

The Establishment of common market and Nigeria-Benin porous borders; Security implication in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigates the extent of Nigeria-Benin porous borders orchestrated by the objectives of economic integration vis-à-vis its security implication in Nigeria, this which has resulted in alarming spate of smugglings, proliferation of small arms and light weapons used in fueling violence acts, terrorism, banditry, etc. in the country. The study was anchored on the institutional theory as its blue-print of understanding. It adopted documentary method of data collection, content analysis for analysing data generated from secondary sources. It revealed that the imposition of stiff penalties on free movement of livestock, the arrest, prosecution and imposition of severe penalties on the offenders aided in the reduction of farmers-herders conflict in Benue State. We recommended amongst other things, that Benue State Government should keep security collaboration and synergy with all the bordering states to keep tough in the fight against Fulani extremists.

Keywords: Smuggling, Borders, Banditry, Liberalisation, Porous.

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1. Introduction

Generally, nation-states engage with one another globally, regionally and sub-regionally on the premise that no state is an island unto itself politically, economically, technologically and otherwise for the purpose of achieving sustainability, stability, security, peace and tranquility, which are sine qua non, or necessary conditions for the achievement of national development.

Fundamentally, this therefore encourages Nation-States with vary degree of interest, particularly in terms of socio-cultural, economic, political, amongst others to unite together and pursue common broader goals through integration, which could lead to the establishment of one common market that shall in turn spur national development (Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016). Therefore, establishment of common market is a form of economic/trade liberalisation, which is popularly known as globalisation or economic integration. The establishment of one common market could be done at various levels, such as globally, regionally and sub-regionally. For instance, at the African regional level, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a regional integration organisation created by the African Union (AU), with the objectives to “create a single

continental market for goods and services, and expand intra-African trade across the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Africa in general” (Omodele, 2021, p. 199-200). He further maintained that the agreement provisions of AfCFTA are “geared towards the promotion of intra-African trade, elimination of border barriers and the creation of the world's largest free trade area” (Omodele, 2021, p. 200). Similarly, at the West African sub-region, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is an integrating organisation in 1975 by the West African Heads of State and government for the purpose of economic integration in the sub-region, with its main objectives to “promote cooperation and development in economic, social and cultural activities; and improving the standard of living of ECOWAS citizens; increase and maintain economic stability; improve relations among member countries, and to generally contribute to the progress and development of Africa” (Omodele, 2021, p. 1996; Opanike & Aduloju, 2015, p. 42; Chapter II Article 3 Revised ECOWAS Treaty). Furthermore, the treaty aims at promoting trade by providing cooperation in trade, customs, taxation, statistics, money and payments. It also requires its member States to

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liberalise trade within the West African sub-region, which implies removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade in the West African sub-region (Omole, 2021). According to, article 3, paragraph 2(d) of the Revised Treaty, the following were provided for:

(d) The establishment of a common market through;

1. The liberalization of trade by the abolition, among Member States, of customs duties levied on imports and exports, and the abolition, among Member States, of non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade area at the Community level;
2. The adoption of a common external tariff and a common trade policy vis-a-vis third countries;
3. The removal, between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, and to the right of residence and establishment (Omole, 2021, p. 198).

Again, its protocol on movement therefore empowers for free movement of persons and goods of its member states within the West African sub-region. Accordingly, Nigeria and Benin are therefore members of both the AfCFTA and ECOWAS, which in the course of economic integration liberalised trade through opening of their borders for free movement of persons and goods within the West African sub-region in particular, and African region in general.

However, the above provisions of the AfCFTA and ECOWAS, which led to the establishment of common market on one hand; and the openness of the borders for free and easy mobility of persons, goods and services on the other hand not only left the borders porous, but also gave room for smuggling, trafficking, proliferation of SALWs, and encouraged all kinds of criminalities within and across the borders, with particular reference to the Nigeria-Benin borders. For instance, it was revealed by the Nigerian Tribune that between 2010 to 2017, a total of 21,548,608 arms and ammunitions had been smuggled into the country (Nigeria), illegally used in perpetuating crimes in the society without interception by the security operatives (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.transission.phoenix&referrer=af_tranid%3DufWbgiQ8Uw4dFEQb5XC08w%26shortlink%3D7lm39om1%26c%3Dshare-article-topBar%26pid%3Dshare-article-topBar). Again, in 2018, Nigerian Custom Service report has it that about 52 pieces of AK47 guns were smuggled from the United States and other parts of European countries into Nigeria in 17 different occasions at various points of entry through the porous Nigeria-Benin borders (Kabir, 2021). In the same vein, Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in their tireless efforts arrested a 20-year old notorious arms dealer, by name Hamza Zakari aka Hamzo in Jos Plateau State, recovered 57AK-47 rifles and large catchment of ammunitions in April 27, 2019 (Kanyi Daily, 2022). Consequently, the above arms and ammunitions are indisputably used in the fueling of series of ethno-religious crises, and perpetuating other kinds of criminal activities in the society. The

porous nature of Nigeria-Benin borders cannot be overemphasised due to the unspeakable spate of its security implications in the society, which many had attributed the border proximity as the possible factor on one hand end; and lack genuine commitment by the government to addressing the issue on the other hand. However, in spite of the myriad efforts of cross-border security agencies such Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Services among others, Nigeria-Benin borders have not only remained highly porous, but also described as the most permissible borders allowing all sorts of cross border or trans-border criminal activities such as "human trafficking, smuggling, drug trafficking, arm robbery, money laundry and illicit arms trafficking resulting to the proliferation of SALW (Idris, 2020). Furthermore, it was observed that "out of the 640 million small arms circulating globally, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa, and 8 million in West Africa, alone (Udeh, Eyikorogha, Ekoyo & Obiagu, 2021). The majority of which about 59% are in the hands of civilians, 38% are owned by government armed forces, 2.8 % by police, and 0.2% by armed groups (Idris, 2020, p. 5; Ochoga, 2019).

Consequently, this has remained an undisputable founding pillar upon the thriving insecurity in the country. For instance, between 2015 to 2017, Nigeria experienced more than fifteen incidences of violent clashes due to the escalation of SALWs in the country, which therefore led to the death of over 2,500 innocent persons in 2016 alone, while other were injured and rendered homeless (Sule, 2021; Ugbudu, 2021). Furthermore, according to the International Crisis Group, (2017), an estimated death toll of over 1,700 deaths, and over 80,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across four major camps in Benue State, majority of which were Christians between 2016 to 2018 (Ugbudu, 2021).

Therefore, the above ugly situation were possible due to the establishment of common market through the supranational authorities such as the AfCFTA and ECOWAS for African and West African trade/economic integration that permit for easy passage of persons, goods and services across the African frontiers in general, and West African sub-region in particular, which thus made the Nigeria-Benin borders so porous and allowing for smugglings and other criminal activities to thrive. As a result, the following verifiable indicators shall be used to advance our discourse and validate our argument on how the establishment of common market leads to porous Nigeria-Benin borders. Such indicators are not limited amongst the following:

- Trade liberalization and smugglings
- Abolishment of visa entry and criminalities
- Free movement of persons, goods and services and proliferation of arms and ammunition

2. Methodology

This study is quantitative data based, through

which we rely heavily on extraction of data from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, book chapters, official documents, internet material, amongst others, even though even though they were not produced for the direct use of this purpose, but in existence for public and research purposes (Udeh, Eyikorogha, Ekoyo, Madu, & Oguwuike, 2021).

Similarly, we also leveraged on content analysis for the purpose of analysing data generated from the secondary sources due to the complexity nature of the study.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses the proposition of Neo-functionalism theory of integration as its blue-print to bear witness to scholarly discourse on the intensity of smuggling, trafficking and proliferation of small arm and light weapons (SALW) in Nigeria. As a rising implication of the establishment of common market through trade liberalisation, abolishment of visa entry, and free movement of persons, goods and services, upon which the borders are made porous, and allowing smuggling, trans-national criminalities, terrorism, banditry, amongst others things in Nigeria. Neo-functionalism theory is a part of regional integration theory propounded by Ernst Haas in 1958 in his book titled, *Uniting of Europe*, 1958, (Udeh, 2017), and was developed in an attempt to integrate the European communities and its economic institutions such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was described as the first regional integration stage, later to European Atomic Energy (EAE) (Onuoha, 2008). The European Economic Community (EEC), was later introduced when the ECSC recorded an inundated success, particularly as regards to the economic concern of the entire European community after the World War II in 1945 (Bache, 2001). The theory was propounded when the functionalism theory failed to address the whole issues of regional integration in Europe. Similarly, the theory holds similar view with that of the functionalism theory of regional integration, which was propounded by David Mitrany in 1946, in his book titled, *Working Peace System*, (Onuoha, 2008).

Thus, both theories held that, every society is composed of various groups of interests, and integration process would better satisfy them, (Rosamond, 2011). Furthermore, neo-functionalism sees a state as a complex society composed of various needs, values, aspirations, interests amongst others, and holds that states with such similar needs, values, aspirations, experiences can transfer or voluntarily cede their sovereign will by function in realisation of set out certain goals and objectives with expectation that in future the integrating states would shift from working together in certain technical areas of interest to create a political union in order to stimulate cooperation, peace and unity among the integrated nation states.

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 among the integrated states. In the same vein, Haas theorised 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).

In the same vein, 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.

4. Literature review

1. Trade liberalisation and smugglings

Obviously, the establishment of the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) in 1975 through Lagos treaty was in consonance with the urgent need for the economic development and regional integration amongst West African member states. In 1995, there was a revised version of the ECOWAS Treaty, with same broad objectives but with slight variation only in chapters and articles. According to Idris (2020) the broad objectives of ECOWAS Treaty or sub-regional integrating organisation are:

To promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic order in West Africa that is geared towards raising the living standard of citizens of Member States, enhancing economic stability, fostering economic relations among member states, and contributing to the development of the African continent (Chapter II Article 3 Revised ECOWAS Treaty) (cited in Opanike, Abuloju & Adenipekun, 2015, p. 42).

Furthermore, ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and goods was enacted in 1979 for the purpose of achieving the aforementioned objectives of the organisation (Idris, 2020). It also granted citizens of the member states the right to enter and reside in any territory of its member states with a valid travel document and international health document certifying the health free threat of such citizen for a maximum period of three months. Similarly, article 3, aims and objectives (d) therefore, established common market through; (i) "the liberalisation of trade by the abolition, among Member States, of customs duties levied on

imports and exports, and the abolition, among member States, of non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade area at the Community level... (iii) the removal, between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, and to the right of residence and establishment" (Chapter II Article 3, p. 5, Revised ECOWAS Treaty). Upon this was the easy and passage of goods and persons across the frontiers of ECOWAS member States with little or no restriction. Although, according to Opanike, Abuloju and Adenipekun (2015), the protocol does not by its objective of openness of the borders and free movement of persons, good, services and capital encourages for criminality of any form. In consolidating the protocol, article 2(2) of the Treaty requires that "its member states to abolish all forms of obstacles preventing its implementation to build a solid foundation for regional cooperation and integration in the West African sub-region" (Idris, 2020, p. 2; Ochoga, 2019).

However, since the inception of ECOWAS protocol on openness and free movement of persons, good, services and capital smuggling and other criminal activities have become the order of the day within and across the Nigeria-Benin borders. By meaning, smuggling is simply a secret importation of prohibited goods; it is synonymous to trafficking, which also stands for dealing of illicit trade. Therefore, the phenomenon of smuggling within the Nigeria-Benin border region has been a while dealing before and after the political independence in 1960, but its spate in the recent time alarming (Golub, et al, 2019; Abegbunde & Fabiyi, 2020), particularly between 2015-2022. As smuggling has not only remained the order of the day, but also posing serious security challenge to the country's national security amid the myriad efforts of the security agencies who are officially responsible for curbing and preventing all kinds of illegal trading activities across the borders. Thus, it was observed that "deliberate smuggling of contraband goods into Nigeria defines the activities of many Beninenses on Nigeria-Benin Republic borders up to the level that smuggling on the selfsame border is the second highest foreign exchange earner for Benin Republic" (Abegbunde & Fabiyi, 2020, p. 58). Again, they noted:

The criminal activities of the trans-border car snatcher Hamani Tidjani (a citizen of Niger Republic but a resident of Benin Republic), who specialised in crossing the border from Benin Republic to Nigeria with his armed gang, snatch cars at gunpoint, smuggle them back to Benin Republic, and repackage the stolen cars as imported cars to be smuggled back to Nigeria for sale was so serious that Nigerian Government in 2003 unilaterally closed the border against Benin Republic and re-opened it only when Hamani Tidjani was arrested in Benin Republic and brought to Nigeria for trial (The Nation, 2013) (cited in Abegbunde & Fabiyi, 2020, p. 58).

Indeed, smuggling activities have always been much pronounced, especially along the Nigeria-Benin

Republic border regions. For instance, according to (Abegbunde & Fabiyi, 2020), an estimated goods worth more than US\$22.4 billion were smuggled into Nigeria in 2016 alone from the Republic of Benin. In agreement with the above, Ovaga, Ogu and Udeh (2023, p. 147) maintained that an "overwhelming bulk of refined fuel sold in the domestic market of Benin Republic (including more than 80% of gasoline as well as 20% of diesel and other products) are smuggled from Nigeria across the Nigeria-Benin international boundary". Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2006) (cited in Abegbunde & Fabiyi, 2020, p. 57) observed that "Nigerian human traffickers regularly use the Nigeria-Benin international borders to transport human trafficking victims from Nigeria to Benin for onward delivery to Gabon, Togo, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Spain, France, Russia, Switzerland, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia for commercial sexual exploitation and child labour". Also, report has it that the Rice Processors Association of Nigeria (RPN) observed the uncontrollable spate of smuggling through the Nigeria-Benin borders, upon which more than 1 billion kilogrammes of rice were smuggled into Nigeria in the first three months of 2019 alone (Munshi, 2019). The above was the justifiable rationale upon which the United States Department of States declared Benin Republic as the world's second largest destination for India-manufactured variety of the opioid known as Tramadol in 2016, which often has Nigeria as its final destination (Kazeem, 2018). Odunsi (2018) decried the situation and maintained that over 500 million tablets of such hard drugs were smuggled into Nigeria through the Nigeria-Benin borders in 2018. Similarly, Abegbunde and Fabiyi (2020) also contend that the trade liberalisation which involves removal or reduction of barriers to trade amongst ECOWAS nation-states has done adversely harm to many ECOWAS member states than its benefits, as it made many ECOWAS borders porous, allowing all kinds of criminal activities and smuggling of SALWs, particularly that of the Nigeria-Benin borders.

Consequently, smuggling as a result of trade liberalisation has reportedly affected Nigerian society in several ways. For instance, smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria is observed to have resulted in the death of an estimated 1,000 Nigerians per year since 1999 through armed robbery (Okeke & Oji, 2014). Similarly, it is also observed that the proliferation of weapons is responsible for the obvious alarming insecurity situation in Nigeria, with particular reference to Boko Haram terrorism, banditry and kidnappings in the country's northeast and northwest region (Ogu, Ovaga & Udeh, 2023; Awodola & Ayuba, 2015). Thus, increased oil bunkering, oil pipeline vandalism, environmental degradation, and kidnapping for ransom in the country's Niger Delta region (Badmus, 2010); worsened the violent activities of the urban youth gangs and increased cultism and rival cult clashes amongst the youths in

academic institutions and urban centres (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020). It also has led to herdsmen attacks on the on the armless farmers (Omitola, 2014); and emboldened secessionist agitations in the southeastern region of the country (Adeniyi, 2017). The incessant ethno-religious violent, intra and inter party violent conflict across the country are not left out (Ubi, 2020). It is against this backdrop that Aluko (2012) posited that, the proliferation of arms and ammunition into African sub-region remained a strong tool used to actualise vested socio-political objectives which in several occasions used to invite troubles to security settings of many countries. With evidence records of social unrest incidents and destructions of properties; lost of lives in Nigeria as a result of circulation of SALWs.

The increase rate of smuggling along Nigeria-Benin borders in the recent time, particularly as it impede the national security of Nigeria was the obvious rationale for the unilateral closure of Nigeria-Benin borders in the early hours of 20th August, 2019 (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020). The decision according Mohammed (2019) came as a preventive measure aimed at “better securing Nigerian borders in order to strengthen the country’s economy and addressing other trans-border security concerns”. In a similar vein, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the Nigerian Minister for Information and Culture also rationalised the border closure with an argument that Nigeria-Benin borders were obviously and lately been used for frequent illegal activities of “banditry, kidnapping, smuggling of goods and human beings, illegal migration, proliferation of small and light (SALW), and circumvention of the ECOWAS Protocol on Transit” (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020, p. 60). Furthermore, report has it that Nigeria-Benin borders have been used diversely for criminalities and trafficking and smuggling of contraband goods such as illegal medical drugs like Tramadol and illegal arms and ammunition; high role of rice smuggling despite the ban placed on foreign rice, amongst other things (Royal, 2019; British Broadcasting Corporation, 2019). BBC (2019) also explained that the rate cars heavily smuggled into Nigeria is estimated to about 10,000 cars on monthly basis; while an estimated 20 million litres of petroleum products particularly gasoline are regularly smuggled from Nigeria to Benin Republic on daily basis as at July 2019. Similarly, Blum (2014) confirmed that the trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW), narcotics, human beings, as well as other cross-border criminalities are not only turning many Nigerian societies into the state of anarchy, but also to the real exchange markets for stolen goods and contrabands like some villages of Djoffin in Benin Republic on one hand. Also, the large importation of textile which amounted to US\$4.2b are partly contributing factor to the collapse of Kaduna Textile Limited, Arewa Textiles, United Nigerian Textiles Limited, and numerous other textile manufacturing companies in Nigeria on the other hand (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020, 62). Again, they further contend that the “non-medical use of the opioid Tramadol sold

outside of medical establishments is often adulterated and substandard, thus has led to a rise in hospital admissions and mortalities in many West African countries including Nigeria”.

Thus, other consequences of smuggling through regional, sub-regional trade liberalisation on national security of Nigeria are abound and not limited to the following:

i. Security infiltration: generally, study has it that trade liberalisation as strong tool for economic integration is an indisputable pillar upon which many African borders are porously characterised in general, West African sub-region in particular on one hand. Therefore, the porous nature of the borders resulted in an uncontrollable spate of smuggling goods and small arms and light weapons (SALWs), which appears serious security threat to the entire society on the other hand. This is not exception in the case of Nigeria and Benin, as the international borders connecting the two countries are obviously porous and permissible for all sorts of criminalities, which therefore impede on the national security of Nigeria. Similarly, according to Nosiri (2016), aside the trans-national crimes, smuggling of illegal goods, trafficking of persons, amongst others, the porous Nigeria-Benin borders also thrive terrorists operation. This is so because, report has it that terrorist group such as Boko Haram, killer herdsmen, amongst other receive their arms and logistics assistance through the porous Nigeria-Benin borders. He further observed that the group (Boko Haram) often use the borders to smuggle arms and weapons used causing terror, mayhem and fear in the society (Nosiri, 2016). Again, the porous borders have aided Boko Haram and other criminal gangs to adequately launch several successful attacks in Nigeria and the neighbouring countries in the West African sub-region killing thousands of innocent citizens, sacking and displacing millions of people from their home (Temisan, 2015; Menner, 2014; Bearzotti et al, 2015; Mailabari & Hamidu, 2015; Adetula, 2015). The groups were able to launch their attacks and escaped through the porous borders undetected on one hand; and also purchase or traffic weapons and travel to other neighbouring countries for other assistance on the other hand (Nosiri, 2016; Ogu, Ovaga, & Udeh, 2023).

ii. Economic Development: The economic development of Nigeria is another factor to be considered. The adverse implication of Nigeria-Benin porous borders cannot be overemphasised, because border insecurity will often pose serious challenge or threat to the economic development (economy) of the affected country. This is so because porous borders often give room for smuggling of goods into the country, thus contributing to high loss of government revenue generation through import duties; on the other hand, smuggling of contraband goods amount serious threat to domestic and foreign direct investment, create unemployment challenge in the society, as people will largely depend on the finished goods from other parts of the world, rather than improvising, patronizing locally

made products. But, if the borders are tightly controlled, it will enforce the citizens to look inward and patronize locally made goods, which by so doing will create more employment opportunities for the people, and aid to the economic development of the country. Therefore, the porous Nigeria-Benin border has always encouraged for lot of illegal activities such as oil bunkering, smuggling of illicit goods, which has led to loss of government revenue (Ubi, 2020). For instance, according to Nosiri (2016, 219):

Oil is often stolen and sent across the border, which has contributed to a huge loss to Nigerian wealth...about 300, 000 barrels are illegally exported per day along the Benin-Nigeria border which is seen as the major acting zone. In addition, the figure of the illegal oil bunkering is between 150, 000 to 200, 000 barrel per day and which may be sold between 10 to 25 dollar per barrel amounting to 2 million dollar per day and 750 million dollar annually.

In line with the above, it is pitifully discovered that "Nigeria loses about 20 billion dollars annually to crude oil theft and estimated 55, 210 barrels of oil per day or monthly average of 1, 656, 281 barrels was stolen in 2018 (This day, 2014) (cited in Nosiri, 2016, p. 219).

iii. Health challenge: The porous Nigeria-Benin borders resulted in increase smuggling of illegal drugs, trafficking of person has high tendency of spread of disease, especially the sex workers or those who went into prostitution, as they may contract infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS (Nte, 2011; Blum, 2014). For instance, Nosiri (2016) observed that "about two-third of the reported HIV/AIDS cases in Nigeria are females that are often migrated/trafficked to other countries". He noted further that aside the contraction of infectious diseases, most of the illegal goods smuggled into the country are often substandard and harmful to the body, as they have high tendency of causing damage to human health (Nosiri, 2016).

2. Abolishment of visa entry and criminalities

Abolishment of visa entry is of the broad objectives of economic integration in the West African sub-region, as contained in the ECOWAS protocol. The article 3, aims and objectives of the protocol clearly defined the abolishment of visa entry as, "the removal, between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, and to the right of residence and establishment" (ECOWAS revised treaty, P. 5). Therefore, the above protocol permits for the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital (trade liberalisation). The protocol on free movement further conferred to the community citizens of the member states "the right to enter and reside in the territory of any member state, provided they possessed a valid travel document and international health certificate" (Opanike, Abuloju & Adenipekun, 2015, p. 44). However, the protocol never encourages illegitimacy and criminality in the course of admission of the citizens of the member states. Akin to the above, Opanike, Abuloju and Adenipekun (2015, p. 44) maintained that the

ECOWAS protocol on free movement "allowed member states the right to refuse admission to any Community citizens who were inadmissible under the member state's own domestic law".

Therefore, since the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and ECOWA protocol as agents of economic integration in the African region in general and West African sub-region in particular through free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; and the overall abolishment of visa entry, as observed in the ECOWAS protocol article 3, aims and objectives, 2d, iii, p. 5. The member states, with particular reference to Nigeria has been greatly disadvantaged and struggling to maintain peace, stability and security, which are obviously the necessary conditions for achieving the overall national development (Idris, 2020). This is so because it is observed that criminals seize the opportunity to perpetuate all kinds of illegal acts of smugglings and other criminal activities along the borders in guise of legitimate traders. Also, aliens from other African states seize the opportunity to showcase their criminal proficiency in collaboration with the nationals of both Nigeria and Benin Republic, thus, affecting greatly Nigerian national security, as the country is in serious security threat. Therefore, this is the ground upon which Idris (2020) argued the emergence of armed banditry in Nigeria is linked to the inter-connectivity between the trans-border free movement and cross-border crimes in West Africa. As a result, Opanike (2016) argued that "security of lives and properties in Nigeria seem to be more threatened now than before with the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency and farmer-herder crisis". He further argued that the recent wave of banditry and farmer-herders crisis in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna, Plateau, Benue and the other parts of the country are liked-up to the porous borders through ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; abolishment of visa entry and the overall trade liberalisation in the West African sub-region (Opanike, 2016). In a clear term, both treaties of ECOWAS and AU on free movement of persons, goods and services cross the ECOWAS sub-region in particular and African region in general for economic development gave rise for smuggling and trafficking of SALWs through the frontiers of Nigeria. Thus, undermining the national security of Nigeria, as the security of lives and properties of many Nigerians appear to be more threatened now than before the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency and Fulani terrorist in the country.

The abolition of visa entry and right of residence by ECOWAS protocol has therefore made Nigeria a danger zone for criminal activities in the West African sub-region through the aid of trans-national crimes. Affirmatively, it was observed that over 90 percent of the border users have no backup documents as specified in ECOWAS protocol on free movement of goods, capital, service; and abolition of visa entry. Instead, they gain access to the borders at the discretion of the immigration

officials. The protocol therefore gave credence for trans-border crimes, which is otherwise known as transnational crimes Nigeria. It also breeds local or national crimes, which therefore grows serious threat to not only the national security, but also to the international security architecture, and further severe implications for public safety (public health and institutions) through the disruption of economic stability across the nation, sub-region, region and the world at large” (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). By transnational, we mean crimes that cut across frontiers of nation-states, which have potential effect across national borders as well as crimes which are intra-state but which offend fundamental values of the international community (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). As a matter of fact, these crimes do not only cross national borders of a particular country, but also have the potentials and involvement in cross-border interference by the nature of its modus-operandi (Ubi, 2020). Therefore, its activities encompasses amongst the following; “human trafficking, smuggling/trafficking of goods (such as trafficking in arms, drugs, illegal animal and plant products and other goods prohibited on environmental grounds (e.g. banned ozone depleting substances), sex slavery and terrorism offences” (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022, p. 279). Thus, the adverse implications of free movement of persons, trade liberalisation, and abolishment of visa entry and right of residence of ECOWAS communities citizens are greatly abound, as it creates more illegal trans-routes where criminals find convenient for their criminal activities along Nigeria-Benin borders. For instance, the following are the major illegal routs between Nigeria and Benin where most of the criminal activities such as smugglings, trafficking, amongst other often take place even in the broad day light, these include:

- Cotonou – Port Novo – Igolo (Benin) – Owode (Nigeria) – Badagry – Lagos
- Cotonou – Porto Novo – Igolo (Benin) – Owode Yewa – Ilaro – Ifo – Alagbado –Lagos
- Cotonou – Port Novo – Pobe – Ketu Owode (Benin) – Imeko – Abeokuta Ogumakin– Ibadan/Lagos
- Cotonou – Port Novo – Pobe – Ketu (Benin) – Oke Agbede Odeda– Ibadan
- Cotonou – Save (Benin) – Igbokoko Iseyin– Ibadan
- Cotonou – Parakou (Benin) – Kisi Igbeti– Ilorin/Offa/Ibadan
- Cotonou – Chikanda – Kisi – Igbetillorin/Ibadan
- Cotonou – Chikanda – New Bussa – Jebba Ilorin/Offa/Ibadan
- Cotonou – Babana – Kainji – Jebba Ilorin/Offa/Ibadan (Aluede, 2017, p. 231-232)

The following sub-themes shall be used to justify the above argument.

i. Trafficking of drugs: Trafficking of drugs is one of the major consequences of abolition of visa entry, free movement of persons and trade liberalisation in the West African sub-region, as criminals utilised the such opportunity to perpetuate illegal acts of smuggling contraband drugs into the country. For

instance, Babajide and Opakunbi (2022) observed that smuggling of drugs across the borders by traffickers has prominently advanced in Nigeria, as hard and illicit drugs like cannabis sativa (Indian hemp) are not only being produced in Nigeria, but are also trafficking to other parts of the world from Nigeria. In consonance with the above, NDLEA (2009) contend that cannabis sativa which is an internationally controlled hard drug are currently being produced in Nigeria after its seedlings were brought into Nigeria from Myanmar by its soldiers returning from the second World War in the 1940s. Furthermore, it was also observed that narcotic substances, which are popularly known as cocaine and heroin are also smuggled into Nigeria from Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East, therefore taking advantage of Nigeria’s strategic location as direct link with many transit and consumer countries (Ubi, 2020). However, the efforts of the security agencies are not relented in curtailing the issue, as many have been arrested in the process. For instance, according to NDLEA report in 2017, a total of 10,009 arrests of suspected drug traffickers were made across the country in 2017 along the Nigeria-Benin borders, of which 9,387 were males and 622 were females (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). Below is the table showing the summary of contraband hard drugs smuggled and its arrested perpetrators in Nigeria along Nigeria-Benin borders from 2012-2021

Below is the bar chart representation of the above contraband goods seizures, with particular reference to cocaine and heroin in Nigeria between 2012-2021.

The chart above shows an upwards increase in the smuggling of cocaine into Nigeria between 2012 to 2016; and between 2017-2020 there was a slowdown in cocaine smuggling activity, therefore leading to decrease in the quantity smuggled and arrested. However, in 2021 the quantity smuggled and arrested in the country became inundated. Thus, abolition of visa entry and right of residence of ECOWAS citizens is an indisputable factor upon which criminalities such as smuggling, trafficking and other forms of criminal activities thrive in Nigeria in particular and other West African States in general. Therefore, the study submit that if this is not controlled at this early stage may lead Nigeria and other West African States into dumping ground of such hard drugs, upon which its health implication abound greatly in the society.

In the same vein, we also used trend graph to illustrate year-to-year movement of cocaine and heroine in Nigeria through the above table. For instance, below is the figure of trend graph.

According to the above figure, there was relative stability in the number of the persons in involved in the smuggling of contraband goods in Nigeria between 2012 to 2016, therefore resulted in the low arrest. However, from 2017 to 2022, there has been an increase in the number of arrested persons due to much involvement in smuggling business. By implication, ECOWAS protocol on the abolition of visa entry within the sub-region

increased in criminal activities, particularly within the Nigeria-Benin border regions.

Similarly, the report also has it that some states like Edo State recorded an outrageous quantity of 45,339kg, Ondo State with 32,729kg, and Kano State 18,654kg in 2017 alone, making a total of 309,356kg of drugs seized just in one year (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). In the same vein, this is not limited to States alone, but also to the six geo-political zones in Nigeria; as such smugglings of the contraband hard drugs are on the increase, particularly in the zones bordering Benin Republic. For instance, the table below shows outrageous drugs seizures according to geo-political zones in Nigeria, 2018-2019.

Therefore, the above seizures of hard drugs were also represented in a pie chart in order to have clear leading zones in such illicit engagement in the country. For instance, this is shown in the figure below.

Empirically, according to the figure above, the North-Central zone which bordered the Republic of Benin through Niger State recorded the highest cases of smuggled and seized illicit drugs with the quantity of 519,022.6 between 2018 and 2019. This following the south-West (Yoruba land), which also has direct border link with the Republic of Benin recorded second highest drugs seizure after North-Central with a total of 46,004.13 in 2018-2019. While North-East recorded the lowest seizure with 6,098.81 due to its none border linkage with Benin Republic on the other hand.

Thus, the above records recognised Nigeria “the highest destination of drugs, above South Africa and Qatar” (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). The abolition of visa entry and right of residence by ECOWAS communality members, thus gave room for the inflow of drugs into Nigeria uncontrollably in the recent time.

3. Smugglings of arms and ammunitions: Smuggling of arms and ammunitions is another consequence of abolition of visa entry, right of entry and residence observed in ECOWAS protocol, which therefore gave room for trans-national crimes to thrive in Nigeria and beyond through illegally trafficking or smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALW) (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). This was the ground through which many nation-states in the West Africa witnessed retrogressive massive proliferation of arms and weapons in the region. Its prominence in Nigeria, thus has posed serious threat to Nigeria’s national security; the corporate existence and unity of the country; and the survival of its citizenry at large on one hand. Similarly, escalating intra and inter-state/communal conflicts including the coups and countercoups and various ethno-religious violence conflicts and violent-ridden elections in the country on the other hand. Furthermore, the proliferation of arms and ammunitions through liberalisation of trade therefore resulted in the current spate of ritual killings, kidnapping, banditry, farmers/Fulani attacks in different parts of the country (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). The escalation of proliferation of arms and ammunitions in Nigeria is quite alarming, as it has negatively defined the country--Nigeria the

largest destination of SALWs in the Africa. The above assertion appears unarguable because evidences abound greatly through documented records. For instance, Premium Times (2017, p. 1) reported that “the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) intercepted 470 pump action rifles imported from Turkey at the Tin-Can Island port in Lagos on September 21, just few days after it intercepted another 1,100 rifles on September 11. And, more recently, 73 locally manufactured guns and 891 cartridges were intercepted at Yauri, Zamare waterside in Kebbi”. More so, the Nigerian Tribune also revealed that a total of 21,548,608 arms and ammunition were shipped into Nigeria illegally between 2010 to 2017 (Nigerian Tribune, 2017) (cited in Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022, p. 281). Consequently, this undermined Nigeria’s national security, as the Boko Haram terrorist organisation in North-East Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen are direct beneficiaries of the arms proliferation in Nigeria. Again, it was observed that most of the arms the terrorist organisation used to engage the Nigerian military found their way into the country through smuggling from countries like Libya, Chad and Sudan through her porous (Asare, 2014).

Thus, the overall consequences of ECOWAS protocol of abolishment of visa entry, right to enter and residence, free movement of persons, goods and services and the overall trade liberalisation cannot be overemphasised, as it makes the borders so porous and allowing all sort of illegitimate activities such as trafficking, smuggling of people and SALW, and other kinds of contraband goods into Nigeria through the Republic of Benin borders (Golub, Mbaye. & Diop, 2019). Therefore, posing serious security challenge to Nigeria despite the tireless efforts of the security agencies officially responsible for curbing illegal trade and other activities on the border (Nigeria Customs Service, 2019). For instance, according to World Bank estimation, in 2006 alone goods worth over US\$2.4 billion were smuggled into Nigeria from Benin Republic (Raballand & Mjekiqi, 2010). Similarly, Abegunde and Fabiyi (2020) also contend that the right to enter and reside by ECOWAS protocol is an indisputable factor through Nigeria-Benin borders are porous, thus allowing smugglings of SALWs and other criminal activities and weapons theft a lucrative means of livelihood across the frontiers in the West African sub-region. Because, the culprits (weapons thieves) easily escape through the borders into the Benin Republic after such dirty businesses and vice versa (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020).

Again, the adverse effect of criminal and smuggling activities as a result of the porous Nigeria-Benin borders through trade liberalisation and free movement of persons across the borders have negatively affected the country’s national security, economic development and its national development in general. For instance, smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALW) into Nigeria has been discovered to have resulted in the death of an estimated 1,000 Nigerians per year since 1999 through armed robbery (Okeke & Oji, 2014).

Similarly, it was also observed that the proliferation of weapons is responsible for the obvious alarming insecurity situation in Nigeria, with particular reference to Boko Haram terrorism, banditry and kidnappings in the country's northeast and northwest region (Awodola & Ayuba, 2015). Increased oil bunkering, oil pipeline vandalism, environmental degradation, and kidnapping for ransom in the country's Niger Delta region (Badmus, 2010); worsened violent activities of the urban youth gangs and increased cultism and its rival cult clashes among the youths in academic institutions and urban centres (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020). Increased herdsmen attacks on the on the armless farmers (Omitola, 2014); and emboldened secessionist agitations in the southeastern region of the country (Adeniyi, 2017). The incessant ethno-religious violent, intra and inter party violent conflict across the country are not left out (Ubi, 2020). It is against this backdrop that Aluko (2012) posited that, the proliferation of arms into African sub-region remained a strong tool used to actualize curtailed socio-political objectives which on several occasions used to invite troubles to security settings of many countries. With evidence records of social unrest incidents and destructions of properties; lost of lives as a result of socio-economic and political violence due to the rampant circulation of SALWs.

4. Free movement of persons, goods and services and proliferation of arms and ammunition

Since the credence of ECOWAS as the West African sub-regional integration organisation, it has been making giant strides and efforts in the community integrative schemes in order to enhance and fulfill its integration responsibility amongst the West African communities/states. Since its introduction in 1975 through Lagos treaty and its broad objective of trade liberalisation which include, the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; harmonization of monetary and fiscal policies; harmonization of business law; development of transport; communications and energy networks and involvement of private sectors in the regional integration process, due to their relevance to the national economic interests of member states on one hand; and immense contribution to the achieving the ultimate economic union goals on the other hand. In juxtaposition, ECOWAS seems the most advanced and achieved compare to other sub-regional arrangements or integration organisation in the African continents, but still miles far from the overwhelming achievements of its European Union counterpart (Ubi, 2020). In the same vein, it is unarguably that ECOWAS Protocol on free movement is regarded the most germane to the overall integration objectives of the ECOWAS policies because genuine integration cannot be optimally achieved in the absence of the free movement of the community citizens who are considered agents of integration objective on one hand; and obviously, prior to the enactment of ECOWAS protocol on free movement, people from places had engaged in movement from one location to another irrespective of boundaries on the other hand (Opanike,

Abuloju & Adenipekun, 2015). ECOWAS protocol on free movement seeks to make trade amongst member states easier by removing all kinds of impediments or barriers which may conflict on free movement of people who are agents of trade. The protocol went further to establish "Free Trade Area, Customs Union, Common Market, amongst other things which may make trade and economic integration easily achieved in the sub-region. According to Opanike, Abuloju and Adenipekun (2015), the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement did not only allow free movement of persons only, but also ensure mobility of trade i.e. goods, services, capital within the West African sub-region or across the member states' frontiers. In the same vein, the protocol on free movement further conferred on community (country or State) citizens the right to enter and reside in the territory of any member state, provided such person possesses a valid travelling document and international health certificate, which validates the legitimacy of such individual (Chapter II, Article 3, Revised ECOWAS Treaty). On the contrary, the protocol clearly did not give room for encouraging smuggling, and other form of criminalities., instead, allows member states "the right to refuse admission to any Community citizens who were inadmissible under the member state's own domestic law"(Ubi, 2020). Furthermore, there were other four supplementary protocols adopted by the ECOWAS, these which were enacted by the protocol between 1985 and 1990 are not limited to the following as: "to provide valid travel document to their citizens, grant Community citizens the right of residence for the purpose of seeking and carrying out income-earning employment, ensure appropriate treatment for persons being expelled, not to expel Community citizens en masse, limit the grounds for individual expulsion to reasons of national security, public order or morality, public health or non-fulfillment of an essential condition of residence" (Opanike, Abuloju & Adenipekun (2015, p. 44).

However, the aforementioned ECOWAS protocol and its integration objectives, particularly on the free movement of persons, capital, goods and services; and the overall trade liberalisation led to proliferation of arms and ammunition. This is so because as there are no restrictions on movement of individuals within the West African sub-region in particular and Africa in general, nationals or citizens of member states including touts, criminals, bandits, miscreants, terrorists, amongst others seize such opportunity to smuggle and proliferate arms and ammunition on one hand. Similarly, trade liberalisation appears an ample opportunity through which weapons could be imported, as no restriction is placed on trade within the sub-region on the other hand. This further resulted in the proliferation of arms and weapons within the Nigerian states, thus leading to increased rate of attacks by terrorist groups such as the Boko haram, killer herdsmen and bandits, among others in country (Ikyase & Umara, 2016; Iweze, 2020; Egbefo & Babalola, 2022). While other trans-national border

criminalities abound greatly in the society on the other hand, these therefore include amongst the following; the human and drugs trafficking, harassments of legitimate traders and smuggling of other illegal/contraband items (Ikyase & Umara, 2016; Eze-Michael, 2021). The adverse implications on the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, capital, goods and services within the region and sub-region cannot be overemphasised, as transnational crimes have grown in scope and momentum leading to the movement of all kinds of contrabands including proliferation of arms and ammunitions across international borders, thus posing serious security threat to Nigeria, Africa and beyond (Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022; Faleye, 2019). By meaning, proliferation of arms and ammunition could be understood as the method through which arms and weapons are available to the use of the unthorised private individuals, especially in the conflict zones (Tukur & Rabi, 2020). Similarly, Hazan and Horner (2007) (cited Tukur & Rabi, 2020, p. 23) contend that the concept of proliferation could be best defined "as the growth or numerous multiplications of illegal arms and weapons in the country...also defined as sudden increase in the number of arms and weapons beyond those need for legitimate national security.

Consequently, the illegal possession of arms and weapons by the unprofessional users has posed serious threat to National security of Nigeria in general, as so many states are struggling for peace, serenity and tranquility due the escalation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the country. Similarly, according to Tukur and Rabi (2020), the large quantity of infantry weapons and civilian style rifles including pistols and revolvers in the hands of private citizens which are used during elections are instrumental for the escalation of ethno-religious crises leading to the deaths of many innocent citizens in the country. In the same vein, (Ubi, 2020) contend that the present wave of insecurity ravaging and threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria, particularly in the South-East are linked to the proliferation of illicit arms and ammunitions. Joining the discourse, Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Ifeoluwa and Nwannenaya (2018) contend that "even though, there is no accurate data on the quantity of small arms in Nigeria, reports have shown that out of 10 million illicit small arms in West Africa one to three million are in circulation in Nigeria". in agreement with the above, Bashir (2014) also observed that over 70 percent of the total illegal small arms in West Africa are in Nigeria, as its regular interceptions by the security agencies are empirical evidences. Furthermore, the implication of arms proliferation abound, aside its huge evidence on threat to the security of people and the communities in general. This is shown on the rapid increase rate of crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage taken and rape abound leading to fears of being the next victim. Tukur and Rabi (2020, p. 54) firmly observed that "the circulation of small arms threatens human

survival; it intimidates people and poses threat to their freedom of movement in economic activities". Similarly, aside the deaths and injuries as observed above, proliferation of arms and ammunitions also threatened and caused financial and property losses due to its resultant effects on ethno-religious crises and conflicts across states in the country, particularly in the northern parts, as many economic activities are hibernated for fear of being victims in the process. Akin to the above, Ubi (2020) revealed that, unspecified but outrageous amount of money had been spent by many states and Federal Government (FG) in ensuring security of lives and properties its citizenry. Of course, such huge expenditure would have been used in the provisions of the essential public social services such as clean water, education, healthcare services amongst others that would aid in the better living standard of the people, which would aid in the improvement of human lives and development.

Furthermore, the insecurity arising from proliferation of illicit small arms also limited health care services to the people and prevented adequate care for preventable and treatable conditions and diseases due to the fear of the unknown and societal hostilities on one end. It also hindered educational opportunities, as schools were completely shut down due to the death and loss of teachers, equipments and lack of students who might have flee away amid such violent situation to perceived serene environment during such an unpalatable situation on the other end (Tukur & Rabi, 2020). Pitiably, since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, it was observed that more than 10,000, (an average of 1000 people) usually get killed annually till date in Nigeria due to the proliferation and unprofessionally use of arms and ammunitions (Uwa & Anthony, 2015). Similarly, aside the above consequences of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; and the overall trade liberalisation, as the best way to achieve regional and sub-regional economic integration in the African continent and West African sub-region respectively. It was also observed that the proliferation of weapons is responsible for the obvious alarming insecurity situation in Nigeria, with particular reference to Boko Haram terrorism, banditry and kidnappings in the country's northeast and northwest region (Awodola & Ayuba, 2015). Increased oil bunkering, oil pipeline vandalism, environmental degradation, and kidnapping for ransom in the country's Niger Delta region (Badmus, 2010); worsened violent activities of the urban youth gangs and increased cultism and its rival cult clashes among the youths in academic institutions and urban centres (Abegunde & Fabiyi, 2020). Increased herdsmen attacks on the on the armless farmers (Omitola, 2014); and emboldened secessionist agitations in the southeastern region of the country (Adeniyi, 2017). The incessant ethno-religious violent, intra and inter party violent conflict across the country are not left out (Ubi, 2020). It is against this backdrop

that Aluko (2012) posited that, the proliferation of arms into African sub-region remained a strong tool used to actualize curtailed socio-political objectives which on several occasions used to invite troubles to security

settings of many countries. With evidence records of social unrest incidents and destructions of properties; lost of lives as a result of socio-economic and political violence due to the rampant circulation of SALWs.

Table 1 The overall summary of drugs seizures and its arrested perpetrators, 2012-2021

Year	Cannabis	Cocaine	Heroin	Others	Total	Arrested persons
2012	228,794.13	131.89	211.03	3,905.45	233,699.6	8,052
2013	205,373	290.20	24.53	134,280.38	339,968.11	8,843
2014	53,878,194.52	226.04	56.45	7,562.49	55,886,039.50	8,826
2015	871,480.32	260.47	30.09	31,442.86	903,624.56	8,778
2016	187,394	305.17	66.28	79,856.04	267,591.49	8,257
2017	191,084.19	92.26	85.36	117,143.20	309,356.31	10,009
2018	273,249.08	124.85	59.62	44,331.29	317,764.85	9,831
2019	602,654.49	113.00	23.89	10,112.29	612,903.48	9,444
2020	124,473.3	105.56	7.55	20,209.27	144,795.67	9,915
2021	469,246.4	326.5	122.55	110,435.5	580,130.5	12,306
Total	57,031,943	1,975.59	687.35	559,248.6	57,595,874	94,261

Source: Eze (2022)

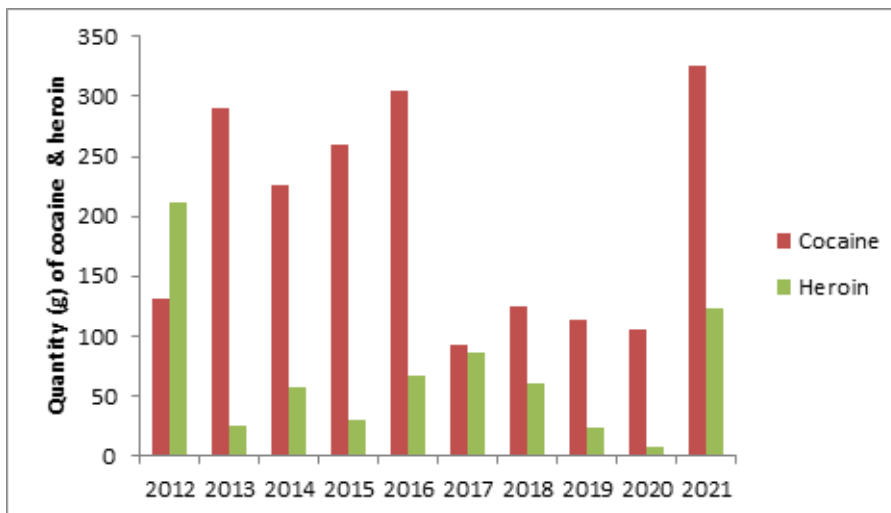


Fig. 1 Year-to-year quantity of cocaine and heroin smuggled into Nigeria, 2012-2021

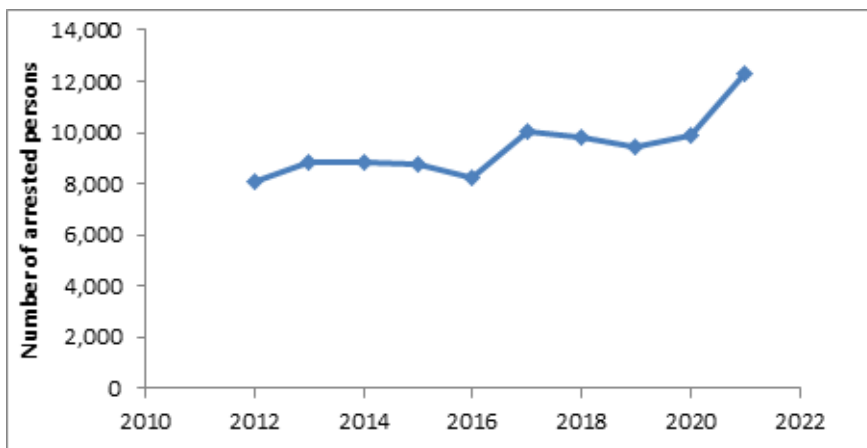


Fig. 2 Year-to-year number of the arrested persons in engaged in smuggling of cocaine and heroin in Nigeria, 2012-2022

Table 2 Seizures of drugs according to the geo-political zones, 2018-2019

Year	North-Central	South-West	South-South	South-East	North-West	North-East
2018	1,311	1,260	1,821	1,022	2,809	1,608
2019	517,711	44,744.13	28,885.85	13,234.48	11,968.50	4,490.81
Total	519,022.6	46,004.13	30,706.85	14,256.48	14,777.50	6,098.81

Source: Ukpe (2019)

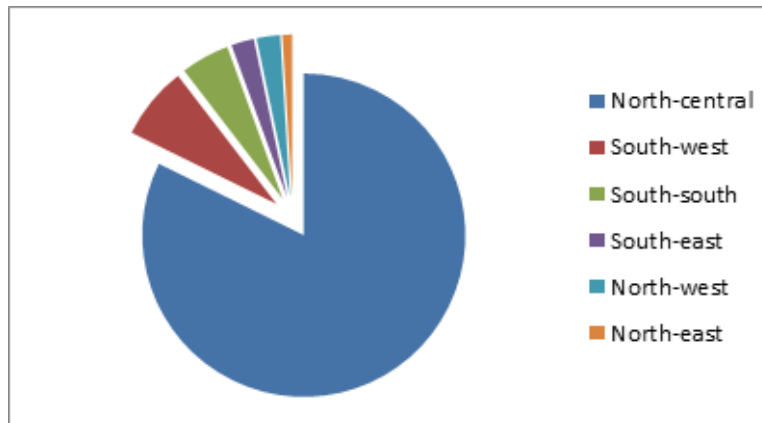


Fig. 3 The smuggling summary of contraband goods according to the six geo-political zones in Nigeria

5. Conclusion

The widely recognition that “no State is an island unto itself politically, economically, technologically and otherwise” formed the background upon which nation-states relate to one another for the purpose of achieving national development and sustainable goals in the society. It is on the basis of the aforementioned that formed the choice of economic integration, globally, regionally, and sub-regionally, which are manifested in form of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Through the liberalization of trade by the abolition, among Member States, of customs duties levied on imports and exports, and the abolition, among Member States, of non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade area at the Community level; the adoption of a common external tariff and a common trade policy vis-a-vis third countries; the removal, between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, and to the right of residence and establishment.

However, in the course of achieving maximally the aforementioned objectives of economic integration in African region at large, and West African sub-region in particular, not only made Nigeria-Benin borders porous, but also gave rise to the ailment of international criminalities, smugglings, trafficking, and proliferation of SALWs into Nigerian society. Consequently, leading to the increase spate of insecurity, Boko Haram terrorism; banditry and kidnappings, increased oil bunkering; oil pipeline vandalism, environmental degradation and kidnapping for ransom; worsened violent activities of the urban youth gangs and increased cultism and its rival cult clashes among the youths in academic institutions and urban centres; increased herdsmen attacks on the on the armless farmers; and emboldened

secessionist agitations in the country.

Therefore, the study revealed that trade liberalisation, abolishment of visa entry and free movement of persons, goods and services led to smugglings, criminalities, and proliferation of arms and ammunitions in Nigeria. Thus, recommended amongst other things:

- The periodic review of the aims and objectives of the AfCFTA, and ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; the abolition of visa entry and rights of residence of ECOWAS citizens. As this will enable for the regional integration organisations to check and maintain commendable and worthwhile regional integration objectives that would be free from security threat amongst its member states.

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