

Citizen Diplomacy in Nigeria-South Africa Relation: Confronting the Paradox of Xenophobia

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Abstract: Africa is witnessing a recurring wave of xenophobic attacks despite being built on the foundations of humanity and oneness. Despite being situated at various sub-region in Africa, Nigeria and South Africa are both regarded as regional hegemony, and as regional hegemony, they tussle for international recognition as exemplified in occasional diplomatic confrontations. Relations between Abuja and Pretoria have been marked by several stages with their political, economic and socio-cultural interaction punctuated by rivalry, conflict, cooperation and competition. This article explores the paradox of xenophobia in South Africa and its impact on strategic relations with Nigeria through the lens of citizen diplomacy. Relying on secondary data, we assess the how Nigerians residing in South Africa can be protected through the instrumentality of citizen diplomacy. From the study, the authors argue that prevalence of xenophobic prejudice and violence on African nationals (including Nigerians) residing in South Africa arises due to limited implementation and utilization of the citizen's diplomacy by the Nigerian government. Therefore, we propose policy prescriptions to enhance the Nigeria-South Africa strategic partnership with an emphasis on the adoption of a cultural mix policy and early warning signals, which are paramount in eliminating xenophobic conflicts in African societies.

Keywords: citizen diplomacy, foreign nationals, hegemony, South Africa, xenophobia.

Globalization has highlighted the need for increased interaction between states. Within the Africa continent, Abuja and Pretoria represent two regional powers whose impulse for cooperation, collaboration, partnership or competition has many implications for the continent. Understanding the relations between both countries entails investigating the dynamics of interaction as a process of flows and closures, empowerment and enslavement, hope and disappointment, gains and losses, and sacrifices. Both countries are recognized as regional hegemony in Africa (Ogunnubi & Amusan, 2018). Located in the Gulf of Guinea on the West Coast of Africa, Nigeria's estimated population of over 190million is Africa's largest. Known as the rainbow nation, South Africa, with an estimated population of 60million is located in Southern Africa. Despite the geographical distance, these countries have maintained political, economic and social ties. Thus, Nigeria was a frontline state in the struggle for South Africa's liberation from

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apartheid. In 1994, following the end of apartheid rule and enthronement of democracy, South Africa witnessed an unprecedented inflow of immigrants including African nationals looking for greener pastures and for recreational activities (Ogunnubi & Amusan, 2018). Today, the country attracts visitors from around the world for a varied of reasons such as vacations, recreational and relaxation, adventures, business purposes among others. African nationals looking for greener pastures are hugely attracted to South Africa due to their perceived favorable economic, political and social environment (Akinola, 2018). According to official data from StatsSA (2021), it is estimated that as at 2019, about 3.95 million foreigners reside in the country while the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) puts this number at 4.2 million. (Zim Fact 2021). About 30,000 of this population are Nigerians (Kiewit, 2019). However, the actual figures are presumed to surpass this as many illegal immigrants are without official documentation. Nigeria played a vital role in the emancipation of South Africans from the shackle of apartheid, and in effect devoted nearly \$60 billion to the anti-apartheid struggle. As a reward for the special role Nigeria played during the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggles, the country was appointed to Chair the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid until 1994. Nigeria is home to several South African companies with a huge assets base. While Nigeria played a crucial and prominent role towards South Africa, the end of apartheid did not result in the expected closeness and cooperation between the countries (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012) due to military dictatorship and gross human right violations in Nigeria.

Thus, instead of the expected strategic partnership with Nigeria to move Africa forward, under President Nelson Mandela, South Africa demonstrated a level of hostility towards Nigeria. The major cause of disagreement was the radical domestic policies of General Sani Abacha's regime, culminating in the killing some prominent political critics and opponents such as Ken Saro-Wiwa and his associates. This reached its climax in 1995 following several political fracas and hostility between Abuja and Pretoria. However, with the return to democratic rule in 1999, both countries renewed their friendship and sought for ways of strategic partnership to pilot the affairs of Africa. Thus, from the Nigerian perspective, the xenophobic prejudice and violence are a sign of ungratefulness from South Africans.

The argument that South Africans are not entirely comfortable with the influx of foreigners is evident in subtle and violent xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals residing in the country, leading to the loss of life and wanton destruction of property, mainly owned by African nationals. In South Africa, between 2016 and 2018, about 121 Nigerians were killed due to violence resulting from xenophobic prejudices and discrimination (Ogunnowo & Joshua, 2019). While xenophobic incidents have been a recurrent event since the 1990s, the tide worsened in 2018 when more than 60 foreign nationals were killed in the country (Bishogo, 2020). Due to the distinct facial features of African nationals residing in South Africa (especially Ethiopians, Nigerians, and Somalis), they are easily identifiable as foreigners and prone to xenophobic attacks and victimization. It is evident that xenophobia exists in every stratum of South African society; however, it is easily identifiable in rural communities. Xenophobic attacks by South African citizens are a direct reflection of how the South African government treats foreign nationals. African nationals residing in the country are often subjected to harassment at police stations, neglected in hospitals and abused in immigration offices (see Bishogo, 2020). Locals accuse foreign nationals of taking over their land, wives, and businesses, and they are alleged to be the driving force behind the high crime rate in the country. Increased poverty, unemployment and unhealthy rivalry for the scarce resources result in xenophobic attacks (Fayomi et al., 2015). The recurring xenophobic violence on African on Nigerians are cause for worry, as they are capable of derailing Nigeria-South Africa relations which are important for the development of the continent. With a view to curtailing the maltreatment and

victimization of its citizens residing in other countries prompted the Nigerian government to initiate the citizen's diplomacy. It therefore, sought to put the interest of the Nigerian citizen citizens at the center of all governmental policies and bilateral engagements. It also entails rewarding and strengthening relations with countries that treat its citizens well and punishing or cutting ties with those that handle its citizens with disdain or violate their fundamental human rights. In this context, the level of Nigeria –South Africa relations will be guided by how Nigerians residing in South Africa are treated.

Several scholars have analyzed the phenomenon of xenophobia. According to Adebisi (2017) since the history of man, xenophobia has constituted a challenge to communal interactions and co-habitation. He notes that prominent evidence abound such as genocide committed by the Nazist government in Germany leading to the death of over 6million Jews and the racist agitation and attacks by the Ku Klux Klan on blacks residing in the United States of America. Adebisi (2017) traces the origin of the word xenophobia to two Greek words: *Xenos* (meaning stranger or foreigner) and *phobos* (meaning fear). For him, this refers to total hatred for people with different backgrounds, race or skin color. In this context, Fayomi et al. (2015) predisposes that xenophobia implies fear or dislike for aliens residing in their country. However, it is not limited to expressions of anger, hate, or dislike, but also entails assault and violent confrontations on aliens residing in the country (Adebisi & Agagu, 2017). Saleh (2015) expands this definition by describing xenophobia as intense dislike and contempt of people because of their country of origin. Therefore, these incidences of xenophobic prejudices occur not just through violent confrontations but includes exploitation, looting, destruction of property and verbal abuse.

Xenophobia has also been defined as one of several possible reactions to globalization and fragmentation of the society (Dauda et al., 2018). Thus, xenophobia is the direct opposite of the basic principle of humanity such as love, forgiveness and tolerance, and as such it divides the society into fraction causing disunity and strife (Roosevelt & Felix, 2015). It occurs in a variety of ways such as through violent confrontations, burning of persons and businesses, use of vulgar languages and derogatory name-calling of these foreign residents (Dauda et al., 2018). It thus covers virtually all forms of hostility and prejudice towards non-nationals or foreigners. Akinola (2018) corroborates this by stating that xenophobia can manifest in several forms such as racephobia (racism), ethnophobia (ethnic conflict), genophobia (genocide), afrophobia (hatred among Africa's nationalities), and foreignphobia (hatred of foreign things). Solomon and Kosaka (2013) observe xenophobia occur due to limited knowledge about these aliens by the host communities, therefore the accompanying apprehension and uncertainty manifests through dislike and prejudice. Kollapan (1999) warns that xenophobia cannot be separated from violence or physical abuse. This suggests that xenophobia is more than attitudinal changes or behavioural prejudice, it involves violent confrontation with an intent to cause either physical, emotional or psychological damage on these foreigners. The incidences of xenophobia have been prevalent in South Africa and its emergence has been linked to the apartheid regime. However, it takes place within the context of crime, poverty, inequality and unemployment. However, these xenophobic prejudices have been Africanized and is directed towards African national residing in South Africa (Nyamnjuh, 2006). Tella (2016) traces the causes and emergence of xenophobia in South Africa to three hypothetical perspectives, namely, the isolation, scapegoating and bio-cultural hypotheses.

From the foregoing, this article examines Nigeria-South Africa relations in the context of unending xenophobic incidents. The study is guided by the following research question:

1. What is the nature of Nigeria-South Africa relations?
2. To what extent has the xenophobic incidences in South Africa affected its relations with Nigeria?
3. How can the Nigerian government use its citizen diplomacy to protect its citizens and improve its relations with South Africa?

Through the lens of Nigeria's citizen diplomacy, the authors interrogate the Nigerian government's mechanisms to protect its citizens at home and in the Diaspora. The article is divided into five sections. The first provides a background on Nigeria's citizen diplomacy initiative and its adoption as an analytical construct. The second section presents a historical overview of Nigeria-South Africa relations while the third analyzes the nature and trends of xenophobia in South Africa. Following this, we examine the predisposing factors driving xenophobia in South Africa and the contradictions this creates for strong bilateral relations between the countries. In the fourth section, we examine the level of the Nigerian government's application of its citizen diplomacy agenda to protect its citizens. Finally, based on the analysis, we conclude with policy proposals that could assist the Nigerian and South African governments to address the menace of xenophobia.

Citizen Diplomacy as an Analytical Construct

This article adopts citizen diplomacy as its analytical framework. The concept of citizen diplomacy is a broad one; however, it can be understood from two different angles. Firstly, citizen diplomacy means the involvement of the country's citizens in the foreign policy and decision-making process. For Mbachu (2007) the national interests of a state are achieved through the instrumentality of citizen diplomacy. He argues that in its current context, the citizen diplomacy is used to ensure that the foreign policy objectives of the Nigerian government and United Nations' Millennium Goals for Africa are in conformity. This is so, because the citizens are at the center of the development and progress of the country. It becomes important to add them to the foreign policy process. Secondly, and important to this article, citizen diplomacy presupposes the protection and projection of the citizens interest by the Nigerian government (Eke, 2009). Simply put, it requires the government to be more conscious of citizens' interests such as improvement in their socio-economic wellbeing, preservation of their fundamental rights and a conducive environment for the attainment of personal goals and aspirations in their strategic partnership with countries in the international community. As a corollary, it also implies that Nigerians will help improve the image of their country. Thus, citizens are both actors and beneficiaries (Ogunsanwo, 2007).

This means that citizens are at the core of policy formulation, implementation and execution. It also entails rewarding and strengthening relations with countries that treat its citizens well and punishing or cutting ties with those that handle its citizens with disdain or violate their fundamental human rights. This is known as the "Diplomacy of Consequence". It should also be noted that protecting citizens' rights and interests starts at home; the policy thus calls on the Nigerian government to take the lead in exemplary treatment of its citizens. Over the years, the government has had limited success in protecting and projecting the interests, aspirations and rights of its citizens. For instance, there have been widespread reports of extra-judicial killings by the security agencies, and high levels of unemployment and poverty. Prior to the adoption of citizen diplomacy as the core of Nigeria's foreign policy (at least in rhetoric), some Nigerians generated a bad reputation for the country in the global community due to their nefarious activities. They have been accused of involvement in organized crime including illicit trade, human trafficking, drug

smuggling and prostitution across the nation's territorial boundaries. Consequently, the show of restraint to intervene for its citizens is a cardinal feature of the, and Nigerians occupy prison cells in countries such as Italy, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Indonesia, Libya, and Sudan awaiting trial, serving sentences or awaiting execution (Eke, 2009). In 2010, an estimated 200 Nigerians were waiting for capital punishment, and 18 had been executed in Tripoli and Benghazi (Akinterinwa, 2010). In 2012, it was accounted that there were 53 Nigerians in Indonesian prisons, 18 waiting for capital punishment, five imprisoned for life and 30 in confinement detention (Akinterinwa, 2012). Due to the apparent nonchalance of the government, several innocent Nigerians have been victims of unjust treatment and victimization in different countries. On assumption of office, the Yar'Adua-led administration through its foreign minister Ojo Madueke adopted citizen diplomacy in 2007 in order to protect, preserve and ensure the dignity, image and integrity of Nigeria.

In line with this ambition, the Nigerian government has sought to intervene in crises involving Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora. For instance, the xenophobic outbreaks in South Africa in 2015 and 2017 affected many Nigerian citizens who were resident in the country. In February 2017, the South African Ambassador to Nigeria was engaged by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to explain why Nigerians are being subjected to xenophobic attacks and prejudice in South Africa. Further, it also resulted in a diplomatic dialogue between the House of Representatives ad-hoc Committee led by Majority leader, Femi Gbajabamila and the then South African President Jacob Zuma on the need to end the spiral of violence against Nigerians residing in South Africa. Promises were made to resolve the issue and compensate Nigerians who lost property. While it is not clear if such compensation has been paid, the point to note is that the Nigerian Government at various levels made concerted efforts to protect its citizens in South Africa.

Nigeria-South Africa Bilateral Relations: From Apartheid to Democracy

Although Nigeria's historical ties with South Africa date back to 1960 when the former gained independence and adopted an anti-colonialism and anti-apartheid posture as cornerstones of its foreign policy, Nigeria-South Africa relations have only been consummated in the past two-and-a-half decades. This can be attributed to two distinct factors, namely, South Africa's return to the international stage following the 1994 collapse of apartheid rule, and the end of military authoritarianism in Nigeria resulting in the emergence of a democratic government in May 1999 (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012). Following independence, Africa was adopted the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Through its Pan-Africanist stance, Nigeria championed for the independence of African states from oppressive and repressive colonialist and apartheid regime. The first opportunity to demonstrate this stance was in March 21, 1960 following the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. The Sharpeville incident resulted in the death of about 72 people and left more than 100 injured (Onuoha, 2008). Nigeria contributed to the fight against apartheid using two primary strategies, namely: condemnation of apartheid policies; and the use and sponsorship of sanctions and open confrontations with the racist South African government (Chibuzor et al., 2017). Thus, Nigeria spearheaded an embargo on trade with South Africa under the Organization of African Unity, denied the country the use of airport and seaport facilities, and prohibited South African aircraft from flying over its airspace. In collaboration with other countries, Nigeria also advocated for South Africa's exclusion from various international organizations (Onuoha, 2008).

The highpoint of Nigeria's anti-apartheid campaign was its election as the Chair of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid in 1977 which it occupied until the Committee's dissolution in 1994, after South Africa's liberation. Nigeria took advantage of this position to intensify its efforts to eradicate apartheid and sought for the independence of all countries in Southern Africa and this led to the creation of an African fund at the Harare Conference in 1986. Successive governments in Nigeria, both civilian and military, played critical roles in the anti-apartheid campaign. Nigeria spent nearly \$60 billion during its anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa (Odoh, 2019). Ebegbulem (2013) observed that South Africa witnessed an inflow of African nationals including Nigerians following the dawn of democracy. While this period witnessed a change in Nigeria-South Africa relations, the end of apartheid did not result in the expected closeness and cooperation between the countries (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012) due to the military dictatorship and gross human right violations in Nigeria.

Thus, instead of the expected strategic partnership with Nigeria to move Africa forward, under President Nelson Mandela, South Africa demonstrated a level of hostility towards Nigeria. The major cause of disagreement was the radical domestic policies of General Sani Abacha's regime. This reached its climax in 1995, when Mandela campaigned for Nigeria's expulsion from the Commonwealth of Nations during its summit in Auckland and subsequently withdrew the South African ambassador from the country in protest against the killing of environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa and his associates. This incident not only severely damaged Nigeria's international image, but deteriorated Nigeria-South Africa relations. Host country South Africa rescinded its invitation to Nigeria's Super Eagles football team (defending champions) to compete in the 20th African Cup of Nations (Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017). The Nigerian government regarded this as an insult (Chibuzor et al., 2017) and the Nigerian Football Association appealed to the Federation International de Football Association (FIFA), claiming that South Africa should be sanctioned for mixing sports and politics. While FIFA agreed, it merely issued a warning to desist from such practices in the future². On May 19, 1999, the military officially stepped down and civilian rule began in Nigeria. Since then, the dynamics of Nigeria-South Africa relations have again taken on new dimensions.

With Nigeria's return to democratic rule, the two countries' presidents sought ways to improve their bilateral relations. Shared historical experiences of imperialism, colonialism, racism and underdevelopment, coupled with the abundant resources and strategic potential inherent in both countries, not only as regional hegemon, but also as potential leaders of the continent necessitated renewed cooperation. Table 1 presents some demographic and socio-economic indices in relation to Nigeria and South Africa.

In 1999, Abuja and Pretoria entered into strategic partnership for the promotion of trade and investment in line with their shared vision of improved bilateral strategic relations and the articulation of a continental blueprint for economic development (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012). The creation of the Bi-national Commission (BNC) was born out of the boom in trade relations and need to facilitate improved cooperation in the areas of defense and security, science and technology, and education and culture (Onuoha, 2008). The benefits of the BNC and other agreements between Abuja and Pretoria can be seen in the fact that from 1999 to 2002, South Africa's exports to Nigeria increased by around 540%. In 1994, the value of South Africa's exports to Nigeria stood at US\$ 1.8 million, while its imports from Nigeria were valued at US\$3.1 million (Onuoha, 2008). The level of economic transaction between the two countries stood at \$2.1 billion

² Abacha died on June 8, 1998 and an interim government headed by General Abdulsalam Abubakar was set up to spearhead Nigeria's return to democracy.

in 2008 and increased to \$3.6 billion in 2012 (Adebisi, 2017). However, a variety of products make up South Africa’s exports to Nigeria such as machinery, electrical equipment, appliances, wood, paper, prepared foodstuffs, beverages, plastics, rubber, chemicals, etc. In contrast, approximately 97% of Nigeria’s export to South Africa is oil. This means that while South Africa exports a variety of goods to Nigeria, with potential growth, Nigeria depends on a single commodity, pointing to unequal trade relations. While South Africa remains one of Nigeria’s top export destinations in Africa and accounted for 7.2% of the total value of goods exported in Q1 2019, comprising crude oil products worth N325billion and N495million worth of non-crude oil goods (Odoh, 2019), the fact that Nigeria lacks value-added manufactured or processed goods means that it is structurally disadvantaged in trade relations with South Africa (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012). Thus, South Africa turns to Europe, Asia and America for products that Nigeria has the potential to produce and export.

Table 1

A Matrix of Nigeria-South Africa Demographic and Socio-Economic Indices

Factor	Nigeria	South Africa
Location in Africa	West Africa	Southern Africa
Landmass	923,768 sq km	1,219,090 sq km
Coastline	853 km	2,798 km
Independence	October 1 1960	April 1994
Recent History	Uninterrupted democratic since 1999	Uninterrupted democracy since April 1994
Key Natural Resources	Natural gas, petroleum, tin, iron ore, coal, limestone, niobium, lead, zinc, arable land, etc.	Gold, chromium, iron ore, manganese, nickel, phosphate, tin, uranium, gem diamonds, platinum, copper, natural gas, etc.
Size of the Economy (in GDP)		
Reserves of foreign exchange	\$40.95billion (2019 est.)	\$44.89billion (2019 est.)
Debt-external	\$27.163billion (2019 est.)	\$135.2 (2019 est.)
Electricity – Production	12.552MW capacity, produces 4000 MW (2019 est.)	51,309 MW (2018 est.)
Population	195.9million (2018 est.)	55.78million (2018 est.)
Life Expectancy at birth	53.95 years (2017 est.)	63.54 years (2017 est.)
HDI Ranking	158 out of 189 (2018)	113 out of 189 (2108)
Literacy (total)	62% (2018)	94% (2018)
Unemployment Rate	8.24% (2018)	26.92% (2018)
Population below poverty	40.19% (2019 est.)	55.5% (2019 est.)
People living with HIV/AIDS	1.9million (2018est.)	7.7million (2018 est.)
Military Strength	Active personnel: 215,000 Reserve personnel: 52,000(2018)	Active personnel: 74,508 Reserve personnel: 15,107(2018)
Military Expenditure	0.8% of GDP (2019)	1%(2018)
Contribution to AU	15%	15%

Note. Figures updated by the authors based on Zabadi and Onuoha (2012).

Growing economic transactions between Nigeria and South Africa also led to a drastic increase in the number of South African companies operating in Nigeria, with the number currently standing at over 120. Today, several companies from South Africa are major players and contribute to the growth of the country's economy. For instance, in 2001, for a fee of approximately \$285million the Nigerian government granted MTN a license to possess a telecommunication network. Unarguably, it represents a huge investment drive for MTN beyond South Africa. By 2003, MTN had spent more than US\$1 billion in infrastructural and other startup businesses in Nigeria. By the end of 2004, its subscriber base had grown to 1.7million emerging as the biggest telecommunication provider in Nigeria with over 50million active users in 2017. Other prominent South African companies that followed in MTN's footsteps include DSTV which is a major force in the entertainment sector, accounting for about 90% of the viewership of paid-satellite TV in Nigeria from 2005 to 2009. South African company Entech was awarded the contract for the re-development at Bar Beach and the Victoria Island area of Lagos. As is the normal course in business, there are also examples of some South African companies that invested in Nigeria but failed. While there are official records on South African firms and investment in Nigeria, the same cannot be said of Nigerian businesses in South Africa. Apart from the well-known Oando Nigeria and Dangote Group, other Nigerian investments in the country lack official documentation.

Beyond cooperation in economic development (trade and investment), both countries engage in fierce competition for international clout and dominance. As a result of the recommendation by the UN High-level panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes for the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to add more representation, especially from the developing world, Abuja and Pretoria engaged in competition for a proposed African slot. The prospect of a permanent seat for Africa unites both countries as much as it divides them. While Abuja and Pretoria are staunchly united on the importance of Africa having a permanent seat in the proposed reformed UNSC, they are sharply divided over who is best qualified to represent the continent when this comes to fruition (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012). Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt are perceived to be strong contenders for one or two slots for Africa (Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017). The contest has led to further political divisions on the African continent. In 2011, following the defeat of President Laurent Gbagbo in the Côte d'Ivoire's presidential election, Laurent Gbagbo declined accepting that he lost the election and was heavily backed by South Africa. However, Gbagbo's resolve to remain in power was vehemently opposed by Nigeria. Further, Nigeria and South Africa were again at loggerheads at the height of the Arab spring revolution in Libya. The then President Colonel Muammar Gaddafi was supported by South Africa, while Nigeria backed the National Transitional Council (NTC) (Adebisi & Agagu, 2017). South Africa wrongfully deported 125 Nigerians for allegedly possessing fake yellow fever vaccination cards in 2012. In retaliation, the Nigerian government deported 84 South Africans. The matter was resolved when South Africa tendered a letter of apology to Nigeria (Umezurike & Asuelime, 2015). During the election of the former AU Commission Chair, Nigeria backed the occupant AU Commission Chairperson, Jean Ping from Gabon, second term bid while South Africa remained behind its Home Affairs Minister Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who arose the victor of the distinctly challenged political decision on July 15, 2012 (Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017). The same scenario played out when Nigeria and South Africa both presented candidates for Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that eventually went to the latter's Wamkele Mene in February 2020. This has been a recurring pattern in relations between Nigeria and South Africa. Interaction between the two can thus be described as conflict, confrontation, co-operation and more recently, competition. Because of Nigeria's citizen diplomacy and South Africa's commitment to an open and mutually beneficial relationship, the governments of both countries have sought ways

to protect their citizens and ensure peaceful co-existence. Thus, rather than engage in a blame game on the question of xenophobia, this article assesses the measures adopted by both governments to peacefully resolve conflict and prevent future recurrences.

Trends and Triggers of Xenophobia in South Africa

The origins of xenophobic attacks in South Africa can be traced to the after-effects of the apartheid regime and the failure of the democratic government to tackle the vast influx of African nationals coming into the country in search for greener pastures. While the apartheid system undoubtedly affected the behavior of South African towards foreigners, the dawn of democracy meant the waiving of international border restrictions, making it possible for South Africans to encounter people and cultures previously unfamiliar to them. In effect, the transition to democratic rule opened Africa to South Africa. Isolated from that market for decades because of economic sanctions, South Africa was now free to exploit new investment opportunities presented by the stagnating African economy. The aftermath of the apartheid regime and experiences imbibed in South African a culture of dislike and distrust for foreigners and as a result, this manifests in the form of hostility.

Due to the high level of development and technological advancement, South Africa presents a destination of choice accounting for a large influx of foreign visitors and immigrants (Dauda et al., 2018). Indeed, the abundant opportunities and nature of the South African economy are major drawcards for migrants. It is argued that the colonialists' extended stay facilitated rapid development and set the country on the path of industrial development (Tella, 2016). This encouraged an influx of people seeking a haven from economic crises, war, poverty, and unfavorable government policies. A report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2015 noted that there were more than 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa (UNHCR ROSA, 2015). It projected that this would increase dramatically, with 60,000 to 80,000 asylum seekers entering the country each year.

Xenophobic assaults in South Africa has its history to 1995 when settlers from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique residing in Alexandra Township in Johannesburg were truly attacked for an extended period of time in January, as violent groups recognized the alleged undocumented aliens and walked them to the police headquarters to free the municipality of foreigners (Fayomi et al., 2015). According to Dauda et al. (2018), locals feel that documented foreigners are to blame for the lack of jobs and essential services, while undocumented foreigners contribute to the high rate of crime and deny locals access to scarce resources. Such perceptions drive the hatred and a high level of hostility toward foreigners.

In 2000, South Africans murdered seven aliens within the Cape Flats districts and the killing spree lasted for over a month as the police judged the incidence to be xenophobic-related. In October 2001, residents of the Zandspruit region gave Zimbabweans ten days to vacate the area. After the expiration of the ultimatum, the Zimbabweans were forcefully removed from the district and their properties were set ablaze. Community members accused them of being employed while locals remained unemployed. They subsequently launched a campaign called "buyelekhaya" (go back home). The first widely recognized xenophobic attack occurred on May 11, 2008, when a series of riots started in the township of Alexandra. In Johannesburg, South Africans attacked African nationals from Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. It was estimated that about 670 foreigners sustain various degrees of injuries, were sexually assaulted, property worth millions of Rands was either looted or destroyed and more than 100,000 people were displaced (Onuoha 2008). In 2011, there was a series of attacks on foreign nationals residing in South Africa. About

120 people were killed, with some burnt alive, and more than 100 were seriously wounded, while 120 businesses and shops owned by foreigners were closed and 1,000 immigrants were displaced (UNHCR ROSA, 2014). Between 2012 and 2014, there were minor but frequent attacks on foreigners. More than 300 violent incidents against African nationals were reported from January 2014 to March 2014 and more than 200 businesses owned by foreigners were either burnt or looted while 900 people were displaced (UNCHR ROSA, 2014). It was reported in April 2015, that Nigerians had lost about 84 million naira to xenophobic attacks in South Africa (Channels Television, 2015).

Also, about seven persons were murdered in another xenophobic violence that occurred in April 2015, in the cities of Johannesburg and Durban (BBC News, 2019). This began in response to a statement credited to Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini who said that outsiders should leave South Africa and return to their countries. It was noted that members of government agencies that should prevent such attacks were stoking them. Former South African president Jacob Zuma's reaction to the 2015 xenophobic attacks laid the blame at the door of other African countries:

Our brother countries contribute to this. Why are their citizens not in their countries? It is not useful to criticize South Africa as if we mushroom these foreign nationals and then ill treat them...everybody criticizes South Africa as if we have manufactured the problem. Even if people who are xenophobic are minority, but what prompts these refugees to be in South Africa? It is a matter we cannot shy away from discussing (Maromo 2015).

Such xenophobic statements are not only common among political office holders but are also capable of instigating conflict between locals and foreign nationals. Between September 1 and 5, 2019, riots broke out in Johannesburg and shops owned by foreigners were looted, leading to the deaths of at least 12 people, including at least two South Africans. This was caused by the death of a taxi driver. The violence spread to the township of Alexandra and it was estimated that about 50 businesses owned by foreign nationals were destroyed (Ogunnowo & Joshua, 2019).

Table 2
Xenophobic Incidences by Province (1994-2018)

Province	Number of times
Gauteng	212
Western cape	111
KwaZulu-Natal	67
Limpopo	40
Eastern cape	33
Mpumalanga	22
Northwest	20
Free state	19
Northern cape	5

Note. Source by BBC (2019)

Table 2 shows that there were more than 300 xenophobic attacks between 1994 and 2018, with the most in Gauteng, followed closely by the Western Cape. Such attacks also often assume subtle forms and, in most cases, do not receive adequate coverage, while those affected tend to suffer in silence. Table 3 shows some of the major xenophobic incidents in selected cities.

Table 3

Major xenophobic Attacks in Selected Cities in South Africa

Urban area	Description	Dates
Alexandratownship (Johannesburg)	“buyelekaya” inspired attacks on Malawian, Mozambican and Zimbabwean migrants	1995
Alexandra township (Johannesburg)	Attacks on migrants resulted in over 600, deaths including locals:342 shops 100, 213 premises burned down, about 100,000 people were temporarily displaced	May 2008
Olievenhoutbasch (near centurion in Gauteng)	Attacks on migrants at Choba informal settlement resulted in several deaths; looting and destruction of foreign owned spaza shops, hair salons and taverns.	December 2005
Olievenhoutbasch (near centurion in Gauteng)	Attack on migrants resulted in several deaths; looting and destruction of shacks and property	2007
Durban	Armed group lead by a community councilor led attacks on migrants; 100 Somalia owned businesses were looted and over 400 Somalis were displaced	January 2009
De Doorns(Western Cape)	Attacks on Zimbabwean migrants at stofland informal settlement resulted in looting and destruction of shacks, 3000 foreigners were driven from their shacks	November 2009
Durban Johannesburg	Attack on foreign nationals residing in the country. the attack was ignited by a statement by the Zulu king goodwill Zwelithin, who asked the foreigners to “go back to your country”	April 2015
Jeppestown, Johannesburg, Alexandra etc.	Attack on foreign nationals broke out after the death of a taxi driver allegedly for trying to stop drug dealers. This lead to the death of at least 10 persons, 423 arrests and about 50 businesses predominantly wounded by foreign nationals were destroyed, looted and burnt.	September 2019

Note. Updated by the authors based on Tevera (2013).

Both tables point to the geographical spread of xenophobic occurrences which shows that they are not restricted to one province. The manifestations of xenophobia tendencies in South Africa is also not limited to the use of violence or physical destruction of property. Perpetrators have adopted several slang words to disparage foreign nationals. Oni and Okunade (2018) identify vulgar remarks used to describe black African national across the country. For instance, in Alexandra, outsiders are labelled with several unruly names often depicting their race, ethnic backgrounds or accent. in most cases, these names are degrading and insulting, and some although appearing harmless, are offensive. Each tag is value laden and all denote the social and cultural origins of the carrier. Such names include “makwerekwere”, which is the most seasoned mark

utilized for black foreigners who communicate in various dialects with totally unique phonetic sounds from South African dialects. The name “magrigamba” is given to West African men who are presumed to come to South Africa with no assets and after at some point, return to their nations with assets in their control (Oni & Okunade, 2018).

Sadly, xenophobia is also prevalent in the South African education system and institutions, including universities. Xenophobic prejudice has been institutionalized into the very fabric of South African universities. Foreign nationals in the academic sector are subjected to gross humiliation, intimidation, character assassination, and derogatory name calling. In some cases, the academic success of these black foreign nationals has been attributed to the use of witchcraft, cheating and black African science (voodoo) (Obadire, 2018). Students at the University of Zululand have constantly complained that most South African lecturers tend to use local languages in lecturing and addressing academic related issues, knowing full well that most international students only understand English (Akinola, 2018). A report published by an independent commission in 2019 found evidence of “systematic suppression of black academics and excellence” at the University of Cape Town (Nordling, 2019). The report further notes that institutional racism and xenophobic prejudice are basically a norm at this university and by extension some other universities in South Africa. These take the form of systemic oppression of black academics, appointment and promotion of inexperienced South African nationals at the expense of better qualified foreign African academics, and even outright dismissal over minor incidents. Furthermore, university staff who are foreign nationals are also victimized by their students, colleagues and superiors. South African universities are usually reluctant to employ foreign nationals because of their accent and alleged low-level English proficiency, often tagged low academic performance. This results in emotional stress, disruption of academic performance, feelings of fear and distrust among foreign nationals in the South African education system.

Xenophobia has been condemned across the Africa, most especially its Africanization as prevalent in South Africa (Ogunnubi & Amusan, 2018). Charles Onunaigu, Director of China Studies attributed “the attacks to reactions to failed expectations of ordinary citizens from the ANC-led post-apartheid South African government. Unfortunately, like in every other anti-colonial struggle in Africa, the fruits fell into the hands of few elites, so the ordinary people are letting out steam through any means including these attacks” (Odoh, 2019). While it is difficult if not impossible to identify a predisposing factor that encourages xenophobia in South Africa, we argue that these tendencies are the result of several social-political factors, some of which are manifest, while others are more subtle. Such triggers include high levels of poverty and unemployment, ineffective migration control, inflammatory statements by the media and political leaders and the alleged bad image of Nigerians (Akinola, 2018; Fayomi et al., 2015).

Citizen Diplomacy and Governments’ Response(s)

The rowing relevance of foreign policy within the international community and relations cannot be over emphasized. A state’s friendly relations with other states in the international arena show its acceptability within the comity of nations. It also serves as a medium to project and protect its interest beyond its territory, thereby gaining international recognition and respect. the recognition a state enjoys in the international system rests on its developmental trajectory, economic and military capacity, the positive image of the country and its adherence to the treaties and international convention which it is a signatory to (Aleyomi & Abubakar, 2017). With Nigeria’s adoption of citizen diplomacy, it was assumed that its new international behavior will primarily aim to protect its citizens’ interests and wellbeing across the world (Folarin, 2013). This

represents a policy shift from the traditional Africa-centered foreign policy, to a Nigerian-centered diplomacy. As the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ojo Madueke noted, the country's Afrocentric policy not only became history with the introduction of citizen diplomacy, but it is a medium to project Nigerian foreign policy with citizens' interest as a focal point. While a citizen-centered foreign policy does not put an end to Nigeria's continued regional and continental benevolence, it is premised on how a section of the international community treats Nigerians (Folarin, 2013). Citizen diplomacy emphasizes the primary objective of Nigeria's foreign policymaking: protection of all Nigerians and image building. Protection of the lives of citizens ought to be the paramount concern of the government.

However, the very notion of citizen-centered diplomacy raises a fundamental question: What will be the response of the Nigerian government to the arrest of its citizens in foreign countries on allegations of committing crimes and other illegal activities? Saliu (2010) asserts it is prejudicial for the government to restrained using the citizen diplomacy to protect its citizens who have been alleged of being law breakers outside Nigeria. This represents a defect in Nigeria's application of citizen-centered diplomacy because countries such as the USA, Germany and France offer protection to their citizens even when they are accused of committing crimes in foreign countries. In effect, the practice of citizen diplomacy entails that the country guarantees the welfare and protection of each citizen irrespective of the accused's crime, without violation of their fundamental human rights. In view of the unfair treatment of Nigerians, Saliu (2010) argues that with regard to the protection of the Nigerian at home and in Diaspora, the instrumentality of citizen diplomacy has not achieved its desired objectives. The recurring xenophobic attacks in South Africa give credence to this assertion.

Xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals (Nigerians) residing in South Africa threaten to derail the relationship between the two countries. Major xenophobic attacks in recent years (2015, 2017 and 2019) have had devastating effects on the lives and property of Nigerians residing in South Africa. It was in a bid to forestall these types of incidents that the Yar'Adua administration-initiated citizen diplomacy. Geared at protecting the image and integrity of Nigerians both at home and in the Diaspora, citizen diplomacy is more than just a foreign policy initiative; it isa call to action to protect its citizens through a show of strength under circumstances that threaten their existence. It was therefore expected that the Nigerian government would take bold and decisive action in the face of xenophobic attacks on its citizens residing in South Africa. However, the level of the application of citizen diplomacy has been relatively low. The Chair of the House Committee on Diaspora Matters, Hon. Rita Orji voiced her displeasure regarding the government reaction to xenophobic incidences in South Africa, accusing the state of being biased and failing to protect its citizens while protecting South African businesses in Nigeria. She noted that between 2014 and 2016, about 137 Nigerian citizens were murdered in xenophobic inspired violence in South Africa (Chibuzor et al., 2017).

In 2019, with the re-occurrence of xenophobic attacks and growing threats of reprisal attacks in Nigeria, the Nigerian government acted decisively. On the political front, the government recalled its High Commissioner from South Africa and Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo and other prominent personalities cancelled a scheduled trip to the country, thereby boycotting the World Economic Forum on Africa hosted in Cape Town in September 2019. The Nigerian government also summoned the South African Acting High Commissioner to Nigeria, Bobby Moroe to explain the reasons for the xenophobic attacks on Nigerians. It offered to repatriate its willing and stranded citizens from South Africa. Private Nigerian airline "Air Peace" volunteered to fly people back to Nigeria free of charge. On September 11, 2019, the first set of 189 Nigerians arrived in Lagos (Kakanda, 2019). On the diplomatic front, the government sent a special envoy to South African

President, Cyril Ramaphosa to express dismay and the grievances of the Nigerian government. In furtherance of the earlier delegation's discussion, in October 2019, the presidents of both countries held a high-level discussion and agreed on the need for security collaboration and the establishment of an early warning system.

Despite these initiatives, the xenophobic attacks persist. The Nigerian government did not take as tough a stance in protecting its citizens as it did in the 1960s when France tested nuclear weapons in the Sahara Desert. The government severed ties with Paris, expelled the French ambassador and imposed a full embargo on French goods. However, such political will is generally lacking today. According to Kakanda (2019), Nigeria is being cautious in order to protect its economic interests in South Africa. Nigeria exported goods worth \$3.83 billion to South Africa in 2018. In contrast, it imported South African products worth just \$514.3 million, representing for about 1% of South African exports. South Africa also has major investments in Nigeria, which are sources of foreign direct investment. Nonetheless, protecting the lives of its citizens is paramount and human security is supreme. The Nigerian government should thus begin to take proactive measures and decisive action against countries that fail to protect the lives and property of its citizens abroad.

This is important because failure to adequately address these xenophobic attacks and prejudices possesses dire implications for Nigeria-South Africa relations and Africa in general. First, it can lead to a reduction in economic investments and partnership between Nigeria and South Africa. Within West and Southern Africa, both countries possess about 60% of the economic strength and trade (This Daylive, 2019). South Africa is a top source of foreign direct investment (FDI) as it has companies in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. Thus, companies linked to South Africans can be found in the telecommunication, engineering, hospitality, construction, tourism and banking sectors of the Nigerian economy. Also, Nigerians have huge investments in South Africa which are at risks of being potential soft targets for retaliatory attacks. Therefore, unchecked xenophobic prejudices can negatively undermine the economic and developmental trajectory of both countries as jobs, businesses and other financial assets might be destroyed. Without these investments, citizens of Nigeria and South Africa will plunge further into unemployment and poverty. This is so, because, while the foreign investors lose their investments, the governments of both countries lose portions of their expected tax revenues. It can also result in trade embargoes, nationalization of companies and restrictions which negate the economic regional initiatives of the African Union. Second, it will result in the reduction of the number of foreign students coming to South Africa in pursuit of either undergraduate or postgraduate programmes. In effect, it can discourage and hinder student's mobility from other African countries including Nigeria, from seeing South Africa as a preferred destination for higher education and tourism (Adebisi, 2017). Third, as two regional hegemony in Africa, the rousing tensions and confrontations arising from these xenophobic attacks can derail the peace and unity of Africans. Both Abuja and Pretoria play a vital role in conflict mediation and peace processes across Africa, therefore, being at loggerheads will create a leadership vacuum and plunge the region into crisis. It will also make African appear as weak and disunited among the comity of nations. Thus, for Africans to develop a strong posture in its relations with the international community, Nigeria and South Africa need to be united. This entails addressing the recurring issue of xenophobia in its relations and strategic partnership.

In view of this, there is a growing need for the Nigerian government to engage a track II diplomacy mix of cultural policy in furtherance of citizen diplomacy to protect Nigerian citizens in South Africa and elsewhere. This refers to the use of unofficial people-to-people interaction in shaping, representing and promoting the image of their states. It would seem to be imperative, as

most of these individuals interact with South Africans on a daily basis. Such exchanges have the potential to de-escalate conflict and build confidence in the host communities. In interacting with South Africans at an informal level, Nigerian citizens residing in South Africa need to respect and adhere to the tenets of their culture and constitution. Orderly conduct on the part of Nigerians will promote peaceful co-existence more than official negotiations. This is because xenophobic attacks occur at the informal level of interaction. However, it is worrisome that some individuals who ought to play a pivotal role in promoting the image of the country are accused of engaging in various nefarious activities in South Africa. This damages Nigeria's international image and leads to the generalization of Nigerians as criminals.

In line with this, Ojo Madueke asserted that for every Nigerian drug pusher or 419scammer arrested across the world, the media and other opinion-makers have the responsibility to showcase Nigerian surgeons, scientists, academics and technocrats that are making a difference in these countries' communities (Ezirim, 2008). Nigeria should be accorded due respect and recognition for its efforts to maintain peace and security in Africa and the remarkable achievements of its citizens around the world. Therefore, to deal with Nigeria's image problem, internationally respected and credible individuals such as Wole Soyinka, Yakubu Gowon, Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop Oyedepo, etc. could be effectively engaged in informal diplomacy. This would greatly assist in resolving the recurring issue of xenophobia in South Africa. According to Folarin (2013:11) the Nigerian government needs to "go the extra mile to save Nigerian lives.... The Nigerian life should be cherished and protected from trigger-happy security agencies at home and xenophobic/racist elements abroad." The use of common-interest bargaining that promotes cooperation rather than conflict is a definitive approach to the protection of Nigerian citizens in South Africa. By establishing areas of mutual interest to both governments, the South African government would be proactive in quelling these incidents before they escalate.

Citizen-centered diplomacy is a dual responsibility on the part of the government and citizens. While the government works to ensure the protection and projection of the legitimate interests of its citizens, citizens need to conduct themselves as good ambassadors of the country. The onus is on Nigerian citizens to serve as good ambassadors through exemplary conduct and etiquette in their daily interaction with South Africans. Through its National Orientation Agency, the Nigerian government should educate citizens on the various ways of projecting the national interests in South Africa and beyond. A basic element of citizen-centered diplomacy is the need to ensure sustainable development in a manner that directly improves citizens' standard of living. The Nigerian government's inability to improve the lives of its citizens is a factor that promotes xenophobia. As a result of growing unemployment and poverty in Nigeria, citizens migrate to South Africa in search of greener pastures. This creates fierce competition over limited resources, resulting in xenophobic tendencies. Hence, rather than blaming South Africans, the Nigerian government needs to create an enabling environment for the attainment of personal aspirations and socio-economic development at the domestic level. Doing so will reduce the clamor to travel abroad and encourage those in the Diaspora to return. A human security approach that focuses on the provision of basic amenities to citizens will promote their allegiance to Nigeria and protect its image.

Finally, the presence of irregular and undocumented Nigerian immigrants in South Africa further hampers effective application of citizen diplomacy. Many Nigerian immigrants residing in South Africa are not officially documented with the Nigerian Embassy in the host country. This makes it difficult for the Nigerian government to engage in adequate contact tracing when xenophobic incidents occur. The Nigerian authorities rely on unofficial information from individuals or groups in the affected communities. It is important for Nigerians in the Diaspora

(South Africa) to obtain official documentation at their home embassy in order to receive appropriate assistance when a crisis occurs.

It is clear that there is an urgent need for a national strategy on foreign policy in Nigeria. Beyond rhetoric, a more robust Nigerian-centered foreign policy is necessary. Given the continued humiliation and oppression of Nigerian citizens, especially in countries that it has made concerted efforts to assist in the past, such as South Africa, Nigeria needs a citizen-centered foreign policy and should develop the political will to protect its citizens at home and in the Diaspora.

Conclusion

The sporadic xenophobic attacks in South Africa possess the affinity of derailing South Africa's cordial relations with other African countries, especially those whose citizens are affected by such attacks, such as Nigeria. Nigeria was at the forefront in the struggle for the independence of South Africa and devoted nearly \$60 billion to the anti-apartheid struggle. Out of appreciation of Nigeria's role in the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggles, the country was appointed to Chair the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid until 1994. Nigeria is home to several South African companies with a huge asset base. Thus, from the Nigerian perspective, the xenophobic attacks in South Africa are a sign of ungratefulness. While factors such as high levels of poverty and unemployment, an influx of immigrants, and alleged illicit activities on the part of some Nigerians could explain these attacks, they do not justify them.

In order to maintain a healthy relationship between Abuja and Pretoria as regional powers, collaborative effort is required to address recurring xenophobic attacks. The establishment of a mechanism to monitor early warning signals is very important in preventing its escalation. In addition, the Nigerian and South African governments need to collaborate and seek avenues to enact a cultural mix policy. This will help to improve social interaction between citizens. It can be achieved through festivals, carnivals, sports events etc., creating a friendly environment for mutual coexistence. The media also plays a critical role in shaping people's views, opinions and perspectives. It should be more discerning when reporting on immigration issues and eliminate harmful racial stereotypes from news content. Likewise, public officeholders and political leaders/figures should recognize that their views, speeches and action also determine people's behavior and reactions. They should therefore lead by example and be ambassadors of humanism.

In conclusion, it is important to address the root socio-economic causes of xenophobic attacks. The governments of both countries need to address poverty and unemployment by creating an enabling environment for the attainment of individual goals and adequate provision of social amenities and employment opportunities. It is important to note that diplomacy is more related to cooperation than conflict. There is a need to avoid issues or speeches that highlight areas of divergence or difference. Making concessions will engender positive responses. Through the collaborative efforts of the Nigerian and South African governments, xenophobic incidents can be reduced to the barest minimum and together we can achieve a united Africa.

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