the “struggle for power” as the overriding essence of politics whether at national or international level. Hence interactions between sovereign nations are driven by the “desire of nations to either increase their power or to maintain power or to demonstrate power”

Marxist political economy approach places emphasis on mode of production, economic determinism and class struggle. Some of the major proponents of this approach are **Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Claude Ake etc.** The approach argues that the mode of production is major

determinant of social relations in every society. The utility of the two theories for this study is as follows.

The realist approach will help us to understand how in the pursuit of economic power and dominance, Nigeria & Benin deploy trade and border politics in their bilateral relations. The use of low and non tariff measures to target Nigeria market by Benin republic are aimed at increasing the economic power of Porto-Novo (Benin Republic) and making the country a dominant partner (in the long run), in its bilateral trade relation with Nigeria and beyond.

Similarly Nigeria's use of policy measures like banning of vehicle importation through land borders is aimed at boosting Nigeria's economic power dominance in west African sub – region & beyond on the other hand.

Application of the theory

Goods Description	State of Origin or supplier	Smuggling/Transit Country	Recipient Country
Small and light Weapons (SALW)	Russia, USA, China, Europe	Benin	Nigeria
Rice	India, Thailand, Europe	Benin	Nigeria
Used tyres	China, Europe	Benin	Nigeria
Vehicles	USA, Europe	Benin	Nigeria
Poultry Products	Benin, China, Europe	Benin	Nigeria
Flour, wheat, pasta	Asia, Europe	Benin	Nigeria
Fuel	Nigeria	Benin	Benin

Cocoa	Nigeria	Benin	Europe, Asia, USA
Palm Oil	Nigeria	Benin	Benin, Asia, Europe

The Marxist political economy approach will help us to understand how economic factor shapes and reshapes the behavior of some of the actors in the Nigeria – Benin cross border trade challenges.

Each of the various actors involved either directly or indirectly in the illicit trade and other illegal activities at the borders is driven by one economic interest or the other.

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Smuggled Goods from Benin Republic to Nigeria

Source: Adapted from OECD 2001; Vanguard 12 Sept. 2018; Benjamin, Golub & Mbaye, 2015.

Importers and shipping companies are another set of players in the politics of border in Nigeria-Benin trade relations. Trade success today is determined by efficient transactions, low transport costs and easy access to quality services inputs (The World Bank, 2011:v). Driven by the quest for quality service and low cost of cargo delivery in order to maximize profit, some importers and shipping companies go for ports with adequate infrastructure and operational efficiency when importing or shipping goods. Since ports in Benin Republic have more facilities and are efficient unlike those in Nigeria, they usually attract high patronage from importers and shipping companies who prefer to use such ports to bring in goods first to Benin and then re-export or smuggle the goods to Nigeria through the borders.

Foreign governments particularly Thailand, China, India and Russia, to mention but a few, are also important actors in the border politics

between Nigeria and Benin Republic. Although these actors are very far away from Nigeria and Benin and do not share any direct borders with the two countries, their trade interests affect activities at the Nigeria-Benin borders. While Thailand and India are known to be the sources of the various brands of foreign rice being smuggled into Nigeria, China accounts for most of the contrabands, such as used clothes, used tyres and substandard products. Russia is among the major sources of arms and ammunitions (OECD, 2001; Vanguard, 2018; Benjamin, Golub & Mbaye, 2015). These countries earn foreign exchange from exporting such goods and sometimes they do not mind trading or exporting the goods through the “black market” or informal channels. In so doing, these foreign governments avoid the various taxes and the security scrutiny of the preying eyes of the government.

A syndicate of trans-border smugglers that take smuggling as occupation is another critical actor in border politics in Africa. The smugglers maintained a broad network that cuts across Nigeria and Benin and even extend to countries in Europe, North America, Asia, and beyond. Some people inhabiting the border communities are also part of the smuggling syndicate (Garba cited in Vanguard, 2018). With the huge proceeds from

smuggling available to the smugglers, they are able to bribe the border security to get some goods smuggled into or out of Nigeria and/or to smuggle some goods through unmanned parts of the borders and this also involves money.

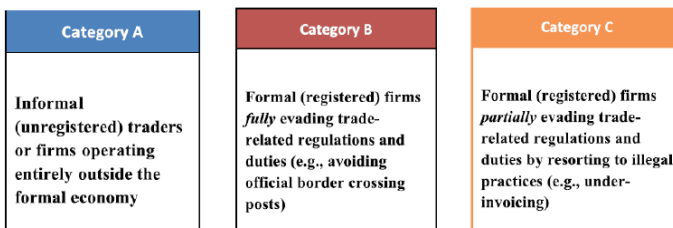
The problem here is that some of these actors are not adequately factored in by the government of Nigeria in the formulation and administration of its border and trade policies. Often times, government policies are meant to target and intercept the goods at the borders, while nothing or little is done to prevent the goods from coming to the borders in the first place. A holistic overview and recognition of these actors and their interests will help in designing the appropriate policies and strategies, that can respond to each of them preemptively and proactively rather than reactively as has been the norm over the years.

The illegal importation of manufactured goods to and from Benin

Concerning the illegal importation of manufactured goods to and from Benin, Chambers, Foresti and Harris observed that when customs duties and protection rates are high, transporters are more vulnerable to corrupt law enforcement practices and there is an increased incentive for informal market activity. The illegal importation of Nigerian manufactured goods to Benin, which would otherwise attract high internal tariffs, is an important informal-market activity along the Benin-Nigeria border and one which deprives the state of substantial fiscal revenues. Curtailing this informal trade would permit the state to increase its fiscal receipts substantially. Furthermore, there is illegal re-exportation from Benin to Nigeria of prohibited products or those with a high taxation rate. Although some progress has been made towards phasing out bans and reducing import duties, the impact of these measures on trade flows and facilitation has been limited because the main items subject to unofficial trade remain prohibited (second-hand cars) and subject to continued high taxes (rice, pharmaceutical products). Chambers, Foresti and Harris(2012), stated that the illicit fiscal market for

these goods is undertaken in effective coordination with border, customs and security officers as well as a well-organised network of drivers, buyers and negotiators. In particular an organized group of transporters, known locally as the ‘acquis’, who import these goods into Benin are central to this trade. Knowledgeable in the products they transport, experts in border crossings, and specialised in grouping products, these transporters have specially modified trucks with increased volume capacity and work in coordination with networks of various border and other officials. Currently knowledge about the internal dynamics of this cross-border trade is limited, including the informal rules which regulate the black market trade, the incentives faced by various actors and the other external forces at play (Chambers, Foresti and Harris, 2012: 13-14).

Diagram 1: Types of Informal Cross Border Traders



The types of merchandise traded informally across the borders are generally categorized as: (i) non-processed goods; (ii) manufactured goods; and (iii) re-exports goods. As illustrated in the diagram above all African countries trade in foodstuff and non food stuff. The West and Eastern African regions have a propensity to trade in livestock whereas the Central and Southern African regions deal in minerals and handicrafts. Manufactured and re-exports goods are usually comprised of low quality manufactured goods, counterfeits and contraband originating from Asia. Most studies estimate that the value of goods traded is generally between 50-1000 USD (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012: 2).

Table 2 : Informal Cross Border Trade Product Categorization (Source ADB Africa Economic Brief 2015).

Regions	Non-Processed Goods	Manufactured Goods	Re-exports	Value of Goods
Eastern Africa including Horn of Africa	Foodstuff and non-food stuff, livestock.	Low quality manufactured and processed goods	Low quality goods from Asia, contrabands, counterfeits and substandard goods	US\$50-US\$1,000
West Africa	Foodstuff and non-foodstuff, livestock.			
Central Africa	Minerals, jewelry, forest products, Food and non-food stuff			
Southern Africa	Handicrafts and foodstuff and non-foodstuff.			

In West Africa, informal cross border trade is estimated to range from 20 percent of GDP in Nigeria to 75 percent in Benin. A large proportion of the products traded within or exported from the region are raw or semi-processed, particularly agro-industrial products originating from or being destined to four West African countries: Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal. The Nigerian hub is however one of the most active with informal exports going to countries like Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012: 2). Table 3 below shows the average informal trade in select agricultural products.

Export Concentration Indices in Africa

Country	1995	2000	2005	2010	2016
Nigeria	0.85	0.92	0.88	0.80	0.73
Benin	0.67	0.59	0.40	0.33	0.31

Source: Adapted from UNCTADstat cited in African Export-Import Bank Report, 2018

From the above table, it could be extrapolated that intra-African export indices for Nigeria and Benin are low. Although the two countries share border proximity, their official bilateral trades are quite low. Given the huge traffic of goods that transit through its various porous borders with Benin Republic, one ready conclusion that can be drawn is that most of the trade between Nigeria and Benin passed through the informal channels. If the value of all the informal trade were to be captured, the official bilateral trade will certainly increase.

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SUMMARY , CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Border politics determines who benefits more and the extent of mutuality in trade relations between contiguous states. This study investigated the manifestations of border politics in Nigeria-Benin bilateral trade/border relations and how the latter is shaped by the former.

Conclusion

The study made the following findings:

- The study found that attempts to use border security and bilateral border/trade agreements in tackling cross-border trade challenges have not yielded the desired result .
- It revealed that the ineffectiveness of bilateral border agreements and memoranda of understanding are hindering the bilateral trade between Nigeria and Benin Republic.
- The study also discovered that border politics is one factor which has not been given adequate attention in the extant literature on

border studies in Africa and by the Nigerian government in its trade and border policies, but which is very crucial nonetheless.

- Among the findings of the study is that Nigeria has not been using its borders strategically in promoting its trade interest in its bilateral relations with Benin Republic and other neighbouring states. And this largely explains why Nigeria is losing in its bilateral trade relations with Benin in terms of volume and value of trade between the two states and the resultant surplus trade and balance of payment, all of which have been favourable to Benin over the years.
- The study equally found that Benin Republic, unlike Nigeria, has maximized border politics to strategically advance its trade interest and also deployed same to undermine Nigeria's trade security and domestic economy by promoting smuggling of contraband goods, into Nigeria.
- The study further established that Nigeria's ill-conceived tariffs regime makes goods imported through the Nigeria ports very expensive, thus creating room for cheaper goods from Benin

Republic whose low prices attract smugglers who then smuggle them into the Nigerian market so as to make profits.

- Finally, the study brought to the fore how Nigerian and foreign importers/shippers now prefer to import goods meant for Nigeria through the ports of neighbouring countries particularly Benin where there are functional ports facilities and efficient ports operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing findings and conclusion, the study recommends the following:

- The Nigerian government should change its negative perception of Nigerian borders with its neighbours as a liability, but instead should see the borders as assets, and then deploy them strategically to advance its trade interest in the bilateral relations with Benin Republic and other contiguous states. In otherwards Nigeria should deploy border politics strategically.

- Rather than the current too much emphasis on bilateral agreements and physical security to prevent smuggling through the borders, Nigerian government should also use non-tariff mechanisms such as ports efficiency and good governance to checkmate the inflow of illegal goods into the country. In other words, the government should reclaim import and shipping traffic from Benin ports to Nigerian ports by eliminating those factors that make both importers and shipping companies to prefer shipping goods into Nigeria through the ports of neighbouring countries such as Benin.
- Tackling corruption and providing adequate/functional ports infrastructure as well as streamlining ports operations would eliminate unnecessary delay in goods clearance and extra costs on demurrage. This, in turn, will make Nigerian ports world-class and among the cheapest in Africa. And this will make Nigeria the first choice of importers/shippers particularly those who currently use Benin ports to import goods and then use the porous borders to smuggle them into Nigeria.

- Given that tariffs on certain goods cannot be eliminated completely, Nigeria should adopt guided mechanism in the administration of trade tariffs. In other words, tariffs on goods such as rice and vehicles should be designed in such a way that their market prices when they are imported into Nigeria will be cheaper than in Benin. That way, it will no longer make economic sense for smugglers to smuggle goods into Nigeria since such goods will be more expensive and as a result, attract less patronage.
- Nigerian government should do more to promote self-sufficiency in the production of those goods (such as rice and poultry products) that are smuggled into the country. It should also give the local farmers subsidies to drive down the prices so as to make them cheaper than the smuggled ones. This will prevent scarcity of such goods and make smuggling them into Nigeria using the borders unattractive and promote a robust bilateral trade relations.
- The Nigerian government should pacify the government of Benin to try and re-channel some of the informal trades to formal trade. This

way, both states would collect tax revenues on the goods, which are currently eluding them.

- The Nigerian government should equally prioritize the welfare and development of the Nigerian side of the border communities by providing them with basic social amenities (such as potable water, tarred roads, electricity, good schools, functional health care centres etc) that would improve their living standard and legitimate businesses. Such development infrastructure would give them a sense of belonging and make them develop patriotism and allegiance to the country which in turn will make them key into the government trade policies such as anti-smuggling war.

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