

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The Struggle for Hegemony in Africa: Nigeria and South Africa Relations in Perspectives, 1999-2014

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**This article examines Nigeria-South Africa relations with emphasis on political, trade and economic engagements. It investigates the consistencies and changing patterns in Nigeria and South Africa relations that are partly linked to the failure of Nigeria to diversify its economy and South Africa's unwillingness to provide enabling environment for Nigerians in its economic domain. It argues that Nigeria and South Africa have de-prioritized the key objectives of leading economic growth and economic development in Africa, and resorted to competitive pursuit of regional hegemonic status. This article emphasizes increased cooperation between the leading regional powers and pursuit of bi-relations on the bases of autonomous state structures rather than the personalities of the governing elite. The work relies on secondary sources of data such as journal articles, newspapers and policy briefs to discuss aspects of Nigeria-South Africa relations. It concludes that Nigeria and South Africa should shift from competitive relations to cordial relations with a view to leading the envisaged economic growth, economic development and political renewal in Africa.**

**Key words:** Hegemony, competitive, cooperation, economic development, diversify, economic growth.

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria and South Africa are, respectively, the first and second largest economies in the African region. These countries are viewed as forerunners of continental development and epitomes of regional diplomatic links in West Africa and Southern Africa respectively. Nigeria and South Africa had made concerted efforts to position the region as a critical global actor in international political and economic relations. The relations of the major African powers had been strengthened by the need to resuscitate Africa's ailing economy and mediate the consequences of imperialism. The Nigerian state became pre-occupied with decolonization in Africa. The

decolonization process assumed a defining context of its Afro-centric foreign policy, which was partly meant to engage the horrendous system of apartheid in South Africa. Nigeria's confrontational and hostile engagement of South Africa began in the 1960s amid apartheid enclave status of the pariah state. The country was diametrically opposed to the apartheid system and it led the campaigns that culminated in the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations in 1961 after the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960.

The inauguration of South Africa's democracy in 1995 vitiated its status as a pariah state and enhanced its re-

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admission into the global community. It assumed a leadership role in African affairs as exemplified in its membership of the BRICs bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the struggle for resources in the Africa. The new South African posture ineluctably pitched it against Nigeria that asserts itself as the Giant of Africa. The claim of South Africa as a de facto giant in the region gained currency with its demand for the restoration of democracy in Nigeria during the tenure of Late General Sani Abacha. The democratic deficit in Nigeria offered Pretoria the leeway to assert itself in Africa despite its claim of not competing with Abuja's leadership role in the region (Banjo, 2010: 83). The execution of Ken-Saro Wiwa, the Ogoni rights activist and the 'Ogoni Eight' compelled South Africa to sustain international campaigns, which led to the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations.

The restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999 signified the "fons et origo" for building strategic partnerships between the two states with the launch of the Bi-National Commission, BNC, in October 1999 and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD, in 2001. The bi-lateral relations between Nigeria and South Africa largely improved between 1999 and 2008 when the volume of trade increased to 22.8 billion South African Rand from 174,000,000 million (Otto, 2012). The bi-lateral relations suffered setbacks in the tenures of Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Jacob Zuma as a result of the xenophobic attacks on African migrants and the refusal of Nigeria to support the nomination of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa for the Chair of the African Union, AU.

The relations between Nigeria and South Africa have been omnium-gatherum of good and evil. It assumes a zigzag dimension with periodic oscillation that scholars describe as love-hate relationship (Agbu, 2010: 437). The Nigeria and South Africa relations have equally been described as unspoken rivalry (Games 2013b: 1); and the struggle for Africa's leadership role that is not predicated on conscious and explicit plan to offer direction to the region. The struggle is rather defined by the Afro-centric philosophical foundations of Nigeria and South African foreign policies.

This article discusses the bi-relations trade, economic and political relations between the contending African regional powers and account for the inconsistencies in these areas. The study period is 1999 – 2014 with a view to underscore Nigeria's return to civil rule and its implications for Nigeria and South Africa relations. The article examines options to deepen existing relations in a sense that promotes economic growth, economic development and political renewal in Africa.

### Theoretical Framework

The notion of hegemony is a significant analytic concept

that expands our understanding of states' interaction and the dynamics of power relations in international politics. The word hegemony is an Anglicized expression of the Greek term, *hegemonia*, which means leadership. It traditionally connotes the dominant state that has the capacity to wield unchallenged influence and power on other states within the system of states. This concept owes its theorization to Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, in his pre-prison writings before 1923 (Adamson, 1980). It expresses a condition of asymmetric relationship among states in which there is power disequilibrium in the international system through the most powerful state that can exert its leadership on the international system.

In the ancient Greek, it was used to describe the relations between city-states as Bach (2000) argues that it is hinged on respect for autonomy of coalition partners as a factor that distinguishes hegemony from imperial domination based on coercion. This notion that a hegemon is imperialist power that imposes her will on other states have been refuted by Gilpin (2001) as "erroneous assumption". Gilpin posits that hegemony is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the establishment of a liberal international economy. He notes, however, that the presence of a hegemon enhances the feasibility of cooperation in the international system.

Scholars such as Robert Gilpin, Robert Baldwin, Bruno Frey and Robert Mundell have pointed at the importance of hegemony for a progressive order in the international system. Kindleberger (1973) argues on the essentiality of hegemony hinged on a stabilized state for the stabilization of world economy. To Mansfield (1992), hegemony is the holding by one state of preponderance power in the international system or a regional sub-system to the extent it single-handedly dominates the rules and arrangements through which international and regional political systems are organized.

Gramsci (1971) posits that power does not depend solely on coercion or force, but thrives on consent. To Gramsci (1971), the leadership status is predicated on ideological persuasion as the basis for the relative consolidation of political authority in capitalist democracies despite the presence of crises and depression. He sees hegemony as the dominant position of a specific state among others and its unchallenged leadership role through the popularization and universalization of its interests as the interest of each tendency. To him, this is achievable through the instrumentality of ideology or a dominant view as symbol of legitimacy. Gramsci posits that hegemony is the receding of the coercive face of power amid the ascendancy of the consensual face.

The concept of hegemony assumed unprecedented usage with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole world power within a somewhat uni-polar world order. The disintegration of the Soviet Union signaled the end of the cold war that characterized international politics at the

end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The cold war phase was laced with the military and ideological rivalry between the Western and Eastern ideological blocs. The notion of super powers emerged within the context of the rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union. The notion of hegemony surfaced with the collapse of the East bloc, Communist regimes, Soviet Union, and the Warsaw Pact. The United States assumed hegemony status amid the prevalence of neo-liberal, capitalist ideology.

Since the end of the cold war, the emergence of new powerful states; China, Russia and India, has called to question the orthodox conceptions of hegemony. Mearsheimer (2001) argues that it is not possible to have a country that would be designated with hegemonic status considering the hegemon is the single powerful state that possesses the wherewithal—military, economic, political—without the existence of other great powers.

Consequent on the critique of global hegemony as a result of the proliferation of multi-polar powers, the concept has been analyzed by scholars within regional context. Wright (1978) and Landsberg (2007) argue that the regional hegemon is the “pivotal state”, or the “middle power state” in the hierarchy of global power. Landsberg (2007) asserts that a pivotal state is in comparison to its neighbors a powerful state. The relative power it possesses confers the ability to influence other states, regions and trajectories of events. The pivotal state is influential in a region to the extent that its position confers positive and negative influence in terms of development, he posits. To Landsberg (2007), the regional hegemon is a powerful state that rules through domination. This pivotal state acts in the interest of the region with the cooperation of other states and build partnerships with and among its neighbor. It is instrumental in the construction of regional societies, he submits.

This article adopts Gramscian (1971) and Landsberg’s (2007) conception of hegemony to interrogate the regularities and inconsistencies in Nigeria and South Africa relations. The concept of hegemony is used in this context as connoting a regional leadership that is able to propagate an ideological basis, either through implicit or explicit consensus, for other countries within its sphere of influence, and possesses the capacity to maintain peace and cooperation through legitimate means. It is, however, noteworthy that the Nigeria-South Africa relations have been predicated on identifying the country that is capable of donning the status of Africa’s hegemon.

### **Historical backdrops of Nigeria-South Africa relations**

Nigeria began relations with South Africa in the early 1960s against the background of the struggle to emancipate colonized African states especially in Southern Africa; Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The African orientation of Nigeria’s foreign policy is evident in the declaration of the

former Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Jaja Wachukwu, in 1961 that ‘colonialism and all its manifestations must be ended and that Nigeria would be failing in its duty if it did not use its full resources, intellectual, moral and material, in the struggle for the emancipation of the rest of Africa’ (Agbu et al., 2013: 1).

The apartheid question was a pre-occupation of Balewa’s foreign policy; the state-sponsored massacre in Sharpeville on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1960 that led to the killing of seventy two blacks and several wounded by the white minority police offered the Nigerian government a leverage to officially intervene in the apartheid enclave. The Nigerian government intervened through the ban on the importation of South African goods into the country (Agbu, 2010:439), and it became a leading voice on sanctions on South Africa in the international community. The expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations in 1961; expulsion of South African Dutch Reform Church from Nigeria and the cancellation of contracts awarded to South African companies demonstrated the Nigerian government despised the inhuman apartheid regime (Agbu et al., 2013:1).

Nigeria chaired the United Nations Security Council during the apartheid period till the collapse of the obnoxious economic and political system in 1994. The Nigeria state was committed to the South African question to the extent it became a member of the Frontline States despite its geographical distance to South Africa (Olanrewaju, 2013:51). The apartheid system repressed blacks and socially disaggregated the society into White, Black or Bantu and colored people with mixed descent. The Asians, Indians and Pakistanis were later added as the fourth group. The expropriation of land owned by the black majority, its appropriation by White minority through institutionalized white supremacist policy was a critical aspect of apartheid’s political economy. The African National Congress (ANC), Pan-African Congress (PAC), and South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRC) emerged within the context of this segregation policy.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Civil War offered a context for South Africa’s subtle intervention in its affairs. Gabon, Ivory Coast, Zambia, and Tanzania recognized the state of Biafra contrary to the OAU’s position on non-interference. This recognition was hinged on the military backups offered to Nigeria by the Soviet Union, which was despised for its Communist ideology. The perception of Communist ideology by Presidents Houphet Boigny and Omar Bongo fostered collaboration with, and assistance from South Africa to realize the independence of Biafra. The South African President Pieter W Botha assisted Ivory Coast and Gabon with US\$1.4 million and “more or less 200 tons of unspecified weapons of ammunition” (Pfister, 2005: 52 cited in Ogunnubi, 2013: 214).

The military administration of Murtala Muhammed sustained the struggle against apartheid and offered

support to revolutionary parties in South Africa albeit Pretoria's infiltration of some African states; the ANC, PAC, and SAYRC got permissions of the Nigerian government to establish offices in Lagos. Nigeria assisted the ANC with \$32,000 in 1975 (Agbu et al, 2013:2) and spent over \$61,000,000 million on the struggle against anti-apartheid (Ngwenya, 2010). It created the Southern African Relief Fund, (SARF), in December 1976 to manage deductions from the salaries of Nigerian workers and mandatory contributions of students (Olanrewaju, 2013: 51). The fund offered medical and other supplies to the liberation movements and granted hundreds of scholarships to black South African students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

The Nigerian state exploited sports to achieve political ends; it mobilized 26 African countries to boycott the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada. The boycott was occasioned by the participation of South Africa and reluctance of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), to impose embargo on New Zealand for its sport links to the apartheid enclave. The military administration of Olusegun Obasanjo further radicalized the anti-apartheid struggle when the British Petroleum (BP), and Barclays Bank were nationalized for Britain's support to the apartheid regime in South Africa (Ochanja, Esebonu and Ayabam, 2013:78). The British Petroleum also violated international economic and trade sanctions on apartheid South Africa when it supplied oil to South Africa. The relatively strong oil economy of Nigeria gave it leverage to pursue the concrete economic and sport based measures against Pretoria.

The military administration of Ibrahim Babangida emphasized economic diplomacy as response to declining economic conditions and the imperative of economic reforms. The implementation of twin political and economic reforms further underscored greater emphases on domestic and foreign economic issues than foreign political policy. Nigeria betrayed its anti-apartheid posture when it invited the President of South Africa, Fredrick De Klerk to Nigeria in 1992. It nonetheless sustained financial and moral support to the ANC and PAC; and called for unity of the revolutionary parties. The invitation of De Klerk did not prevent the Nigerian state and 32 Commonwealth members boycotting the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, Scotland to protest the refusal of Britain to effect comprehensive sanctions on apartheid South Africa.

The sustained global economic and political pressures on Pretoria and the preference of De Klerk for dialogue aided the collapse of apartheid regime. The unbanning of revolutionary parties, release of Nelson Mandela, convening of Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Conference for Democratic South Africa (CODESA), and multi-party elections set the backdrops to a post-apartheid South Africa. The inauguration of a constitutional democracy in South Africa in 1994 raised Nigeria's expectation that the thawed bi-lateral relations would reach a *détente*, but the authoritarian and despotic

style of Abacha nipped this in the bud.

The Nigerian military dictator, Abacha, was recalcitrant on the release of Moshood Abiola, the winner of the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1993 Presidential Elections despite official and unofficial pressures by the South African emissaries. The Nobel Peace Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former South African Vice-President, Thabo Mbeki made unsuccessful pleas for his release. The extra-judicial killing of minority right activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight Ogoni men heightened the disquiet between Nigeria and South Africa. Pretoria insisted the execution of the right activists violated human rights and its outrage expedited the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1995. The suspension of Nigeria led to contradictory realities for Nigeria and South Africa; the political and diplomatic isolation of Nigeria coincided with the increasing role of South Africa in regional affairs.

The Nigerian despot, General Sanni Abacha, withdrew the Super Eagles from the African Cup of Nations held in South Africa, thereby drawing the suspension of the Confederation of African Football (CAF). The Nigeria and South Africa relations deteriorated with the verbal tirades between General Abacha and former President Mandela. The 1999 political transition in Nigeria offered the context for the restoration of civil rule and renewal of relations with South Africa. The next sub-heading reviews extant literature on Nigeria, South Africa relations with a view to delineate dominant themes, perspectives and changing patterns.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The discourse on Nigeria-South Africa relations centers on what Landsberg (2012: 2) describes as volatility and tension in asserting their leadership roles. The literatures written prior to 1999 emphasized on Nigeria's indispensable roles in dismantling the apartheid system in South Africa; and how the post-apartheid state would recompense what Nigeria had done. Literatures from 1999 till date had been pre-occupied with the analyses of how to reach a *détente*, revive the sickening economies, and unveiling the love-hate relationship that is a recurrent decimal in Nigeria-South Africa relations.

Games (2013a) identified the prevalent features of Nigeria and South Africa relations as co-operation and competition. He posits that the type and level of bi-lateral relations have been defined by leadership issues and the differences in the countries' strategies in approaching continental problems. He cited the democratic attitude of Nelson Mandela and the despotic disposition of General Sanni Abacha as the reason for the unfriendly engagement between 1995 and 1999; the efforts and established friendship of Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo as the factors responsible for cordial relations in post-1999. To Games, bi-lateral relations in the Jonathan and Zuma administrations almost crumbled due to the domestic

policy emphasis of Nigeria and the South Africa's pre-occupation with international issues beyond Africa. Games posits that despite the often conflict nature of Nigeria and South Africa relations, there is a certain degree of cooperation on African issues. He perceives Nigeria and South Africa as powerful and emerging markets whose active participation at the levels of G-20 and BRICS would engender development. He advocates for cooperation of the powers and discouraged the promotion of self-seeking ambitions on the probable greatest power in the region. Games attributes Nigeria's inability to measure to South Africa in the economic realm to the local issues of the lack of institutions, poor infrastructure, and the heavy dependence on crude oil as the major import into South Africa.

Games' submissions are laden with subjective assertions that appear to be in defense of the impenetrable nature of the South African economy. He justifies the rigid nature of South Africa's economy as a function of the naivety of Nigerians to understand and compete favorably in the business and market domains in South Africa. The author placed little emphasis on the attitude of white dominated South African bureaucracy that has been reluctant to promote relations with black Nigerians (Agbu, 2010: 44)—a factor that hinders a level playing ground for Nigerian business players. He did not demonstrate in substantial terms the implications of xenophobic attacks in South Africa on the capacity of Nigerians to effectively penetrate the South African market.

Ngwenya (2010) and Obi (2015) agree that the relations between Nigeria and South Africa improved dramatically with the creation of the BNC as a mechanism for re-invigorating the inactive engagement. Obi reiterates South Africa's position in global economic governance; and how the development of Africa is predicated on South Africa's strategic partnership with Nigeria, which is the single continental economic power without BRICS. He insists Nigeria and South Africa should co-operate and avoid competing with a view to attain regional development aspirations. More so, Obi avers that the Nigerian state is a significant partner of South Africa in 'projecting a meaningful African agenda for engaging with global powers'. He attributes the diplomatic setbacks in Nigeria-South Africa relations to the failure of leaderships to build relations that would endure. Obi (2015) agrees with Otto (2012) that the relations maintained by Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo was built on personalities rather than independent foreign policy structures and institutions. To Otto, the relations have been cordial in trade and investment relations; but it has suffered at the political level. Obi and Otto cohere that the unstable political relation explains the inability of Nigeria and South Africa to sustain cordial relations beyond a few years of Obasanjo and Mbeki's tenure. Otto reasons that despite the problems in the bi-lateral engagement of the continental giants, the development of the region can be

achieved when the states go 'beyond contest and rise above petty rivalry and unhealthy competition'. He canvasses for the implementation of developmental policies and prioritization of mutual interests for their citizens and region.

Amuwo (2014) illustrates the dwindling influence of Nigeria in continental affairs amid South Africa's strides in the economic realm, governance and infrastructure. He argues that the Nigerian governing elite are preoccupied with domestic issues at the expense of African policy. Amuwo avers that bi-relations have been marred by conflict citing the struggle for the chair of African Union, and the seizure of Nigeria's \$15 million (ZAR 164.6 million) meant for arms purchase by the South African government. Agbu (2010) examines the prospect of future relations and interrogates domestic obstacles to healthy bi-lateral relations. He asserts the South African bureaucracy is largely occupied by whites who are less willing to forge relations with the most populous Black Country in the region.

Conversely, the Nigerian infrastructural base problem, inadequate power supply and poor road networks are major impediments to its growth. The Nigeria-South Africa relations have been described by Agbu (2010) as bumpy albeit cordial political relations. He argues, however, that the rivalry and competition between Nigeria and South Africa should not justify the fragile relations; and prescribes a strategic partnership in different aspects of relations.

Banjo (2010) relies on the collision between Nigeria's former Head of State, Abacha and South African's icon, Mandela to discuss the contradictions inherent in Nigeria and South Africa relations. He observes, however, that the Bi-National Commission (BNC) aided diplomatic rapprochement in Obasanjo and Mbeki's tenure. He insists on the actualisation of African potentials and the need to give credence to the probable impact of foreign relations on ordinary citizens. He avers that the strengthening of BNC is critical to improving bi-lateral economic relations and achieving synergy through the convergence of resources.

Sega and Lekaba (2014) appraise Nigeria-South Africa relations amid the rebasing of Nigeria's GDP in April 2014. The scholars examine the competitive and cooperative pattern of existing bi-lateral relations and the likely future gains at bi-lateral and regional level. In their view, the economic growth recorded by Nigeria as shown in the rebasing of its GDP signpost the likely gains of flourishing intra-African trade. Sega and Lekaba (2014) contend that the economic growth in Nigeria cannot be disconnected from the huge investment of South African companies in the Nigerian economy. South Africa is, therefore, rated by these scholars as a major player in the expanded and liberalized Nigerian economy. To Sega and Lekaba (2014), the economic growth in Nigeria has been achieved through the co-operation of Nigeria and South Africa albeit the domestic challenges and

contradictions that confront the respective national economies. The scholars argue these problems, particularly the Boko Haram challenge, could be contained through a collaborative effort relying on South Africa's strong military base rather than solicit external intelligence that derides Africa's intelligence. The authors insist the Nigerian state cannot be a regional leader as a result of its internal challenges, specifically the inability to recover the abducted Chibok girls from the Boko Haram Sect. This argument is faulty and ignores the global nature of terrorism, which makes counter-terrorism measures difficult. This article concedes that Nigeria's security architecture was not at its best when the school girls were abducted, but it is not sufficient to undermine the country's regional status and influence.

Adekeye and Landsberg (2003:171-204) appraise the rivalry in Nigeria-South Africa relations to fill the hegemonic lacunae in the region. These scholars contend the role of Nigeria and South Africa as hegemons would likely induce anti-hegemonic alliances and deepen regional rivalries. Olaitan (Nigerian Tribune, 29 April, 2003) shares the view of Adekeye and Landsberg (2003) when he compared leadership roles of Nigeria and South Africa. He describes Nigeria's leadership role as mirage and predicates his submission on the predatory nature of power politics of the political class in Nigeria as against the engagement of young generations in the governance of South Africa. Olaitan (Nigerian Tribune, 2003) insists there is no competition in a real sense and argues the most populous country is chasing the shadow of leadership without popular recognition.

The foregoing analyses capture the periodic rivalry and competition in Nigeria and South Africa relations, which are based on the pursuit of conflicting national interests. The Nigeria and South Africa relations should respond to national strategic interests and regional imperatives in order to lead the region's development strives. The next sub-heading discusses the dimensions of Nigeria-South Africa relations.

### **Nigeria-South Africa Relations: the Analytic Assessment, 1999- 2014**

The restoration of democracy in Nigeria on the 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999 renewed hope for its growth and the continent. It was envisaged that Nigeria has a crucial role in the renewal, growth and development of Africa. Similarly, the South African state is perceived as a major state actor in Africa's international political and economic relations. The former South African president, Thabo Mbeki and former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo had been instrumental to the strategic partnership of these states as means to mediate development deficit in Africa and attenuate recurring diplomatic tension. This strategic partnership had been dubbed 'the golden age' within the context of the mal-development and social deficit that

characterize the region (Games, 2013a:12). The initiative has shown potential to redefine the status of Africa in the new millennium; it however has its shortcomings on defined goals and expected outcomes.

This section discusses specific aspects of the Nigeria and South Africa relations between 1999 and 2014; these include trade and investment relations, political engagements and multi-lateral relations.

### **The Bi-lateral Trade and Investment Relations**

The Nigerian state has a population of 160 million people and its Gross Domestic Products (GDP) is \$509.9 billion since the rebasing exercise in April 2014, thereby making it the largest economy in Africa. South Africa has a population of 51.19 million people and a GDP of \$384.3 billion thereby making it the second largest economy in Africa (The Guardian Newspaper, 07 April, 2014: 1a). Meanwhile, the BNC, constituted the context for strategic partnerships to enhance bi-lateral relations and redeem Africa's economy. It is noteworthy that negotiations held in October 1999 and April 2000 on the avoidance of taxation on income and capital gains, reciprocal promotion and protection of investments, co-operation in the fields of mining, geology, exploration, and energy (Banjo, 2010: 9). Nigeria and South Africa signed agreements that attracted hundred South African companies into the Nigerian economy (Bello and Hengari, 2013). The South African firms operating in Nigeria include the Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), with 55.4 million subscribers in 2014 (MTN Group Limited, 30 September, 2014). Shoprite, Stanbic Bank and Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) are equally strategic South African businesses in the Nigerian economy. Similarly, the Dangote Group of Companies with headquarters in Nigeria have investment portfolio of nearly \$400 million in cement production in South Africa; and Nigeria's Oando Oil Company is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Oil represents over 95 percent of Nigeria's exports to South Africa (Nagar and Paterson, 2012: 4). The South African government in October 2000 raised the volume of crude oil import from Nigeria, thereby suggesting increase in economic relations (Ogoegbulem, 2000). The bi-lateral volume of trade increased from ZAR 174 million in 1998 to ZAR 22.8 billion in 2008, thereby accounting for nearly a quarter of South Africa's total African trade in 2008 (Otto, 2012). South Africa's exports to Nigeria increased from ZAR 505 million to ZAR 7.1 billion and Nigeria's exports to South Africa increased from ZAR 15.7 billion to ZAR 123.6 billion in the same period (Otto, 2012.). South Africa's exports to Nigeria in 2010 stood at ZAR 4.38 billion and Nigeria's exports to South Africa stood at ZAR 16.08 billion with the total trade amounting to ZAR 20.46 billion. The aggregate trade figures experienced a leap in 2014 with a cumulative of ZAR

**Table 1.** The trade transactions between Nigeria and South Africa from 1999-2014.

Year	Nigeria's imports from S.A	Nigeria's exports to S.A	Total trade
1999	ZAR 514m	ZAR 1.23bn	ZAR 1.74bn
2000	ZAR 709m	ZAR 1.26bn	ZAR 1.97bn
2001	ZAR 1.6bn	ZAR 1.66bn	ZAR 3.2bn
2002	ZAR 2.7bn	ZAR3.6bn	ZAR 6.3bn
2004	ZAR 2.9bn	ZAR 5.1bn	ZAR 8bn
2005	ZAR 3.4bn	ZAR 4.2bn	ZAR 7.6bn
2006	ZAR 3,85bn	ZAR 9,28bn	ZAR 13,13bn
2007	ZAR 4,62bn	ZAR 12,48bn	ZAR 17,10bn
2008	ZAR 7,12bn	ZAR 15,74bn	ZAR 22,86bn
2009	ZAR 5,41bn	ZAR 15,60bn	ZAR 20,01bn
2010	ZAR 4,38bn	ZAR 16,08bn	ZAR 20,46bn
2011	ZAR 5,7bn	ZAR 12,27bn	ZAR 28,4bn
2012	ZAR 6,4bn	ZAR 30,5bn	ZAR 36,9bn
2013	ZAR 7,8bn	ZAR 34,9bn	ZAR 42,7bn
2014	ZAR 10,5bn	ZAR 55,7bn	ZAR 66,2bn

Source: High Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in South Africa, <http://www.nigeriapretoria.org.za/nido.htm>, and Trade and Industry Department, South African High Commission, Nigeria, <http://www.dirco.gov.za/abuja/tradeandindustry.html>.

66.2 billion; this period had exports to Nigeria from South Africa standing at ZAR 10.5 billion while the Nigeria's exports to South Africa skyrocketed to ZAR 55.7 billion (See Table 1 in supplementary files showing the trade transactions and the items of trade between Nigeria and South Africa from 1999-2014. NB: There are constraints in gathering data on the items of trade, but the available data are captured in the appendix)

The foregoing suggests trade surplus in favor of Nigeria, but the state has failed to diversify its economy and expand production base. Nigeria heavily relies on export of oil and human resources to South Africa and South Africa's exports to Nigeria include electrical equipment, machinery, wood, paper, foodstuff, beverages, spirit, tobacco, rubber, and plastics. The diversified nature of South Africa's investment portfolio has raised question on the country's interest in Nigeria. More so, it has been difficult for Nigerian firms to penetrate the South African economy, thereby raising fear of South Africa likely dominance in Nigeria. Ironically, the South African firms' record significant contribution to Nigeria's GDP, the end users rarely benefit as Nigeria's GDP per capita is \$ 2,688 in relation to South Africa's GDP per capita of \$ 7,336 (Langalanga, 2014). These asymmetric relations raise question on the strategic partnership and expected role of Nigeria within.

### The Bi-lateral Political Engagements

The Obasanjo and Mbeki era inherited a debt ridden Africa with its implications for stability, security and development. The Obasanjo and Mbeki administrations

opted for economic diplomacy and African renaissance respectively to mediate development concerns in their countries. These leaders sought to place Africa as an indispensable actor in global development by bridging the gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries in Africa. Nigeria and South Africa advocated for debt cancelation and the transfer of technology from the developed economies to Africa. Obasanjo, Mbeki, and the Algerian leader, Abdelaziz Bouteflika attended the G-8 meeting in Japan in April 2000, and strongly canvassed for the forgiveness of Africa's debts.

In 1999-2008, the negotiations on the platform of BNC led to 20 key agreements to improve bi-lateral relations between Nigeria and South Africa. The relations turned edgy in 2008 with the xenophobic attack on Nigerians that raised questions on the historic friendship between the countries. South Africans became suspicious of Nigerians as aiding crimes such as drug-trafficking, robbery, prostitution among others in their homelands. This lack of trust was betrayed in 2004, when a Johannesburg radio presenter humorously insulted the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who was in South Africa for Mbeki's inauguration, that he probably 'carried cocaine in his luggage' (Games, 2013a: 23). There was no full session of the BNC meeting since 2008 till the meeting held in May 2012 in Cape Town; the latter meetings scheduled for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commission did not hold.

The South African government conferred award on a Nigerian diplomat, Professor Ibrahim Gambari, in 2012 for his role as the last chairman of the UN Special Committee against apartheid. The Nigeria and South Africa relations, however, wobbled as a result of the

deportation of about one hundred and twenty five Nigerians from South Africa for non-possession of genuine yellow fever certificates (Agwuchi, 2012). The Nigerian government reacted to this development with the deportation of 131 South Africans (Alechenu, 2012). Pretoria, however, tendered apology when its envoy, Mrs. Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nkqakula led a delegation to former President Goodluck Jonathan on the deportation saga (Fadeyi, 2012).

The non-recognition of Nigeria at Mandela's memorial service spurred criticisms of South Africa by the civil society, media and intellectuals who opined that South Africa was 'repaying good with evil' (Olanrewaju, 2013: 51). The arm scandal between Nigeria and South Africa in 2014 where the Pretoria seized about \$ 15 million from the Nigerian government almost crumbled their relationship. The seizure of \$ 5.7 million that was found in two suitcases in a Nigerian private jet and the confiscation of \$ 9.3 million nearly threatened their engagement as Nigerians asked its government to summon the South Africa's ambassador to Nigeria. It is imperative to enhance these relations in the light of the political and economic status of Nigeria and South Africa in the region. The nature of relations between Abuja and Pretoria will likely have implications for the trajectories of Africa's growth and development.

### **Multi-lateral Dimensions of Nigeria and South Africa Relations**

Nigeria and South Africa have maintained somewhat viable multi-lateral relations since the Obasanjo and Mbeki administrations. The commitment of these countries to international organizations such as the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), Non- Aligned Movement (NAM), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) enhanced their relations. Both countries facilitated effective cooperation through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Southern African Development Commission (SADC). In 2002, Obasanjo and Mbeki were nominated to work hand-in-hand as part of the Commonwealth troika with the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, to monitor the post-electoral events in Zimbabwe after it was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations in 2002 due to alleged rigged elections won by its President, Robert Mugabe.

The multi-lateral relations began to wane when the Russian President, Vladimir Putin invited the South Africa's President, Thabo Mbeki, to the G-8 summit in Moscow in 2006. The invitation of Mbeki raised suspicion of former President Obasanjo and other African leaders that the region's leadership position may have been implicitly conferred on South Africa. Meanwhile, the struggle for African permanent representation on the UN Security Council, which started in 2005, placed the

African triumvirate, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt on competitive relations. The 'Ezulwini Consensus' that called for at least two permanent positions (with veto power) and five rotating positions for Africa in the UN Security Council inadvertently led to diplomatic strife between Abuja and Pretoria. Nigeria claimed it was qualified for the seat in the light of its historic role in maintaining international peace and security amid its status as the most populous black nation in Africa. South Africa equally claims it is qualified for the seat citing its economic strength.

The political quagmire in Ivory Coast in 2011 created diplomatic tension between Nigeria and South Africa. Nigeria was opposed to the government of former President, Laurent Gbagbo, who refused to abdicate power on his defeat at election. Nigeria mobilized the West African forces to displace Gbagbo from power, which contradicted the preference of South Africa for a political negotiation. The position of South Africa on the crisis in Ivory Coast was perceived as interference in a sub-regional issue, and attempt to foster its African leadership agendum. The Nigerian government preferred military action to displace former Libyan leader, Maommar Ghaddafi, elicited contrary positions by South Africa. The AU, however, excluded Nigeria from the ad hoc committee on Libya and appointed Zuma as the chairman. Nigeria's preference for a National Transition Council (NTC), to replace the Ghaddafi leadership was perceived by South Africa as a unilateral recognition of the NTC in Libya (Agbu et al., 2013: 9).

The contest for the AU chair position in 2012 recreated the rivalry when the Nigeria government opposed the nomination of South Africa Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and supported the incumbent chairperson, Jean Ping. The South African quest for the position was conceived as violation of an unwritten understanding reached among the Africa's main financial contributors to the AU; Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa, to avoid contest for the chair position in the AU Commission (Agbu et al., 2013). The ECOWAS states supported the former foreign minister of Gabon, Jean Ping and the SADC supported Dlamini-Zuma who later emerged as the chair. The emergence of Dlamini-Zuma created the perceptions that South Africa's leading role had been reinforced and the capacity of Nigeria declined. The Nigerian government, however, argued that it supported a joint decision of ECOWAS and did not contest for the position of AU chairperson. The Nigerian government had contested for the seat of Commissioner for Political Affairs, which it won.

The South Africa's membership of BRICS and G-20 raised anxiety in Abuja on Nigeria's leadership of the region. South Africa was likely perceived as a relatively strong economy with a large industrial base in Africa; and on the contrary, the Nigeria's economy has been predicated on low industrial and weak economic base. South Africa's improved relations with Angola in 2008



created anxiety that Pretoria was de-emphasizing relations with Nigeria. Angola is a major crude oil producer in the Gulf of Guinea and likely source of crude oil supply to South Africa. The multi-lateral relations are characterized by intense rivalries and competitiveness that are not healthy for the growth of intra Africa trade, economic and political relations.

### **Bi-lateral Citizens' Relations**

The liberalization policy of Obasanjo administration encouraged South Africans into Nigeria for trade and investment opportunities. Similarly, the Nigerian experts and business class increasingly sought and explored opportunities in South Africa. There are numerous thriving businesses owned by Nigerians in South Africa; and its intellectuals are quite visible in the academia (Olupohunda, 2013: 24). Since 2008, there has been increasingly hostility and suspicion of foreigners in South Africa. The foreigners including Nigerians are linked to drug trafficking, prostitution, and armed robbery.

The deficit dimension in bi-lateral citizens' relations has shown in the series of coordinated xenophobic attacks on Nigerians and other Africans. There is the perception that foreign workers largely occupy jobs meant for South Africans. The mining and retail sectors are somewhat populated by foreign migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria. Meanwhile, the racist and apartheid policies created social divisions between the white minority and black majority populations. The land dispossession of majority black population and its transfer to white farmers created the land question; while the Bantustan education and segregated residences are major sign posts of expropriation policy of the apartheid regime. The post-apartheid phase, however, held promise of social change in the socio-economic conditions of the black populace. The perception of receding expectations occasioned by the preponderance of slum residences, continuous land dispossession and high level of unemployment among the black population; and the increasing entry of foreign migrants who compete with South Africans for jobs underscore the xenophobic attacks.

There were incidences of xenophobic related attacks in 2015, which led to the death of eight foreigners. The Nigerian media reported physical attacks and looting of retail businesses of Nigerians especially in the province of Johannesburg. This development led to the withdrawal of Nigeria's Ambassador in South Africa and the plan to relocate its nationals. The recall of Nigeria's Ambassador provoked responses in the Nigerian media on its appropriateness; the media considered the decisions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as ill thought and clumsy. It argued that the recall of its Ambassador further exposed Nigerians to xenophobic attacks. The media insisted the crises demanded the presence of a high level diplomat to

respond to the travails of Nigerians in South Africa; and relate to Pretoria on the mechanisms to deal with the fallouts. More so, the South African government condemned the xenophobic attacks and promised tough measures against its perpetrators. Pretoria, however, responded to the withdrawal of Nigerian envoy citing the death of 38 South African nationals in a collapsed building at the Synagogue church in Ikotun, Lagos. The South African government recalled that the deaths did not elicit harsh reactions by state officials and the populace.

The killing of popular South African music icon, Lucky Dube, in 2009 increased hostility at bi-lateral citizens' level. The assassination of the reggae icon was influenced by the perception of his nationality amidst the stereotyping of Nigerians in South Africa as rich, living in opulence and owning flashy cars through crime related activities (Games, 2013a: 23). The issuance of visa raised issues on Nigeria-South Africa relations. Nigerians on initial visit to South Africa were required to deposit monies to offset the cost of a possible repatriation from South Africa. The South African government denied visa to several Nigerians who applied for visa during the 2010 FIFA World Cup without official reasons (Olanrewaju, 2013: 51). The delay in issuance of visa to Nigerian business men had resulted in cancellation of contracts due to their inability to meet business schedules. The South Africa declined to sign a non-visa regime pact with Nigeria which it earlier agreed (Agbu, 2010: 444). The Nigerian Nobel winner, Professor Wole Soyinka was delayed at the airport in 2005 despite his invitation to deliver lecture at Nelson Mandela's birthday. He was allowed entry at the intervention of Mandela's wife, Gracia Mandela (Olanrewaju, 2013: 51). The experience of Soyinka heightened the perception among Nigerians that South Africa has least respect for the country's intellectual class and business class; and other citizens.

### **Conclusion**

The Nigeria-South Africa relations have been a potpourri of co-operation and conflict; there is hardly consistent peaceful co-existence that would deepen relations. The development of Africa is, however, contingent on cordial relations between Nigeria and South Africa since these states are the major economies, and largely impact on economic growth trajectories in the continent. The countries have deviated from the core objective of leading economic growth and development within the African continent; this agendum should be pursued doggedly with a view to alter the status of the continent as under developed and peripheral. Both states resort to rivalry on leadership status; which creates setback since the Obasanjo and Mbeki administrations. Recurring conflicts equally affect bi-lateral relations; it is imperative to create effective conflict management mechanisms to respond to, and resolve crises without adverse

implications.

Nigeria and South Africa should create enabling environment for foreign investment and remove trade restrictions in order to address trade imbalances. Foreign investment, however, should complement the deliberate and sustained national drives to develop indigenous capital formation. The capacity of the region to develop local capital is germane; and central to the realization of economic and political autonomy. Furthermore, the diversification of Nigerian economy and expansion of its manufacturing base would likely increase the articles of trade and deepen terms of trade. Nigeria's trade surplus has not been qualitatively enhanced by its dependence on crude oil export and relatively weak industrial base. The foreign policy actors in Nigeria especially, should give priority to BNC in order to identify new frontiers of cooperation and sustain existing trade, economic, and political relations. The BNC would not likely impact on bi-lateral relations amidst rivalry, mutual suspicion and distrust. The nearly moribund commission should be revived as strategic and advisory organs; and the *raison d'être* of bi-lateral relations would be better served when the states give priority to regional imperatives.

The xenophobic attacks on foreigners in South Africa would likely renew hostile relations except it is concretely dealt with. The withdrawal of Nigerian Ambassador amid the 2015 xenophobic attacks had raised new debates on the capacity of Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to manage the country's international relations and South Africa's perception of Nigeria and its populace. The withdrawal of Nigeria's Ambassador was hasty in the light of the significant presence of Nigerians in South Africa. The recurring xenophobic attacks have drawn severe criticism of South Africa in Nigeria especially in the light of Nigeria's front line status in the anti-apartheid struggle. The capacity of Pretoria to mediate this phenomenon would likely affect its perception by other states and impact on her bi-lateral relations. Nigeria and South Africa relations would likely be hurt when Pretoria fails to address the social questions that led to xenophobic attacks on foreigners and their economic interests.

There should be formalized mechanism in the AU to determine African representation in international organizations and the mode of rotation among the states in the region. This proposal is imperative to avert the recurring rift and rivalry among the leading states on representation in sub-regional, regional and global bodies. The face-off among African states on the chair of the African Union was needless and should be avoided in future relations. Again, there is compelling need to prioritize Nigeria and South Africa relations in order to foster economic growth and ramifying development in the continent. The economic strengths of Nigeria and South Africa situate the economies to play catalyst roles in Africa's development process. The exemplar roles would likely endure in the absence of hegemonic politics and overtly assertive tendencies. The relevance of Egypt, Kenya, and Angola in the African discourse should,

however, not be underestimated.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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