

Balancing Sovereignty and Integration: Nigeria's Public Policy Dilemma in The Era of Globalization

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Abstract—

Nigeria's public policy space is increasingly defined by a persistent dilemma: how to preserve sovereign authority over domestic development priorities while participating credibly in regional and global integration regimes. This paper analyzes how globalization reshapes Nigeria's policy autonomy across four governance arenas trade and border management, regional and continental integration commitments, industrial policy, and digital regulation. Using a qualitative, theory-guided approach grounded in negotiated sovereignty, the globalization trilemma, embedded liberalism, and the policy space perspective, the study explains why Nigeria frequently combines integration-oriented reforms with periodic sovereignty-forward interventions. The paper finds that this tension is driven less by a rejection of integration than by distributional politics, institutional capacity constraints, credibility challenges, and sequencing problems that make openness politically fragile when adjustment mechanisms and enforcement capabilities lag behind commitments. The paper argues that Nigeria can reduce policy volatility through a strategic sovereignty approach that emphasizes predictable rule-based engagement, precision enforcement over broad restrictions, performance-based industrial upgrading, and balanced digital governance that protects rights while enabling cross-border exchange. The study contributes to debates on African political economy and public policy by demonstrating that sustainable integration depends on aligning external obligations with domestic capability, legitimacy, and developmental objectives.

Keywords: Nigeria; sovereignty; globalization; public policy; regional integration; AfCFTA; ECOWAS; policy space; industrial policy; digital governance; border management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has transformed public policymaking from an overwhelmingly domestic exercise into a multi-level governance process shaped by cross-border flows of goods, capital, people, technology, and data. For states, the central challenge is no longer simply how to protect territorial authority, but how to retain meaningful control over development priorities while operating within increasingly dense regional and international rule systems. In this context, sovereignty is best understood as contested and negotiated rather than absolute states continuously trade discretion for access, credibility, and cooperation, even as they attempt to preserve autonomy in politically sensitive domains (Krasner, 1999).

Nigeria illustrates this sovereignty-integration tension in an especially consequential way. As Africa's most populous country and a pivotal economy in West Africa, Nigeria faces strong expectations to drive regional and continental integration, yet it also confronts intense domestic pressures industrialization demands, fiscal constraints, unemployment, and security challenges that often amplify calls for policy control and economic nationalism. This tension has become more visible as Africa's integration agenda has accelerated

under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a landmark agreement that entered into force on 30 May 2019 and commenced trading on 1 January 2021 (African Union, n.d.; AfCFTA Secretariat, n.d.). Nigeria's commitment to this project was signaled when President Muhammadu Buhari signed the AfCFTA Agreement on 7 July 2019 in Niamey, Niger (Punch Newspapers, 2019; Nairametrics, 2019). More recently, Nigeria took a significant implementation step by gazetting its AfCFTA Provisional Schedule of Tariff Concessions in April 2025, which strengthens the operational basis for applying preferential tariffs under AfCFTA rules (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2025).

Yet Nigeria's integration posture has also been marked by sovereignty-forward policy episodes that generate uncertainty for regional partners and market actors. A notable example is the land border closure that began around 20 August 2019, widely justified in terms of security concerns, anti-smuggling efforts, and protection of domestic production (Enwere, 2020; University of Ghana, 2022). While such restrictive measures can be politically popular and framed as defending national interests, scholarly and policy discussions emphasize that they also impose regional externalities by disrupting trade, affecting border communities, and straining the credibility of integration commitments (University of Ghana, 2022; Jacob,

2024). Nigeria's later decision to reopen key land borders in December 2020 underscores how integration constraints and domestic pressures interact dynamically rather than producing a stable equilibrium (Pulse Nigeria, 2020).

Nigeria's dilemma is sharpened by its longstanding regional commitments in ECOWAS, where integration norms extend beyond trade to mobility and residence rights. The ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment sets out a phased approach toward progressively removing obstacles to entry, residence, and establishment across member states (ECOWAS, 1979; UNECA, n.d.). Complementing this, the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) aims to liberalize intra-regional trade by abolishing customs duties on eligible goods and reducing non-tariff barriers, reinforcing the expectation of freer movement of goods within the community (ECOWAS Trade Information Portal, n.d.). In practice, therefore, Nigeria's policy choices on borders, trade facilitation, and import controls are not merely domestic instruments; they are actions with direct implications for rule-based regional governance and Nigeria's leadership credibility.

Analytically, Nigeria's public policy dilemma aligns with core arguments in international political economy about the trade-offs produced by deep integration. Rodrik's framework suggests that states cannot simultaneously maximize democratic politics, national sovereignty, and deep economic globalization attempts to push all three to their limits typically trigger backlash and policy oscillation (Rodrik, 2011). Empirical work developing "trilemma" indices further supports the idea that policy makers face persistent constraints in jointly advancing globalization, sovereignty, and democratic responsiveness, with particularly sharp trade-offs in developing-country contexts (Aizenman & Ito, 2020). From a complementary angle, the embedded liberalism tradition emphasizes that sustainable openness depends on domestic legitimacy and compensatory institutions; liberalization is politically durable when governments retain tools to manage distributional consequences and maintain a credible social bargain (Ruggie, 1982).

This paper also draws on the "policy space" literature to emphasize that sovereignty is not only a legal status but a governing capability: the practical ability to choose, sequence, and implement development strategies. UNCTAD has argued that evolving global rules and production networks can narrow developing countries' policy space, especially regarding industrial policy and regulation, making strategic governance choices more difficult (UNCTAD, 2014; UNCTAD, 2021). Nigeria's industrial policy tools illustrate this tension clearly. The Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act 2010 institutionalizes local content requirements designed to increase domestic participation and value capture within a globally integrated sector an assertion of developmental policy space that can both support national goals and create frictions with liberalization pressures (NCDMB, 2010; KPMG Nigeria, 2010).

Finally, the sovereignty–integration dilemma increasingly extends into digital governance, where "borders" are regulatory rather than territorial. As data becomes a critical factor of production and cross-border services expand, states seek to protect privacy and security while enabling innovation and international commerce. Nigeria's Data Protection Act 2023 establishes a comprehensive legal framework for personal data protection and creates the Nigeria Data Protection Commission, signaling a bid to balance participation in global digital flows with stronger domestic regulatory control (Nigeria Data Protection Commission, 2023; KPMG Nigeria, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the study examines Nigeria's dilemma as a recurring governance problem: how can Nigeria preserve meaningful sovereignty understood as legitimate and effective domestic policy capacity while deepening integration in regional and global regimes that reward openness, predictability, and rule convergence? Rather than treating sovereignty and integration as a simple zero-sum choice, this paper argues that Nigeria's tensions are driven by distributional politics, institutional capability gaps, and sequencing challenges conditions that shape when integration becomes politically sustainable and when sovereignty-focused restriction becomes the default response (Rodrik, 2011; UNCTAD, 2014).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Globalization and the changing meaning of sovereignty*

A major strand of scholarship argues that globalization does not simply "weaken" the state; rather, it reconfigures how sovereign authority is exercised by embedding domestic choices in international regimes, market discipline, and transnational networks (Krasner, 1999; Keohane & Nye, 1977). Under conditions of complex interdependence, states remain central actors, but they must increasingly govern through cooperation, negotiation, and rule alignment especially in areas such as trade facilitation, financial regulation, migration, and (more recently) data governance (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Macro-sociological accounts similarly conceptualize globalization as a deep transformation in the scale and intensity of cross-border interactions that reshapes national policy environments and the boundaries of domestic authority (Held et al., 1999). Within this literature, sovereignty is often treated as multidimensional legal recognition, domestic control, and policy autonomy can diverge in practice. Krasner's "organized hypocrisy" thesis is influential in showing that states frequently endorse sovereignty norms while selectively violating them or bargaining them away in exchange for security, economic access, or external support (Krasner, 1999). Cambridge University Press & Assessment This helps frame Nigeria's experience: the dilemma is not a binary choice between sovereignty and integration, but an ongoing process of renegotiation across policy arenas where external commitments and internal pressures collide.

B. The integration–sovereignty trade-off: trilemma and embedded liberalism

A second body of work explains policy tension through the political economy of “deep” integration. Rodrik’s political trilemma posits that countries cannot simultaneously maximize national sovereignty, democratic politics, and hyper-globalization; durable configurations tend to emphasize only two of the three at any one time (Rodrik, 2011). Building on and empirically operationalizing this idea, Aizenman and Ito develop indices for globalization, sovereignty, and democracy and test the trilemma’s implication that the three objectives are jointly constrained especially under intensified cross-border integration (Aizenman & Ito, 2020). In the Nigerian context, these frameworks are useful for interpreting why integration commitments can trigger domestic backlash (e.g., fear of job loss, fiscal pressures, security concerns), which then generates restrictive policy responses that undermine predictable openness. Complementing the trilemma, the embedded liberalism tradition argues that open markets are politically sustainable only when “openness” is embedded in domestic institutional arrangements that protect social bargains and manage distributional conflict (Ruggie, 1982). This literature suggests that the key question for Nigeria is not merely whether integration is desirable, but whether the state has sufficient institutional capacity (customs efficiency, regulatory enforcement, social protection, competitiveness policy) to make openness legitimate and stable.

C. Policy space, development strategy, and contested openness

A third literature emphasizes “policy space”: the room governments have to pursue industrialization, regulate investment, and sequence reforms without being locked into externally imposed constraints. Critical political-economy accounts highlight how globalization can narrow developmental options for late-industrializing states and amplify asymmetries in bargaining power (Stiglitz, 2002; Chang, 2002). Empirical debates about globalization’s effects on poverty and inequality similarly question whether liberalization reliably produces inclusive outcomes, stressing uneven gains, volatility, and the political consequences of unequal adjustment burdens (Wade, 2004). Institutional policy research particularly from UNCTAD reframes the discussion by arguing that modern industrial policies remain central to structural transformation but must be designed to be coherent with investment regimes and global production realities (UNCTAD, 2018; UNCTAD, 2021). This perspective is relevant for Nigeria’s recurring dilemma: sovereign policy instruments (e.g., local content rules, trade restrictions, selective openness) can support capability-building, but if they are poorly designed or weakly implemented, they can increase uncertainty, raise costs, and invite retaliation reducing the very development gains they seek.

D. African regionalism, AfCFTA expectations, and implementation constraints

A growing AfCFTA literature argues that continental integration has significant potential to raise intra-African trade, support industrialization, and reduce poverty but outcomes depend heavily on implementation, trade facilitation, and complementary domestic reforms (Maliszewska et al., 2020; Byiers et al., 2021). The AfCFTA’s legal and political milestones entry into force (30 May 2019) and commencement of trading (1 January 2021) have intensified expectations that member states will align national policies with a rule-based continental market (African Union, 2019). Yet political-economy studies caution that regional agreements often face bottlenecks at the implementation stage because domestic institutions, infrastructure, and competitiveness levels vary widely making “paper integration” easier than “real integration” (Byiers et al., 2021). Nigeria-specific policy documents reflect these concerns by emphasizing diagnostics of the trade ecosystem, regulatory coordination, and readiness gaps implicitly acknowledging that integration success depends on domestic capability and governance coherence (Nigeria AfCFTA Strategy & Implementation Plan, 2021). PDF II Within West Africa, ECOWAS’s long-standing free movement architecture creates additional integration obligations. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment outlines progressive realization of entry, residence, and establishment rights, making unilateral restrictions politically and legally consequential for regional cohesion (ECOWAS, 1979).

E. Nigeria’s oscillation: border governance, informal trade, and credibility problems

Nigeria-focused research frequently treats border policy as a key site where sovereignty claims and integration commitments collide. The 2019–2020 border closure is widely discussed as a sovereignty-forward policy justified on security and anti-smuggling grounds, but it also reveals how restrictive measures can disrupt regional value chains and livelihoods, especially where informal trade is structurally intertwined with formal commerce (IMF, 2022). IMF eLibrary The IMF’s analysis of the Nigeria–Benin corridor underscores how unilateral border actions create measurable macroeconomic and distributional effects because neighboring economies may depend heavily on Nigeria-linked trade flows (IMF, 2022). IMF eLibrary This reinforces a recurring argument in the literature: credibility and predictability are part of the “integration dividend.” When policies swing sharply, the costs are not only immediate trade losses but also longer-run reputational effects that shape investment decisions and the willingness of partners to cooperate.

F. Digital sovereignty and the globalization of regulation

Recent scholarship extends the sovereignty–integration dilemma into digital governance. Network power approaches argue that states can leverage centralized positions in global information and financial networks, turning interdependence into coercive or surveillance capacity raising new questions about autonomy, security, and dependency (Farrell &

Newman, 2019). Internet governance research similarly highlights that control is often exercised through standards, infrastructure, and private governance arrangements that transcend territorial jurisdiction, complicating traditional sovereignty frameworks (DeNardis, 2014). For Nigeria, this strand of literature is increasingly relevant because data protection has become a core policy domain in which global norms (e.g., GDPR-inspired standards) interact with national regulatory ambitions. Nigeria's Data Protection Act 2023 and the institutional role of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission illustrate how states respond by building domestic regulatory capacity while still engaging cross-border digital flows (NDPC, 2023). In this sense, "digital sovereignty" becomes less about isolation and more about the capacity to regulate participation in global networks on terms that protect citizens' rights and national interests.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, theory-driven design that interprets Nigeria's public policy dilemma as a recurring tension between sovereign authority and rule-based integration under globalization. The inquiry is explanatory and interpretive, aimed at clarifying how policy trade-offs emerge, stabilize, or reverse across governance arenas such as trade, regional commitments, industrial regulation, and digital governance. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the paper focuses on meaning, institutional design, and political economy mechanisms rather than on estimating causal effects through statistical modeling (Yin, 2018). Nigeria is treated as an analytically strategic case because it is simultaneously a major African economy, a central actor in West African regional governance, and a state whose policy posture has frequently oscillated between commitments to openness and assertive sovereignty-oriented interventions. The case is used to generate theoretically informed insights rather than to claim statistical representatives; the goal is analytic generalization to concepts and mechanisms that illuminate sovereignty and integration dilemmas in comparable contexts (Yin, 2018).

The analytical framework integrates four complementary perspectives. First, sovereignty is conceptualized as negotiated practice: legal authority and practical autonomy often diverge because states operate within external constraints and internal legitimacy pressures (Krasner, 1999). Second, Rodrik's political-economy trilemma is used to structure the central trade-off among deep economic integration, domestic political responsiveness, and national policy autonomy, with the expectation that attempts to maximize all three generate backlash or policy instability (Rodrik, 2011). Third, the embedded liberalism perspective emphasizes the domestic foundations of sustainable openness, arguing that integration becomes politically durable when domestic institutions can manage distributional conflict and adjustment costs (Ruggie, 1982). Fourth, the policy space literature informs the assessment of how international rules and regulatory diffusion can narrow governments' options for industrial upgrading, social regulation, and strategic sequencing, particularly in developing economies (UNCTAD, 2014). The study proceeds

through qualitative interpretation and thematic reasoning, structured as a within-case comparative analysis across four policy domains: trade and border governance, regional/continental integration commitments, industrial policy instruments, and digital regulation. Each domain is examined to identify how sovereignty is asserted, how integration obligations or norms are engaged, and what trade-offs become visible when domestic priorities confront external constraints. The analysis relies on pattern matching: theoretical expectations from the trilemma, embedded liberalism, negotiated sovereignty, and policy space are used as interpretive guides, and observed patterns are compared across domains to determine whether similar mechanisms recur. This approach helps distinguish one-off policy choices from deeper structural dynamics, especially where distributional politics, institutional capability, and credibility concerns appear repeatedly. Interpretive credibility is strengthened through analytic transparency and conceptual consistency. Claims are tied explicitly to the paper's theoretical constructs sovereignty, integration depth, legitimacy, adjustment capacity, and policy space so that conclusions follow a traceable reasoning path rather than impressionistic judgment. The analysis also pays attention to sequencing and institutional capability as cross-cutting mechanisms, recognizing that integration outcomes often depend less on formal commitments than on the state's ability to implement rules predictably and manage domestic adjustment.

The study has limitations consistent with qualitative, theory-driven case analysis. Because the goal is explanation rather than measurement, findings are not presented as causal estimates, and they may not capture every informal bargaining process or short-run political shift that shapes policy decisions. In addition, generalization is conceptual rather than statistical: insights are intended to inform broader debates about how developing states navigate globalization's constraints while pursuing integration and domestic legitimacy (Yin, 2018).

IV. FINDINGS

Nigeria's public policy dilemma in the era of globalization is best understood as a pattern of recurring trade-offs rather than isolated contradictions. Across trade governance, regional/continental integration commitments, industrial policy, and digital regulation, the evidence points to five interlinked findings that explain why Nigeria alternates between integration-oriented reforms and sovereignty-forward interventions. Nigeria's integration commitments are real and increasingly operational, but they coexist with a "conditional openness" posture. The country's participation in AfCFTA has moved beyond signature politics toward implementation measures, including the gazetting of its AfCFTA tariff commitments in April 2025, which strengthens the administrative basis for preferential trade (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2025). Yet the same policy environment contains episodes where Nigeria imposes restrictive measures in response to domestic political pressure, security framing, or revenue concerns, revealing that openness is often treated as

contingent on internal stability and enforcement capacity rather than as a fixed rule-based stance (Rodrik, 2011). This coexistence suggests that Nigeria's integration path is shaped by short-run political constraints and governance readiness, not only by long-run economic strategy.

Border governance emerges as the clearest site of sovereignty assertion, with security and illicit trade narratives repeatedly overriding integration norms. Nigeria's land border closure that began around August 2019 illustrates how the state deploys territorial control as a rapid instrument to address smuggling, protect domestic producers, and respond to security concerns (Kassa & Zeufack, 2020). However, policy assessments emphasize that such measures generate substantial regional spillovers and welfare costs, disrupting corridor trade and exposing border communities and neighboring economies to shocks (IMF, 2022). This finding indicates that Nigeria's sovereignty responses often substitute for more precise regulatory and enforcement tools; where customs modernization, traceability, and coordinated border management are weak, the policy system tends to revert to blunt instruments that are politically visible but economically costly (Ruggie, 1982). Regional leadership expectations deepen Nigeria's dilemma because ECOWAS commitments raise the reputational costs of unilateral restriction. ECOWAS's free movement framework commits member states to progressively remove barriers to entry, residence, and establishment, creating a normative and legal environment that disincentivizes prolonged unilateral closure (ECOWAS, 1979). In addition, ECOWAS trade liberalization arrangements aim to lower formal barriers within the region, reinforcing expectations of predictable intra-regional commerce (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The implication is that Nigeria's restrictive episodes do not occur in a vacuum: they carry credibility costs that can weaken trust and cooperation and reduce the benefits Nigeria seeks from regional influence and market integration (Krasner, 1999).

Industrial policy instruments function as Nigeria's primary mechanism for retaining developmental policy space inside globalization. Local content regulation in the oil and gas sector demonstrates an intentional strategy of capturing greater value domestically in an internationally integrated industry. The Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act institutionalizes Nigerian content requirements to deepen domestic participation and capability formation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010). This reflects the policy space logic that late-developing economies often require targeted industrial measures to build competitiveness and avoid remaining locked into low-value positions in global value chains (UNCTAD, 2018; Chang, 2002). The evidence therefore supports the interpretation that Nigeria is not rejecting integration per se; it is seeking to integrate on terms that preserve room for domestic upgrading, even if this creates tensions with liberalization expectations. Digital regulation is becoming a new frontier of the sovereignty-integration dilemma, with Nigeria shifting toward "regulatory sovereignty" rather than isolation. Nigeria's Data Protection Act 2023 and the creation of the Nigeria Data Protection

Commission indicate a move to strengthen domestic control over personal data governance while still participating in cross-border digital flows (NDPC, 2023). Highly visible enforcement actions and public scrutiny around major platforms further illustrate that Nigeria is increasingly asserting jurisdiction in the digital economy, framing regulation as necessary for consumer protection and national interest rather than as anti-globalization (Reuters, 2024). This finding suggests that sovereignty is being rearticulated as regulatory capacity in domains where integration is unavoidable and where rule-making power is increasingly exercised through standards, enforcement, and institutional credibility (DeNardis, 2014).

Overall, the findings show that Nigeria's sovereignty-integration dilemma is driven by three underlying mechanisms: distributional politics, institutional capacity gaps, and sequencing challenges. When adjustment burdens are high or concentrated, domestic pressures push toward restrictive sovereignty measures; when institutions for enforcement and compensation are weak, blunt tools become the default; and when integration commitments advance faster than competitiveness readiness, policy oscillation becomes more likely (Rodrik, 2011; UNCTAD, 2014). In practical terms, Nigeria's dilemma is less about choosing between sovereignty and integration and more about building the institutional and legitimacy foundations that allow integration to be governed in a politically sustainable way.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria can reduce the sovereignty-integration dilemma by pursuing strategic sovereignty: integrating where it expands development opportunities, while strengthening domestic institutions that make openness governable and politically legitimate. The following recommendations translate the paper's findings into actionable public policy directions. Nigeria should replace episodic, economy-wide restrictions with precision enforcement tools that protect national interests without undermining regional credibility. Border closure-type responses should be treated as measures of last resort and substituted with intelligence-led customs enforcement, risk-based inspections, interoperable cargo tracking, and joint border coordination with neighbors. This shifts sovereignty from blunt territorial shutdowns toward "smart control" that targets smuggling and security threats while sustaining lawful commerce and Nigeria's leadership standing within ECOWAS and AfCFTA norms (ECOWAS, 1979; Rodrik, 2011; IMF, 2022). Nigeria should institutionalize AfCFTA implementation as a permanent delivery function rather than a periodic project. Gazetting tariff commitments advances operational integration, but benefits will depend on consistent administration of rules of origin, trade remedies, standards compliance, and dispute-handling capacity (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2025). A dedicated implementation architecture anchored in a legally backed coordination unit should ensure predictable application of commitments, continuous stakeholder engagement, and rapid resolution of bottlenecks. This responds to the governance insight that integration

succeeds when domestic capability and credibility keep pace with formal commitments (Ruggie, 1982; UNCTAD, 2014).

Nigeria should embed integration in a domestic adjustment and competitiveness bargain to reduce backlash and policy reversals. The state needs stronger mechanisms that cushion adjustment costs and make openness politically sustainable, including targeted support for SMEs, export readiness programs, port and logistics upgrades, skills development for tradeable sectors, and scalable social protection where shocks are concentrated. The embedded liberalism literature suggests that openness becomes durable when domestic institutions manage distributional conflict rather than ignoring it (Ruggie, 1982). This approach directly addresses the political economy driver of Nigeria's oscillation between integration and restriction (Rodrik, 2011). Nigeria should refine industrial policy tools especially local content into performance-based and time-bound capability building that remains compatible with integration. Local content regulation can support value capture and learning, but it should be governed through transparent procurement, measurable targets tied to realistic capacity benchmarks, and phased requirements that tighten as domestic capability improves (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010; UNCTAD, 2018). This maintains policy space for structural transformation while reducing investor uncertainty and limiting inefficiencies that can arise when targets are vague or enforcement is politicized (Chang, 2002; UNCTAD, 2014). Nigeria should pursue regulatory sovereignty in the digital economy through predictable, risk-based data governance rather than restrictive fragmentation. The Data Protection Act 2023 provides a foundation for protecting citizens' rights and building trust, but Nigeria should complement enforcement with clear rules for cross-border transfers, regulatory cooperation with African partners, and capacity building for compliance across public and private sectors (NDPC, 2023). This positions Nigeria to benefit from digital trade and innovation while exercising credible jurisdictional control, aligning with scholarship that modern power is increasingly exercised through standards and regulatory capability in networks rather than through isolation (DeNardis, 2014; Farrell & Newman, 2019).

Finally, Nigeria should treat credibility as an economic asset in regional governance. Frequent policy reversals raise risk premiums and weaken the benefits of integration. Nigeria can strengthen credibility by publishing stable policy roadmaps, using transparent criteria for any emergency trade restrictions, and relying on rule-based instruments such as safeguards and trade remedies where permitted rather than ad hoc closures or bans (Rodrik, 2011; UNCTAD, 2014). Over time, this supports investor confidence, improves regional bargaining leverage, and allows Nigeria to shape integration rules in ways that protect its developmental priorities.

VI. CONCLUSION

Nigeria's public policy dilemma in the era of globalization is not a straightforward choice between defending sovereignty and pursuing integration. Instead, it reflects a continuing

governance challenge: how to protect national priorities security, jobs, revenue, and industrial upgrading while participating credibly in regional and global systems that demand openness, predictability, and rule alignment. The pattern that emerges is one of policy tension and occasional oscillation, where integration goals are advanced in some moments but constrained or reversed in others when domestic pressures intensify. The study shows that sovereignty today is increasingly expressed through regulatory capability and institutional strength rather than through isolation. Nigeria's industrial and local content policies illustrate attempts to retain room for domestic value creation and capability building within internationally connected sectors. Likewise, the growth of digital regulation reveals that modern sovereignty is also about controlling and supervising cross-border flows especially data through credible rules and enforcement structures, not merely through territorial control.

Overall, the paper concludes that Nigeria's most workable path is strategic sovereignty: integrating selectively in ways that expand development opportunities, while building domestic institutions that make openness governable and socially legitimate. By strengthening border and trade administration, institutionalizing integration implementation, refining industrial policy into performance-based upgrading, and adopting balanced digital regulation, Nigeria can reduce policy instability and transform integration from a repeated source of political strain into a stable platform for national development and regional leadership.

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