

Assessment of Nigeria-Niger Republic Economic Cooperation: Constraints and Benefits

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria and Niger are neighbours in West Africa with similar culture, religion and language along their borderline. Since the independence of both countries, Niger has been a loyal neighbour and ally to Nigeria, but their relations was perceived to be beneficial to Niger alone. The attention that the government of Nigeria gave to Niger from 2015 to 2022 raised issues in the polity as Nigerians sought justification for the economic cooperation, its benefits to Nigerians, and the economy of Nigeria. This paper assesses the economic cooperation between Nigeria and Niger from 2015 to 2022, and considers the challenges and benefits of the economic cooperation. Using the Economic Interdependency Theory, the paper discusses the economic cooperation between Nigeria and Niger, their economic interdependency, and the rationale for the involvement of Nigeria in the economic development of Niger. Consolidating on the ECOWAS mandate and good neighbourliness foreign policy, the government of Nigeria between 2015 to 2022 improved economic cooperation with Niger majorly as a long-term investment for Nigeria and Nigerians, especially for those residing in the Border States. The paper argues that contrary to assumptions, both countries have had economic cooperation as depicted in their agreements and cooperation since the 1970s. From 2015 to 2022, both countries cooperated in areas such as transportation (rail line and road construction), oil and gas, and aid/support. The paper concludes that there are challenges to continued economic cooperation between both countries which include porous border, and poor consultation with stakeholders. The recommendation of this paper is continued involvement of stakeholders and the people for beneficial cooperation. Subsequent governments should build on the economic cooperation to promote the ECOWAS mandate.

Keywords: Nigeria, Niger, Economic Cooperation, Challenges, Benefits

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria and Niger are two of the fifteen countries that make up West Africa. Both countries share a long boundary (about 1600km) that is very important to Nigeria because it is the longest borderline with any of her neighbours, and as such could expose the country to threats easily. Prior to the 20th century, there was no formal border between both countries (Mohammed, Abba, & Sani, 2019). The peoples of Nigeria and Niger around the border areas have been living and interacting with one other for hundreds of years (Usaini, 2010). Nigeria and Niger have had strong historical, economical and social ties. The towns and cities between Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger share language and customs, Hausa being the prevalent language spoken in the area. Trade between Niger and Nigeria is favoured by Niger's geographical situation: Niger, being a land-locked country is dependent on neighbouring countries (Mohammed, Abba, & Sani, 2019).

Nigeria being a strong force in the West African sub-region continues to be the centre point for economic and political cooperation. Economic cooperation between Nigeria and Niger became inherent after independence, and this led to the creation of the Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC) in 1971, which not only foster economic cooperation, but also serve as an innovative strategy to achieve sustainable development through border community development and regional integration (Oji, 2018). Contemporary settings of the 21st century has made economic cooperation between both countries a major defining element of international relations, especially with the world being a global village, and the challenges of security in the West African region. Nigeria's relations with her immediate neighbours have not been dealt with extensively by scholars probably because her neighbours, being militarily weak, having low population and subsistence economy, hardly pose any threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity or political leaders (Syed, 1984). Although this perspective changed with the Nigeria – Cameroon rift over the Bakassi Peninsula in 2007 which Cameroon contested and won at the International Court of Justice. Nigeria's relations with her immediate neighbours is centred mainly on hegemonic strength, and to avoid disputes which could lead into full-fledged armed hostilities. The series of economic, socio-cultural and other joint initiatives between these countries and Nigeria are therefore considered as preventive mechanisms directed at ensuring peaceful coexistence of all states in the sub region (Tijani, 2010).

his paper specifically focuses on the economic cooperation between these two sovereign states especially with the drive by the regional body, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to boost collaboration and cooperation between and among member states. Economic cooperation between Niger and Nigeria has contributed immensely to the peaceful relations and cooperation of these two economies. There have been intermarriages, informal trades in farm produce, livestock and manufactured goods, and formal trades across both border states. Though the relations between both countries have been cordial under successive administrations, there was a conspicuous increase in the interest of Nigeria as regards the economic and security development of Niger between 2015 and 2022.

The paper stems from a scholarly need to investigate, assess, and document the economic cooperation between Nigeria and Niger from 2015 – 2022. The objective of this paper include to identify and analyse the ways Nigeria and Niger cooperated from 2015 – 2022, examine the challenges to the economic cooperation, and recommend strategies to improve the economic cooperation that will be beneficial to both countries in the future. The methodology adopted for this paper is qualitative using both primary and secondary data. For primary data, fifteen individuals who are knowledgeable in the subject matter were interviewed; two were in the academia, have worked or currently working on research that relates to Nigeria and Niger relations, and resident in Katsina and Maradi States in Nigeria and Niger, two work with NNJCC and have worked there for over 10 years, two work with the Nigerien embassy in Abuja, two with the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Abuja, two work with of the Nigeria Immigration Service and have served at the Nigeria-Niger border, two are business men in Katsina and Maradi, two are residents of border towns (Kaita) in Katsina State, Nigeria and one staff of National Intelligence Agency (Nigeria) working in Niger. While secondary data was collected from existing literature such as books, journals, seminar papers, reports, newspapers and magazines.

Conceptual Clarification

Nigeria and Niger

These are the two countries highlighted in this paper. Nigeria is a Federal Republic in West Africa with a land area of 923,768km². It is often referred to as the “Giant of Africa”, owing to its large population and economy (Ajayi & Crowder, 1987), and lies between longitude 3^o and 14^o and latitude 4^o and 14^o. It shares land border with the Republic of Benin on the west, Chad and Cameroon on the east and Niger on the north. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean (Ajayi & Crowder, 1987). It was

granted political independence from Britain on 1st October 1960; and made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Nigeria is one of the fastest growing population in the world with an estimation of about 206 million in 2020 (National Population Commission, 2021). It is a multi-ethnic nation, with over 250 cultural groups and languages, multiple religious groups, and varied environmental conditions; making Nigeria a complex linguistic, social, and cultural mosaic (Imaah, 2008). The major rivers in Nigeria are the Niger River and its greatest tributary, river Benue. River Niger flows from Futa Djallon mountains in the Republic of Guinea through the Republic of Mali, Niger Republic, and Nigeria into the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria has a share in the Lake Chad together with Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic (Miles, 2005). Nigeria is endowed with various mineral resources such as petroleum, tin, columbine, coal, limestone, iron ore, gypsum, and gold.

Niger is also a republic in the West African sub-region with a surface area of 1,267,000 km². Niger got her political independence from France on 3rd August 1960. It is a landlocked country that falls within Latitudes 11⁰ to 24⁰N and Longitudes 0⁰ to 16⁰E (Geels, 2006). In the Northern part, which represents four fifth (4/5) of the national territory, annual rainfalls are less than 300-600mm. It is a Sahel area favourable to agricultural and breeding activities. Only a small part in the Southeast, between Dosso and Gaya can be considered as Sudan savannah. Niger is a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic country (Geels, 2006).

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, and was ranked last in the world according to the 2018 Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) though endowed with natural resources such as Uranium, Coal, Tin, Gold, Iron Ore among others. It is an agrarian country faced with austere natural environment and extremely vulnerable to climate change (including flooding, drought, sand and/or dust storms, extreme temperatures, high winds, locust attacks, and bush fires) (Ajayi & Crowder, 1987). Niger is not an investor country.

Economic Cooperation

Cooperation occur among individuals, organisations, groups and countries. From a historical viewpoint, one could argue, that countries have always maintained economic relations and cooperation long before the word economic cooperation came to be used. According to O'Farrill, Fierro, Moraga, Perez, & Vallejos, (1999), economic cooperation is a complex, insufficiently defined concept, generally pertaining to industrial, financial, commercial, entrepreneurial and production related cooperation. Economic cooperation is a component of international cooperation that seeks to generate the conditions needed to facilitate the processes of trade and financial integration in the international arena by implementing actions with the aim of obtaining indirect economic benefits in the medium and long term (O'Farrill, Fierro, Moraga, Perez, & Vallejos, 1999). Here, economic cooperation is not only limited to matters related to commerce, but also comprises a wide range of aspects, such as industrial cooperation, research and innovation, scientific exchanges, and the establishment of scientific and economic commissions and committees that will foster and improve the welfare of citizens of states as these greatly affects the economy (Barston, 2014).

Furthermore, Andruseac & Hertug (2015) explains international economic cooperation as a form of collaboration, between two or more countries or entities from various countries, in various ways, for the purpose of reaching certain industrial, agricultural, commercial, technical-scientific, touristic goals or others. In this sense, economic cooperation is not a commercial exchange or a mere transfer of goods, services and capitals from one country to another but, it represents the common use of the resources and means of all partners.

Constraints and Benefits

Constraints play very important role in the shaping of systems, processes and decision-making. According

to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, constraint is “the state of being checked, restricted, or compelled to avoid or perform some action”. While the Cambridge Dictionary defines constraints as “something that controls what you do by keeping you within particular limits”. Constraints are limitations or boundaries that restrict the feasible options or behaviours within a given system or problem. Constraint is a factor or an element that limits ability to get more of what one want. Constraints in international relations refers to limitations or restrictions that affect the behaviour of states, organisations, or individuals (Weede, 1994). It could be physical, economic, legal, technological, temporal, social and cultural.

Benefits, on the other hand, according to the Oxford Learners’ Dictionary, is “an advantage or profit gained from something”. Benefit is something that produces good or helpful results or effects or promotes well-being (Merriam Webster Dictionary). Benefits generally encompass positive outcome. It is another way of saying the gains that would be accrued as a result of a relation, cooperation or integration with other individuals, groups, among others. In international relations, benefit refers to the advantages or gains that states or other actors seek to achieve through their actions. It could be economic gains, security, normative goals or strategic interests (Weede, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the Economic Interdependence Theory. The Economic Interdependence Theory was proposed by Richard N. Cooper, an international Economist and Political Scientist in 1968, who asserts that economic interdependence normally refers to some measure of the value of economic transactions between two countries, or between a country and the rest of the world, perhaps scaled to total national output or to some measure of total financial assets (Cooper, 1985). According to Mansfield & Pollins (2003:73), there are two main meanings to economic interdependence in the field of international relations. Firstly, “a group of countries is considered interdependent if economic conditions in one country are contingent on those found in the other”. For example, a change in the exchange rate of a country would affect the economic conditions of other countries that are in a dependent economic relationship with it. Secondly, “countries are considered interdependent if it would be costly for them to rupture or forego their relations”. This would be the case if the relations between Nigeria and Niger is severed.

Therefore, the paper adopts the economic interdependence theory due to its relevance to the discussion as the economic cooperation between Nigeria and Niger is one that is seen as interdependent with both countries depending on each other. Nigeria is undoubtedly the backbone of the West Africa region because of her population, military capability, arable land area, mineral resources and coastline among others. The common knowledge is that Niger is dependent on Nigeria, but their relations and cooperation are interdependent. For instance, Niger is dependent on Nigeria as Nigeria supplies about 70% of the electricity used in Niger (Nwachukwu, 2017). Nigeria is also dependent on Niger with the agreement between Nigeria and Niger in the 1970s that Niger should forestall the construction of dam along the upstream Niger river, while Nigeria will supply a certain amount of electricity to Niger because a construction of dam or any obstruction along the upstream will affect the supply of water to Nigeria’s hydroelectric dams in Kainji and Jebba, Niger state in Nigeria. This agreement and other joint commissions, bilateral and multilateral agreements have been the pillars on which Nigeria and Niger have built cooperation that have benefited both countries for decades (Oji, 2018).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Nigeria and Niger have maintained cordial relations since they gained independence and have shared economic cooperation across their borders. They have enjoyed very cordial diplomatic relations which birthed cordial economic cooperation both formally and informally at the border areas. Tracing the diplomatic relations of both countries from the perspective of *Hausanisation*, Umate & Idris (2021) posit

that the Hausas in present-day Nigeria and Niger share the same territory, lineage, and religion among others. However, the invention of border divided a group that was hitherto a single nation into two countries. Despite the division, Hausa language remains an important diplomatic instrument that shapes and reshapes the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Niger Republic. The paper concludes that the *Hausanisation* perspective influences the economic cooperation between both countries; and was a factor that influenced the decisions of Muhammed Buhari during his tenure as President of Nigeria.

Ibrahim (2015) reflecting on Cross Border Trade in West Africa argues that the international boundary between Nigeria and Niger Republic is artificial as it was created by the then colonial masters following the scramble and partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference held from 1884 to 1885 in Germany. However, the notion of cross border trade between Nigeria and Niger has brought about various challenges. As a matter of fact, the demarcation along the Nigeria-Niger boundary is not noticeable or adhered to by inhabitants along the border communities. Adeola & Oluyemi (2012) and Ibrahim (2015) agrees that the international boundary between Nigeria and her neighbours is artificial as migration between these countries have been a source of concern in the formulation and articulation of diplomatic and foreign policy of Nigeria. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has made it possible for unwarranted influx of migrants, goods and services from neighbouring states to enter the country illegally. However, the notion of cross – border trade between Nigeria and her neighbours has brought about various challenges to Nigeria.

While corroborating Ibrahim (2015), Arzika (2023) opines that the border between Nigeria and Niger is an open one where contact is predominant and does not function as barrier between the two countries. It is a unique zone of cultural similarities, language, law as well as condition of trade, work, and life; and is the location for the most intense interactions between the two populations along the borderline. Arzika (2023) asserts that security is a major challenge across the border and is attributed to a constant movement of people and goods. The study further argues that amongst the various challenges to border security and social stability, corruption, insecurity, porous nature of the border and uncontrollable movement of people were responsible. On the implications of boundary demarcation on the relations of Nigeria and Niger, Muhammad, Musa, & Shehuri, (2019) assert that the division of Nigeria and Niger into two distinct political entities by their former colonial masters is not without its consequences which has led to increase in insecurity and smuggling. However, this has not affected the peaceful relations or activities between communities on the border.

Iliyasu (2014) argues that regional integration has been a subject of discussion among academics and policy makers in West Africa; and that cross border trade between Nigeria and Niger had been in existence since the pre-colonial period when the communities living along the border exchange their goods with one another in order to satisfy their daily needs. Despite the problems associated with unrecorded cross – border trade, it has the potential of facilitating economic integration and cooperation between Nigeria and Niger. This is because goods from Nigeria, for example are transported to countries like Mali, Togo and Cameroon through Niger republic; and goods from Niger are transported through Maradi border to Nigeria. This has created a wide range of economic interaction among people in Nigeria and Niger.

Informal cross-border trade plays an important role in developing countries as is the case of Nigeria and Niger. Ahmodu-Tijani & Dosunmu (2020) agree that informal cross border trade between Nigeria and Niger act as accelerator of economic development, and regional development of the borderland areas. It is a crucial coping measure for poor households; especially when unemployment is high, and it also addresses mass poverty. The study perceives that the informal cross border trade between Nigeria and Niger enables small-scale entrepreneurs to escape poverty and meet the education, housing and other basic needs, and recommends that there should be bilateral agreement between Nigeria and Niger on creating an enabling, gender-sensitive environment for informal cross border traders so that they can easily engage in economic

activities.

The Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC) is a product of the necessity for formal, organised, cooperation between Nigeria and Niger. Oji (2018) reveals that promoting trans-border cooperation for economic and social progress of borderland dwellers has always been at the fore front of the African Union Border Programme (AUPB) primarily aimed at unity and integrating Africa through borders thereby forging bridges of peace, development and security. The Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) initiative does not only enhance good neighbourliness, through the provision of infrastructure among other things, but also serve as a mechanism for peaceful and negotiated settlement of border conflicts.

AREAS OF NIGERIA AND NIGER COOPERATION DURING THE PERIOD

The period under review, 2015-2022 had Nigeria's President Buhari and Niger's President Issoufou as leaders. President Buhari had a focus on sub-regionalism, with special emphasis on what he described as the 'Nigerian sub-region', and this he did with Niger (Hassan, 2023, Interview). Niger was the first country President Buhari visited from the moment he was inaugurated for his first term on May 29, 2015. He visited Niger and Chad between June 3 and 4, 2015 for consultations on how to tackle terrorism in the sub-region (Adeyemi, 2023, Interview). This clearly showed the value and quality of relations between Nigeria and Niger Republic. Both countries cooperated mostly in projects that would be of economic and security benefits such as in the areas of rail development, road constructions, refinery and Joint Security Task Force (Baba-Munguno, 2023, Interview).

Key areas where Nigeria and Niger built economic cooperation from 2015 to 2022 were:

1. **Oil and Gas:** In July 2018, the governments of Nigeria and Niger agreed in principle to cooperate on building an oil pipeline and refinery (Kofar-Bai, 2023, Interview). The proposed refinery will be located in Katsina State, northern Nigeria, and will receive crude oil through the pipeline from Niger Republic's oilfields in the Ténéré desert (Ayeiola, 2023, Interview). The project will facilitate the construction of a 100,000 – 150,000 barrels' capacity refinery to be located in Katsina State, and it is projected to provide over 2,500 direct jobs and` 10,000 indirect employment opportunities not only to the state but Nigeria in general (Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, 2018). If and when this project is completed, more formal and informal jobs would be created especially in Nigeria and there will be a boost of economic activities around communities in the refinery area (Abdou, 2023, Interview).
2. **Transportation:** Another significant area that Nigeria built on to boost economic cooperation was in transportation (rail and road construction) to ease inter-connectivity and movement of persons, goods and services between both countries (Zubairu, 2023, Interview). For instance, on 9 February 2021, the President of Nigeria performed the ground-breaking ceremony of the new rail line construction of 284 kilometres standard-gauge line with 12 stations from Kano (Nigeria) to Maradi, the second-largest city in Niger Republic, regarded as the centre of the country's developing oil industry (Chiedozie, 2021). This project is estimated to cost \$2 billion. The rail project when completed is expected to facilitate the realisation of the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, to which Nigeria and Niger Republic are signatories; and expand the historical cultural relationship between the people of Nigeria and Niger Republic (Danjuma, 2023, Interview). The project is also very important in enhancing inter-nation and continental trade in line with the integration policy of the ECOWAS (Ayeiola, 2023, Interview).
3. **Aid and Support to the government of Niger:** Nigeria's Afrocentric and good neighbourliness policy with various governments since independence gave support and aid to countries in Africa especially in West Africa. The government of Nigeria like many other countries has often given aid

and support to the people and government of Niger. Most of the support and aid were with the ECOWAS, African Union, France, European Union, United Nations and other International Agencies (Ibrahim, 2023, Interview). There were reports that the Presidency of the Republic of Niger requested for logistics support from the Presidency of Nigeria which was granted in January 2022. The government of Nigeria approved ₦1.145 billion for the purchase of 10 Toyota Land Cruiser V8 vehicles which were supplied to the Republic of Niger (Ailemen, 2022). The vehicles given to Niger was a gesture that was condemned by Nigerians (Adeyemi, 2023, Interview). The then Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, while justifying the decision, said though Nigerians had the right to ask questions, President Buhari, who approved the purchase, also had the right to make his own assessment on situations and act on them accordingly, but noted that Nigeria has a policy of assisting her neighbours, a development, which goes a long way to strengthening capacity to deal with insecurity (Daka, 2022).

CONSTRAINTS TO THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN NIGERIA AND NIGER

Just like it is common among countries that share borders, especially those that share very close communities along the borderlines, so it is with Nigeria and Niger. Most citizens/settlers far from the borders do not understand why governments should give much attention to the borders, communities living there, and the countries they share borders with (Ayeiola, 2023, Interview). Though governments of both countries have had mutual respect for agreements and cooperation, there are some constraints and challenges that are hindering better economic cooperation between Nigeria and Niger. Some of the challenges are:

1. **Fear of continuity:** Shortly after independence, the two friendly neighbouring countries with an exemplary cooperation in the West African sub-region realised the need for a peaceful and harmonious co-existence between their people especially those on the borderline and formed the NNJCC in 1971 to foster cooperation and strengthen their relations (Daouda, 2023, Interview). When Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, the presence and activities of NNJCC around the border states started dwindling. This continued until President Mohammed Buhari came into office in 2015 (Danjuma, 2023, Interview). Citizens especially those on the border states of both countries have the fear that projects and cooperation initiated by the government of Nigeria would not be continued by subsequent governments especially when they are not northerners, and with the current leadership challenge in Niger (Mahamane, 2023, Interview).
2. **Porous borders:** Border porosity is a common challenge to most African countries. About 1608km borderline between Nigeria and Niger that spans seven states in Nigeria is very poorly manned and managed (Hassan, 2023, Interview). Nigeria and Niger are among the countries that people get in and get out without proper documentation or tracking (Suleiman, 2023, Interview). This is one major challenge to boosting economic cooperation between both countries. Porous borders mean easy and uncontrolled movement of people, goods and services without clearance, documentation or payment of customs duties (Akpan, 2023, Interview). With the porous borders, goods and services that are supposed to generate income for the country are smuggled in and people get involved in illegal economic activities that jeopardises the agreements of both countries (Baba-Munguno, 2023, Interview).
3. **Poor dissemination of information:** Information and knowledge are key to the sustenance of relations and cooperation between people and this also applies in the international scene. When people are well informed about the reasons and justification for international relations and cooperation, they will be more open to acceptance and even be ready to forge more relations that will be beneficial to

their country (Danjuma, 2023, Interview). Poor dissemination of information on Nigeria's relation, especially the economic cooperation with Niger by relevant government agencies was a challenge that led to rancour among Nigerians from 2015 to 2022 (Ayeiola, 2023, Interview).

4. **Poverty:** Poverty is a bane to a country's international relations as poor citizens who do not benefit from the country's relation do not support or see any justification for such relations (Zimas, 2023, Interview). Due to the high level of poverty, Nigerians, generally, did not accept the country's 'Father Christmas' role to Niger from 2015 to 2022 (Ibrahim, 2023, Interview). People did not understand why a country that could not provide infrastructure and basic amenities would be concerned to improve the lives and living conditions of people of another country, especially as it would not improve their own living standards (Adeyemi, 2023, Interview). Nigeria kept losing her place in Africa economic power, and citizens saw no justification for investing in another country when the money could be used to build Nigeria's economy and citizens (Zimas, 2023, Interview).

BENEFITS OF NIGERIA-NIGER ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Most Nigerians want to understand what their country benefits or would benefit while investing so much in the economy and development of Niger. In 2021, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was worth \$441 billion, while the gross domestic product per capita equaled \$2.4 thousand (Sasu, 2023). This market size allows Nigeria to increase capacity and expand into other African countries building economic cooperation that would be beneficial to all countries involved. The benefits of Nigeria's economic cooperation with Niger are not as visible as people would like to see (Ayeiola, 2023, Interview). For instance, people asked, what Nigeria is gaining from providing electricity to Niger? Or why is Nigeria building a rail line to Niger? (Zimas, 2023, Interview).

Nigeria has not made any significant gain in her relations/cooperation with Niger. In fact, Nigeriens are the ones gaining that is why they speak highly and respectfully of Nigeria and Nigerians (Suleiman, 2023, Interview). They cross Nigeria's border without stress, do their businesses and take their gains back home (Abdou, 2023, Interview). When the rail project was initiated, Nigeriens celebrated more. Same with the roads being constructed from Sokoto and Jigawa to Niger (Ibrahim, 2023, Interview). These shows that Nigeria is giving out much just to get little in return.

Though it seemed Nigeria gave without receiving anything in return, it is an investment that the returns will come to the country sooner than expected (Danjuma, 2023, Interview). Informally, from the side of the border communities and states, Nigeria's economic cooperation with Niger has improved the economy and security of Nigeria (Mahamane, 2023, Interview). In the informal sector, both countries are benefiting from the cooperation where goods and services are exchanged with very little hassle (Zubairu, 2023, Interview). The understanding between both countries have helped in the peaceful co-existence which is very important for economic growth and security of their territories (Baba-Munguno, 2023, Interview). With the understanding between both countries, the NNJCC has been beneficial to both countries especially in the area of agriculture and waterways. That is majorly why Nigeria has not had any water or land dispute with Niger since independence (Daouda, 2023, Interview).

Nigeria's relation with Niger has greatly affected the economy of Niger, and by extension the economy of Nigeria both positively and negatively (Zimas, 2023, Interview). Niger is a very poor country (Hassan, 2023, Interview) whose people often migrate to Nigeria, settle and contribute to the growth of Nigeria's economy (Abdulkadir, 2023, Interview). On the negative side, the movement of banned goods across the border lines is bringing draw backs to the economy of Nigeria especially the smuggling of petrol and other banned items to Niger, Chad and other countries (Kofar-Bai, 2023, Interview). This means that subsidies were being paid for fuel exported to Niger and benefited by only a few people.

CONCLUSION

The African way of life believes, promotes, encourages and support cooperation and integration of people and countries, and shares a common brotherhood. Nigeria and Niger are neighbouring countries that have lived, cooperated and integrated in ways that are sometimes difficult to differentiate on the borderline. Citizens of both countries along the border line relate so much that the boundaries have not been able to limit them. Both countries have over time built relations on cultural, religious, political and economic lines. These relations have been characterised by brotherhood, mutual friendship and understanding. Since independence, Nigeria have been in cooperation with Niger in areas such as agriculture, electrification, politics and economy while rendering aid and support when necessary. The NNJCC and other agreements between both countries is a prove of the cooperation and relations shared by both countries in furtherance of the ECOWAS mandate to promote economic integration in the region.

WAY FORWARD

To strengthen economic cooperation of the two countries, policy formulation is a very important part of governance especially the fact that these policies, though amendable, outlives the formulators. Nigerian Policy makers should be keen to review and enact policies that would portray national interest while protecting and strengthening the existing relations between both countries. This will create enabling environment that will allow investors in public and private sectors to contribute to the economic development and cooperation of both countries.

Every government should be concerned about improving the lives and living conditions of their people. This makes the opinion of the people a necessary part of good governance. Public polls should be encouraged and considered when government plans to embark on both local and international ventures. This will serve as a guide on the choice of projects or cooperation, and the benefit it would have on the people even in the future. The academia, Researchers, Locals on the border states and other stakeholders should be part of the policy making.

On the whole, it is to be seen that surmounting the challenge of Nigeria-Niger border porosity will not only secure the Nigerian territorial space, but will control the movement of persons, goods and services across the border. Even with the ECOWAS Protocol for the Free Movement of persons, goods and services, the Nigerian government through its relevant agencies need to work out modalities to secure the borderline and control the movement of persons, goods and services, especially illegal migrants and contrabands. A well manned and managed border will be an avenue to generate income for the government especially with the importation and exportation of goods. This would also control the influx of illegal migrants that would become security risk that would affect the economy.

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