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Friends or Foes, Partners or Hegemons: Examining Anti-Apartheid Struggles, and The Pattern of Nigeria-South Africa Relations, 1994-2014

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Abstract: The total liberation of Africa from the shackles of European colonialism and racial discriminatory regimes in Southern Africa, where the twin evils lasted longer became the focal of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy at independence in 1960. Thus, the Apartheid era saw Nigeria lead other independent African states in the furtherance of South African liberation struggles. With the end of Apartheid and the international isolation that accompanied it in 1994, South Africa resumed bilateral relations and international engagements with many states and organizations from which it was excluded in the apartheid years. South Africa's entry into the Africa scene and the international arena as an emerging democratic, economic and regional superpower at a time Nigeria had suffered image-damage and declining influence following lingering military dictatorship, and internal political drawbacks, combined to alter Nigeria's position as the continent's sole giant and voice, albeit, momentarily. While Nigeria continued her Africa-centred Foreign Policy posture and leadership thereafter, rivalry and competition fuelled by a range of historical, political and soft issues have surfaced to shape relations between it and South Africa. Using the Hegemonic Stability Theory, this paper explores the emerging wrangling and internecine rivalry in the post-apartheid era, its impact on their relations and the implication for the continent as a whole. It also examines the ruthless rights violation perpetrated against the blacks by the apartheid regime on the ground of racial superiority and Nigeria's contribution to the efforts to dismantle it. It concludes that healthy competition and partnership between Nigeria and South Africa will undoubtedly prove equally beneficial to both, and indeed the continent at large.

Key words: Apartheid, Bilateral Relations, Hegemony, Human Right, Nigeria, South Africa.

Introduction

A prominent agreement among experts of International Relation is that relations between and among nation-states is the glue that binds the world together. It follows that no state, irrespective of status and wealth can survive in isolation. In a world increasingly compressed by globalization, interstate relations have become an imperative diplomatic activity in the international system. This paper contributes to ever-growing literature that has been devoted recently to exploring Nigeria–South Africa relations, particularly dwelling on the contribution of the former to the anti-apartheid struggle and the pattern of their bilateral relations thereafter (Adebajo, 2007); (Landsberg, 2012); (Moeng, 2012); (Games, 2013); (Chidozie, 2014); (Seteolu, & Okuneye, 2017).

Nigeria's leadership potentials were quite obvious and indeed widely acknowledged in the run-up to her independence in 1960. Based on her rich human and natural resources endowment, the country was seen, and rightly so, as a natural leader in political and economic orders, especially within the Africa context. Amongst other notable indices, its population, and the substantial economy at the time was among the highest in Africa and dwarfed those of all neighbouring West African countries combined (Ayo, 2013).

Consequently, Nigeria at independence, adopted Afrocentric foreign policy posture. It was on this basis therefore that Nigeria spearheaded efforts at tackling decolonization, racial discrimination and apartheid particularly in Southern Africa. Bolarinwa (2020) and Adeniji, (2005) attribute this to the highly pivotal role played by Nigeria in ending colonialism in Angola, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

The end of apartheid in the early 1990s ensured that South Africa re-entered regional and global affairs. Nigeria continued her Africa-centred foreign policy posture and leadership but studies have shown that the two states have habitually had a patchy relationship that fluctuated dangerously "between hostility and cordiality" (Egwemi and Ochim, 2012); (Landsberg, 2012); (Games, 2013); Agbu, et al. (2013). Also, the regular eruption of xenophobic violence in South Africa targeted at foreigners, including Nigerians, further undermined their relations. Thus, the need for a critical assessment and appraisal of Nigeria-South Africa relations cannot be more compelling.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Hegemonic Stability Theory as its theoretical construct. Following the works of Italian

Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, who in the early 20th century originally theorized the concept of hegemony, Kindleberger (1973), propounded the Hegemonic Stability Theory. Other scholars have also provided varied perspectives: Modelski (1987), Keohane (1984; 1989), Gadzey (1994). HST establishes the likelihood of international stability if a single-nation state has the capacity to, and enjoys an absolute dominant status in the international system. The adoption of this theory is underscored by its simplification of our understanding of the workings of power relations in international politics.

Scholars from various schools of thought are unanimous about the imperativeness of a hegemonic power in the international system Modelski (1987), Krasner (1989) Gilpin (1987), Gadzey (1994). This is underpinned by the need for a powerful state that can wield its collection of powers to maintain orderliness in a power disequilibrium multilateral environment. According to (Ogunnubi, 2013: 77), possessing enormous political influence, economic and technological superiority and uncommon military strength are the necessary preconditions that must be met before a state can attain hegemonic status. In this connection, the unscathed nature of the United States after the World Wars, at which time Europe was reeling in financial and physical wants, underscored its emergence as the world leader, though with stiff completion from the USSR. It suffices to say that the emergence of the US as a global hegemon was predicated upon her fulfillment of these special requirements (Keohane 2005:33-34). This also reinforces the notion that hegemony stability thrives on the weakness of potential rivals in the international system. For instance, the demise of the USSR cemented US dominance of the world. The hegemonic status also comes with important responsibilities. As (Gilpin 1981:145), (Shaw *et al* 1996:33) have observed, the emergence of the US as a hegemonic state has made it an indispensable advocate of world peace who is willing and capable of formulating and enforcing the rules of interaction that guides most important members of the international system.

Scholars have categorized hegemons into three major forms; namely benevolent, mixed-motives (strategic) and exploitative hegemons. Whereas benevolent hegemon leverages on a reward system rather than a show of force to derive loyalty of low and middle power states and advances the general wellbeing of all instead of self-interest, the exploitative hegemon who is interested in relative gains and uses compulsion to win compliance is exactly the opposite. The mixed-motives and strategic hegemon is a bit of the two (cited in Ogunnubi, 2013: 82). The various types of

hegemons, where they exist, provoke different forms of reactions from prospective contenders and other member states of the international system.

Moreso, HST also establishes the need for international cooperation. Thus, the driving of multinational institutions by powerful states in the international system that contributes more than small and average players in the maintenance of the institutions is a pointer to this assertion. This strategic role and influence, therefore, ensure that hegemons derive more benefit than other players from multilateral institutions (Hadebe, 2015: 53).

These arguments rationalize Nigeria and South Africa's drive and aspiration to respectively become an African hegemon, a continent described by Gill (1993) as lacking undisputed hegemony. The absence of a clear hegemon has thus resulted in what (Hadebe, 2015: 53 describe as "sharing hegemony" between the two continental pivotal states. This however does not imply that the two countries are contented with shared hegemony, hence the scheming, unspoken rivalry, and competition to outdo each other. On this ground, it can be implied that the various regional and continental roles undertaken by Nigeria and South Africa are in furtherance of their respective hegemonic aspirations.

Interestingly, "will and capability" has been recognised as basic elements that legitimize a hegemonic state. According to Adebajo et al (2003:174), a "hegemon needs to have effective tool at its disposal, such as the ability to dispense foreign assistance, forge alliances, and use various sticks and carrots to achieve its policy objective." The two countries, Nigeria particularly and South Africa to a lesser degree possess this wherewithal and are already playing these roles across regional (ECOWAS and SADC) and continental levels. This study thus finds the HST appropriate in explaining the rationale behind the rivalry between Nigeria and South Africa. It posits that the quest to gain regional and international legitimacy as Africa's hegemon is at the root of their rivalry and completion.

The Repressive Apartheid Regime in South Africa

Though, racial segregation, white supremacy and general subordination of blacks in South Africa had its root in the establishment of European colonization in the area starting from the mid-17th century, it was however the coming to power in 1948 of the South African National Party under Prime Minister Voerwoerd that masterminded the creation and extensive enforcement of some of the most aggressive and discriminatory racial segregation policies in

human history. Ironically, it was in the same year that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which abhorred the systematic and deliberate violations of basic human rights by governments across the world, was ratified by the General Assembly of the United Nations by a vote of 48 to 0 (Hinds, 1985). It must be noted however that the Union of South Africa was among the eight-member states that abstained.

Despite this international obligation biding on all countries, the all-white government led by the National Party comprehensively enforced its racial segregation policies under a system of legislation known as apartheid. Under it, nonwhite South Africans were forced to live in separate areas from the whites (Clarks and Worger 2016). With limited contact between whites and blacks and the development of separate public facilities, the denial of many basic rights to non-White people became institutionalized and effectively preserved the longstanding colonial restrictions on the political and economic rights of the black. Other features that marked the apartheid period include: conscription of land through a combination of Land Acts, waves of arrests, illegal detention, imprisonment and extrajudicial killing of anti-apartheid campaigners (Foster, 1989), (Kagee & Price, 1995).

Throughout the period, the South African Government successively introduced new legislations that further reinforced an already broad state apparatus of repression against blacks leading to more arrests, illegal detentions, trials, and convictions lacking in true tenets of justice (UN, 1976). For example, the Suppression of Communism Act (otherwise known as The Internal Security Act) passed in 1950 served this purpose (UN, 1976). For instance, for protesting against the Pass Laws in 1953, Walter Sisulu and other leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) were tried and convicted based on the Act for furthering "Communism" (Hinds 1985). Other notorious apartheid era legislations include: the Unlawful Organizations Act of 1960, the Terrorism Act introduced in 1967 and Terrorism Act introduced in 1967, but retroactively extended to 1962. On the back of these Acts and several others, members of several organizations at the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle were subjected to incessant arrests, illegal detentions, and politically motivated trials.

Across prisons in South Africa, political prisoners held under state suctioned solitary and dehumanizing conditions, faced prolonged incarceration, ferocious torture, and eventually trials that either resulted in life or death sentences. The former was particularly a potent tool in the hands of the apartheid state. For this

reason, there were more than 500 freedom fighters serving various sentences at Robben Island by the early 1980s. Other notorious prisons with a high number of political prisoners included Barberton and Pretoria Central Prison. Besides the likes of Sipo Ginenische James Lenkoe, Caleb Mayekiso, and Nichodimus Kgoathe who died in 1969 (Cape Times 10 July 1969), several other political prisoners met their untimely death particularly during torture by overzealous prison guards even before their trials commenced or were concluded. Records show that 57 of such deaths occurred between 1963 and 1982 (Hinds, 1985). This state of affairs was acknowledged by Andrews Maguire, the co-chairman of the United States Congressional ad hoc monitoring group on South Africa when, after visiting the enclave in 1977, he emphasised that:

> This regime is a police state as regards the non-White population. They are regularly tortured. There are instruments of torture and, in some and all too frequent circumstances, some are killed while in detention. There is no rule of law...and this Government systematically intimidates, harasses, forces into exile and imprisons people without any judicial process at all. Torture is used to force statements from prisoners. One of those most commonly described is the use of electrodes on the head and neck (Times of Zambia, 3 August 1978) cited in (Shope, 1978:4).

Besides death from torture, there was also a massive scale-up of execution by the state, of anti-apartheid campaigners convicted under questionable judicial processes. For example, ANC member, Solomon Mahlangu died by hanging in 1979, while the trio of Jerry Semano Mosololi, Teile Simon Mogoerane, and Thabo Marcus Motaung was executed in the early 1980s having been convicted of treason. Before then, several freedom fighters were executed in the 1950s, 60s and then later in the 1980s. These executions were carried out despite intense international campaigns for

clemency championed by neighbouring state, the UN and other international humanitarian organizations. Accordingly, the sustained implementation of apartheid racial policies resulted in South Africa being isolated by all neighbouring states, and indeed many more across the world including Nigeria.

This was the state of events in South Africa, when Nigeria, a country which would later play an extremely pivotal role in the anti-apartheid struggle, gained independence in 1960. Consequently, the first sorts of engagements between the two countries were on antagonistic ground rather than friendly as the former provided crucial supports for ANC led anti-apartheid movement. This remained till apartheid collapsed in the early 1990s.

Nigeria's Contribution to Anti-Apartheid Struggles

If the apartheid policy, introduced at a time of rapid decline in racist policies in other climes was cruelly and forcibly enforced with frightening state apparatus, in like manner, the black resistance movement that arose, led by the ANC and its several offshoots, particularly it armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, was not less formidable. Beginning with a nonviolent approach hinged on protests, widespread demonstrations and workers' strikes, black resistance eventually progressed into an armed struggle that received support from a plethora of states across the world, including Nigeria and neigbouring states in southern Africa region collectively known as the Frontline States.

Against this background and based on African solidarity, Nigeria, immediately after independence, espoused the abolition of colonialism and white minority regimes in Southern Africa as a vital element of her national interest despite not sharing any contiguous boundaries with any Southern African states. On this, Prof. Aworawo avers that, amongst the plethora of states that championed anti-apartheid course, Nigeria, particularly gained global attention for her selfless and unweaving commitment, which manifested in far-reaching political, financial, moral and logistic supports (Aworawo, 2021). This, akin to Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy, was a culmination of a long-held belief in her manifest destiny to champion the affairs of the continent. Therefore, this role was not unexpected.

Be that as it may, Nigeria, like most states that opposed apartheid did so on the back of the glaring and extensive human right abuses

perpetrated against blacks, as well as the fact that the white minority regime did not represent, nor emerge, via the endorsement of the majority. Against this backdrop, Nigeria's involvement in the great effort to end apartheid in South Africa began, as a matter of utmost urgency and importance,
on the backdrop of the Sharpesville massacre of 1960. During that incident, 72 protesting blacks were gruesomely killed, with more than 180 others wounded (Wilmot, 1980:9; Zabadi and Onuoha, 2012:439). These and other incidences of gruesome killing of blacks by the apartheid regime, triggered the compelling need to exert more international political and economic pressures on the apartheid regime.

Even so, there appeared to have been another major motivation for Nigeria. The Nigerian Civil War, 1967 – 1970, was said to have reinforced Nigeria's perceived interest in ending colonialism and minority regimes in Southern Africa in general. In this context, the various supports, overtly and clandestinely accorded Biafra by South Africa, Portugal, Rhodesia and other agents that sought to sustain colonialism and minority-dominated regimes in Southern Africa, was viewed by Nigeria as a direct threat to its security and national interest (Polhemus, 1977), Agbu, et al. (2013). To underscore this concern, General Gowon alluded to these threats in a well-summarized statement in 1971 when he remarked that "Besides the vivid affront which they constitute to our conscience, the threat they pose to our political independence and security is as real as it is intolerable" (Bulletin on Foreign Affairs, I (July, 1971) cited in (Polhemus, 1977: 49). It can therefore be inferred that one of the main priority for Nigeria in its intervention in Southern Africa in general was the elimination of minority regimes that supported the rampant attempt to fragment and potentially weaken her through the Civil War. Overall, however, the criminal oppression of blacks in the region appeared to have served a greater propelling force than any other consideration.

Consequently, all Nigeria's post-independence regimes were often unanimous in their condemnation of white minority rule in Southern Africa. This became a common trend in the foreign policy thrusts of each, despite a considerable measure of dynamism with which they conducted their respective foreign affairs (Polhemus, 1977). The earliest indication that the situation in the region would feature prominently on independent Nigeria's foreign policy came through the statement of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, at the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos, shortly before independence in 1960 (Polhemus, 1977). Jaja

Wachuku, first External Affairs Minister of Nigeria, also affirmed in 1961, that "the total eradication of all forms of racial discrimination" was a major component of Nigerian foreign policy (Polhemus, 1977:46). Sir Abubakar further remarked at the Addis Ababa Summit Conference in 1963, that "on the question of colonialism and racial discrimination…we in Nigeria will never compromise" (Proceedings of the May 1963 Addis Ababa, Summit Conference, as cited in (Polhemus, 1977:47).

This political and diplomatic rhetoric by Nigerian leaders were not limited to civilian administrations. In fact, military regimes, by their nature, were even more revolutionary in their support for, and approach to the anti-apartheid struggle. This was exemplified, particularly by the Mutalar/Obasanjo, Gowon, as well as General Babangida regimes. For instance, General Babangida once put the whole matter in perspective when he emphasized that: "the defence of humanity and freedom of the black man is an issue dear to us all…It has been a cardinal factor in our foreign relations to provide the African continent focus and leadership in the struggle against colonialism, exploitation and racial oppression" (Babangida, 1991: 8).

In the light of the foregoing political and diplomatic rhetoric, to what extent, therefore, did Nigeria impact anti-apartheid struggle? This is against the backdrop of the fact that to roundly denounce apartheid and perceive an interest in its abolition is one thing; to back same with actions and resources is another. In this connection, scholars are unanimous that not only did Nigeria conceive strategic foreign policy measures and means of execution which transformed its averred opposition to apartheid into pragmatic support for ANC and anti-apartheid struggle in general, she also deployed her resources at an unprecedented scale (Landsberg, 2000); (Adeniji, 2005); Yoroms G. (2007); Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012); (Agbu et el. 2013); Chidozie, et al 2013); (Games, 2013).

Despite not engaging in any form of direct military intervention in Southern Africa, Nigeria's role in pressurising the apartheid regime, through unilateral or multilateral measures is incontestable. Nigeria provided, arguably the most troubling, damaging and decisive blow to whatever international reputation the apartheid regime had left and contributed in no small measure to its eventual collapse. In this regard, Nigeria channelled her resolve to ensure the dismantling of apartheid through three major fronts. First, alongside other independent African states, Nigeria adopted a combination of diplomatic isolation and deprivation that effectively and continentally ostracized South

Africa economically, socially, and in diplomatic terms (Obi, 2015). In this context, Nigeria had a commanding presence at the 1963 summit conference in Addis Ababa where the governments of thirty of the then thirty-two independent states in Africa collectively agreed to "break off diplomatic and consular relations between all African States and…South Africa so long as they persist in their…attitude towards decolonization" (Polhemus, 1977: 54).

Furthermore, Nigeria also embarked on extensive international campaign which resulted in the internationalization of the anti-apartheid struggle. This move, from all indications, succeeded in putting pressure on international organizations and leading governments, particularly foremost allies and traditional partners of South Africa to initiate and apply stringent and necessary economic, diplomatic and social sanctions to press for an end to the apartheid régime (Paulette Pierson-Mathy 1987). Similarly, the country was also at the forefront of the international campaign and indeed sponsored the proposals that led to the suspension and withdrawal of apartheid South Africa from the Commonwealth and the International Labour Organization in 1961 and 1964 respectively. These suspensions, like other anti-apartheid measures, to a great extent, reaffirmed the growing influence of the Nigerian state and came as a crushing blow for South Africa, who at the time, was an influential member alongside Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand and Great Britain, and had applied to remain a Commonwealth member state after becoming a republic (Polhemus, 1977), Obi, (2015). Another move which dealt a devastating blow on the apartheid enclave, to who sports were an essential activity, was the incessant boycott, by several African countries led by Nigeria, of all international sporting events in which South Africa or any of its allies, were billed to participate. In this connection, Nigeria led the boycotts of the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 and repeated same during the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Alberta, Canada. The country also withdrew from several other sports events in which any competing nations had had contacts, no matter how minute, with South Africa, to press home its demands for complete isolation of the apartheid regime. These included the 1975 Davis Cup tennis championship, the 1976 Wimbledon junior tennis event and indeed the International Amateur Squash Championship in the same year (Aluko, 1972), (Polhemus, 1977). These boycotts later informed the UN General Assembly's passage of an International Declaration against Apartheid in Sport (Agbo, et al, 2013).

Therefore, based on Nigeria's unweaving support and

commitment to the anti-apartheid course, it was, no accident of history that a succession of her permanent representatives to the UN had the honour of chairing the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid continuously for more than two decades (Gambari, 1997). Similarly, Nigeria led the anti-apartheid struggle at the continental level. For instance, in 1963, it became one of the nine states that coordinated OAU Liberation Committee which sourced, managed and disbursed material and financial supports from independent African states to liberation movements (Olanrewaju, 2013:51). This fact was restated by former President Jonathan who emphasized that "Nigeria gave leadership at the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity…the Commonwealth and several other fora in the fight against apartheid" (Jonathan, cited in (Chidozie, 2014: 244).

Moreso, Nigeria accorded critical supports and assistance to various liberation movements, particularly, the ANC, South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRCO) and the Pan African Congress. However, the ANC, whose anti-colonial struggles stretched back to 1912, was the face of black anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Regularly joining forces with international progressives in the fight against colonialism and white minority rule, it gradually moved, in approach, from dialogue and demonstration to defiance campaign, confrontation and armed struggle and forged strategic bonds across the world. It was in this pursuit of support and solidarity that the ANC, in the early 1960s visited Nigeria. These strategic links would later prove invaluable to the struggle in many ways (ANC, 2012), (Obi, 2015). Amongst other assistance, Nigeria gave grants of US$32,000, US$10 and US$50 in 1975, 1986, and between 1986-1991 respectively. Besides, the country also, through the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF) awarded scholarships to Black students from South Africa to study in Nigeria universities (Aremu, 2013), (Umezurike & Asuelime, 2015). Thus, it is unarguable that the effort to end the racial discriminatory regime in South Africa in particular and Southern Africa, in general, had all Nigerians of all persuasions, irrespective of creed or gender on board.

It must also be mentioned that Nigeria's anti-apartheid posture came at huge national cost. Beyond committing time and financial resources, the country also made further sacrifices that were sometimes against her crucial national interests. As (Garba, 1987:101) argued, "no other foreign policy issue has pre-occupied Nigerian governments more since…independence in 1960" than anti-apartheid

struggle.

The foregoing underscores Nigeria's undeniably vital roles in the anti-apartheid campaign, an international outcry that Nelson Mandela, one of the direct victims of apartheid repression, described as "the most important human-rights crusade of the post World War II era. Its success was a demonstration, in my opinion, of the oneness of our common humanity" (Mandela, 1993:3, Alao, 2014). It was on this basis that respected South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu "proclaimed that if not for the commitment of Nigeria to the anti-apartheid struggles, the dismantling of the obnoxious regime would have taken a much longer time" (Lipede, 1996), cited in (Games, 2013). Accordingly, given the unparalleled contributions Nigeria made to the downfall of apartheid, it was earnestly expected that Nigeria and South Africa would engineer an uncommon bilateral relationship at the end of apartheid. On the contrary, what emerged was at best, a hostile, competitive, and highly unstable relations.

Post -Apartheid Renaissance and the Patterns of Nigeria – South African Relations

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria foreign policy and diplomatic attitude has made Africa its undeniable fundamental focus. Over the years, the country has become reputed for often pursuing foreign policy goals and objectives that uphold the interest of African countries and well-being of Africans; particularly in the areas of providing support and solidarity to eradicate colonialism and minority regimes; conflict prevention and resolution; restoration and maintenance of peace in addition to of its extensive political and economic role on the continent Nweke, (2010). Scholars have attributed this central paradigm for Nigeria's foreign policy focus to a number of factors; ranging from geopolitical consideration; demographic strength; security interest and national prestige/hegemonic consideration (Abegunrin, 2003); (Adebajo, 2008); (Osuntokun, 2008); (Oni & Taiwo 2016). This role, however, has been at a huge national cost; in terms of human and material resources. For instance, scholars have contended that Nigeria committed billions of dollars into the restoration of peace and democratic governance in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Adebajo, 2002); (Adebajo, 2008); (Adebajo & Mustafa, 2008); (Mohamme, 2015). Likewise, the struggle against apartheid and racial discriminatory regimes in Southern Africa gulped even more resources. In line with this trend, Oyinlola (2010) cited in (Oni & Taiwo 2016) stressed that since her independent in 1960, the promotion of peace and stability and the eradication of all form of colonialism

across various parts of Africa have cost Nigeria 10 billion US dollars. Successive Nigerian governments since independence have justified Nigeria's "big brother" foreign policy posture, for which she earned the "Giant of Africa" title. Scholars are of the opinion that Nigeria dominance of this role was against the backdrop of its readiness to always commit huge resources into African affairs.

Ogunjewo contends that the end of apartheid and the emergence of multiracial and multiparty democracy in 1994 produced a South Africa with the political will, economic dependence and international credibility to play an equally prominent continental role in Africa (Ogunjewo, 2019). According to (Cheryl Hendricks 2014), the post-apartheid South Africa "was able to quickly transform itself from international villain to Pan-Africanist" force. While "South Africa's position in the Southern African region has always been one of a predominant actor" (Pfister, 2000), her entrance into the African space and international arena spectacularly coincided with the period of Nigeria's declining international fortunes, caused by the lingering military dictatorship and internal political drawbacks. This came with a massive implication as it resulted in a drastic change in the African regional power structure. Hitherto dominated by Nigeria, who lay claim to a "special responsibility" embedded in "manifest destiny," the emergence of a South Africa with the wherewithal to engage in equally elaborate regional and international diplomacy and led by a no less persona than Nelson Mandela, saw the altering of the existing African power structure, thus, challenging the historically dominant role of Nigeria.

It must be emphasized that the emergence of a new South Africa that is able to take on new role in Africa, was, though naturally made possible by the collapse of apartheid, but further solidified by a collection of other important local and international variables. First, South Africa's solid economic base and homegrown multinationals did not only place its post-apartheid economy on the path of incredible ascendance but ensured its leading corporations expanded their presence across the continent's leading markets. According to (Daniel et al. 2003: 368-90), those companies capitalised on a series of competitive advantages offered by South Africa's relatively developed economy – massive investible capital, marketing and strong technological know-how, superior public infrastructural base, and a pool of excellent human resources – in their exploitation of business opportunities across Africa's most promising business frontiers. In this respect, its membership of leading international trade and political blocs such as BRICS and G20 did not only symbolise the far-

reaching potential and accomplishments of its economy, but also a testament to its international acceptance and influence. Relatedly, like Nigeria, in addition to its expanded roles in multilateral organizations: the OAU/AU, Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement, UN among others, post-apartheid South Africa also began to anchor, efficiently to a reasonable extent, the huge task of intervening in complex conflicts in Southern Africa, a region reputed for conflicts of varying forms and causes. For instance, the regional effort to solve conflicts in Lesotho, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe had South Africa at the centre of it. The country also led a campaign for the emergence of a continent where the principles of human rights, peace, stability, democracy and development are well-entrenched (Mills, 2002/3), (Games, 2013).

Understandably, these new realities – attributes, capabilities, leverage and responsibilities – combined to make the new South Africa a leading voice, significant partner and valuable actor in global, continental and regional affairs. This new mentality and sense of responsibility explains Nelson Mandela's warning that: "South Africa cannot escape its African destiny…If we do not devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that brought ruin to its various parts" (Mandela, (1993: 89).

As events have shown, despite this new level of engagement in bilateral and multilateral relations by South Africa, certain factors combined to frustrate the long envisaged robust diplomatic engagement with Nigeria. At best, what emerged between the two regional powers was described by scholars as a relationship characterised by "rivalry and competition." The stumbling blocks to the sustenance of rancor-free mutual beneficial relations between the two countries are embedded in a range of soft issues.

To begin with, the complexity of Nigeria-South Africa relations is entrenched in the important dissimilarity in political systems of the two countries at the dawn of multiparty democracy in South Africa. This state of affairs did little to help the creation of enduring relations from the onset. When South Africa transformed into a democracy in 1994, Nigeria was ruled by a ruthless military dictator – General Sani Abacha (Games, 2013). Therefore, despite Mandela's repeated attempt to engage, by dispatching at different times, notable emissaries such as the Nobel Peace Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the then Vice-President, Thabo Mbeki, Abacha's proclivity for tyrannical and authoritarian approach, exemplified by the extra-judicial execution of the Ogoni Nine,

including right activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, refusal to release the acclaimed winner of the annulled 1993 Presidential Elections Moshood Abiola and a general climate of human rights abuse in Nigeria in clear violation of international conventions further fuelled the disquiet between Nigeria and South Africa (Seteolu, & Okuneye, 2017). In reaction, South Africa's efforts resulted in the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations in 1995, a move which was a reenactment of Nigeria championed suspension of South Africa from the same organization in 1961. On this ground, the outbreak of diplomatic hostilities was therefore not unexpected. Unfortunately, this would go on to set the tone for future Nigeria–South Africa engagements.

Secondly, the return to civil rule in 1999, following and the emergence of both Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki at the helms of affairs in Nigeria and South Africa, restored some cordiality in their relations, but things soon drifted apart during the administrations of Jonathan and Zuma (Games, 2013). Another factor at the heart of their diplomatic hostilities was the dominant position assumed by South African companies in crucial sectors of the Nigerian economy. As earlier alluded, one of the major features that defined post-apartheid South Africa is its foreign economic policy which have seen a significant number of its key multinationals make foray into leading economies across Africa (Alden, & Sokof, 2005). Besieged by economic stagnation, low domestic investible capital and poor FDI occasioned by years of sanctions that characterised the Abacha years, Nigeria quickly opened its doors to international investors after it returned to democracy. The extensive campaign for investment by the new civilian government saw the arrival of investors from across the world, including well-resourced South African companies with expertise in key sectors. According to (Weekly Trust 13.9.2003) more than sixty (a figure which has since soared) South African companies including: Stanbic Merchant Bank Nigeria Ltd, Multichoice Nigeria/M-Net, South African Airways, MTN, Eskom Nigeria, Protea Hotels, operate in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. However, as much as these burgeoning investments have brought mutually benefiting impact - economic prosperity for South Africa and created jobs for Nigerians – they have nonetheless "increased hostility" (Games, 2013). According to (Games, 2013), the scale and sheer size of those investments saw South Africa being labeled "neo-colonialist...bent on dominating African economies," Nigeria's inclusive. Hence, this negative perception further fuelled resentment against South Africa with its attendant impact on their relations, especially given that Nigeria did not boost a

corresponding level of investments in South Africa.

Thirdly, rivalry over who occupies a potential United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permanent seat, if and when created, provided another sphere conflict of interest (Agbo, et al 2013). The likelihood of an expanded UNSC, though first conceived decades earlier, became a global talking point at the start of the twenty-first century. Scholars have identified a collection of potential candidates from all parts of the world including: India, Mexico, Germany, Brazil, Egypt, Japan, South Africa, and Nigeria amongst others; the two African powers, based on regional influence, longstanding diplomatic ties with the UN, economic strength and other potentials, emerged as the most likely candidates in Sub Saharan Africa (Landsberg, 2012), (Games, 2013). According to (Agbo, et al 2013) the realisation of this possibility created a fearsome scrambling and intense political lobbying of relevant interests at bilateral and multilateral levels by both countries.

Another area where there has been a conflict of interest between the two countries is in relation to their incessant disagreements over the best approach to tackle regional issues as demonstrated during crises and political problems in Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast and Libya. Analysts contend that Nigeria's timely and proactive style to regional issues was at variance with the "quiet diplomacy" and unnecessary vacillation that often shaped South Africa's reaction. For instance, while Nigeria favoured African based "carrot and stick" in opposition to U.N. and French military intervention in 2010 Ivoirian post-election fallout involving former President, Laurent Gbagbo, Pretoria's indecisiveness had analysts wondering about its motive (Landsberg, 2012). The situation in Libya was similar, where both countries, as U.N. Security Council nonpermanent members supported resolutions 1970 and 1973 that approved arms embargo and a no-fly zone over Libya as sanctions to protect civilians (Landsberg, 2012). South Africa, whose President, Jacob Zuma led AU's mediation committee, was at odd with Nigeria's swift recognition of the National Transition Council (NTC) following its own opposition to NATO's regime-change agenda. Yet, despite the initial grandstanding, Nigeria's position on Libya and NTC ultimately prevailed with African Union adopting it and urged member countries to do so. Another related diplomatic hullabaloo was stirred when South Africa, against existing convention dating back to OAU days, which forbade Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa (the continent's five biggest financial contributors to the AU) from vying for or occupying the AU Commission position put forward the candidature of its former Home Affairs Minister, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma for AU Chairperson Position. The eventual victory of South Africa's candidate over Nigeria's preferred Jean Ping was seen by Nigeria as a dent of its continental leadership and an indication of South Africa's mounting influence in continental affairs (Daily Trust, 19 July 2012); (Landsberg, 2012); (Agbo, et al 2013).

Relations between Nigeria and South Africa soon deteriorated further in March 2012 when 125 Nigerian travelers were turned back at OR Tambo International Airport over yellow fever certificate infractions. Nigeria's reciprocation resulted in the deportation of a total of 131 South African travelers from Murtala Muhammed International Airport (Moeng, 2012), (Kperogi, 2012). South Africa's immediate apology doused the mounting tension. In the end, the row created by the deportations proved a catalyst for the reevaluation of their bilateral ties. The high-level exchange of visits by Presidents Jacob Zuma and Goodluck Jonathan in 2013 set the tone for a new page of a strategic partnership between Africa's two biggest economies. But despite the new level of engagement, persistent problems continued to characterize their relations.

Regrettably, competition between the two countries, described by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as "a form of sibling rivalry" has also become pronounced at the level of citizens-to-citizens engagement. Fuelled by mutual suspicion and negative perceptions, many Nigerians and South Africans have awful reservations about each other. For instance, many South Africans stereotypically see Nigerians as "drug lords, prostitution" enablers, "419" and being "over-confidence tinged with a bit of arrogance." As a result, whenever any of those ugly incidences occurred in South African communities with a significant Nigerian presence, locals are quick to blame it on Nigerians in their midst. A classical example of this widespread depicting of Nigerians as criminals and fraudulent was the joke in 2004 by a local radio presenter (94.7 Highveld Stereo), that President Obasanjo, who was visiting South Africa for Mbeki's second term inauguration, "had probably carried cocaine in his luggage" (Adebajo, 2007), (Games, 2013). Sometimes, rivalry at this level degenerates "to a level of frivolous accusations that Nigerian men….with the financial strength of hard currency take South African women from the local boys" (BBC website, 2016). On this ground, scholars have blamed the dangerous stereotypical perception of Nigerians as "criminals and fraudulent," as being largely responsible for the high number of its citizens at the receiving end of recent xenophobic attacks.

Conversely, many Nigerians have argued that the South African involvement with the Nigerian economy is "essentially exploitative" and geared towards the utilisation of Nigerians and their natural resources for the benefit of South Africa. While this claim remains arguable, one must concede that not a few Nigerians were of this view which was often exacerbated by perceived arrogant of South African businesses in Nigeria (Games, 2013). Expectedly, the implication on their relations was increased resentment and hostility.

The foregoing notwithstanding, it must be emphasized that Nigeria – South Africa relations in the post-apartheid era had not always been shrouded in hostilities. Despite the many diplomatic rifts, hostilities and tensions, exceptional periods of robust bilateral exchange existed. For instance, both countries were pivotal to the transformation of OAU to AU, the formation of NEPAD and indeed in establishing the Nigeria/South Africa Bi-National Commission (*The Comet* 3 December 2001). In this context, scholars are of the view that the Obasanjo-Mbeki era (1999 – 2007/9), represented the "golden era" of Nigeria-South Africa relations. After assuming power in 1999, the two leaders worked closely to have the relationship formalized by establishing the Nigeria- South Africa Bi-National Commission chaired at the vice president level by Atiku Abubakar and Jacob Zuma. As a result of the BNC, relations between the two countries bolstered, giving room for improved bilateral trade and investment. In addition, alongside Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria the two leaders worked closely to drum support for debt cancelation and the transfer of technology from the developed economies to Africa (Seteolu & Okuneye, 2016: 65). Generally, the two countries have advanced African development, peace and security at all levels. It is therefore imperative to note that enhanced relations between the two countries is not only central to their respective interests but also pivotal to the continent's growth and development.

Conclusion

Since impendence in 1960, Nigeria has committed human and material resources to African affairs, particularly with regard to ending colonialism and white minority regimes in Southern Africa, as well as advancing development, peace and security across the continent. These roles were consistent with Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy posture. According to the findings, South Africa's freedom in the early 1990s triggered massive expectation in Nigeria that the two pivotal states would forge close political, trade and people-to-people ties. Over the years, however,

contentious issues associated with political and ideological struggle have emerged to surround their relations. Scholars are of the view that rivalry over hegemonic aspirations is at the root of the patchy and topsy-turvy engagement which often sees the two countries at loggerheads.

Be that as it may, the complexity of Nigeria – South African relations has not undermined the awareness by both nations that they are codependent and pivotal states crucial to the future development of Africa. Thus, both countries must not shy away from this responsibility (Obasanjo, 2001:137).

Against this background, there is the need for both countries to come to the full realization that their cooperation, and not competition and rivalry is crucial to their development and the continent at large. To this end, they must position themselves as development partners rather than rivals. Nigeria and South Africa must use the advantages confer by their capacity and endowment to galvanize Africa's development. Likewise, both countries must tackle the underlying issues at the root of dangerous stereotypical problems undermining people-to-people ties. Nigeria and Nigerians must do more to change the dangerous appellation of "criminal and fraudulent" frequently deployed to characterize them in foreign lands, in South Africa inclusive. On the same scale, South African authorities must take measures to address the numerous causative factors of xenophobic, which have seen many Nigerian residents in South Africa live with naked fear and apprehension, having, unfortunately accounted for the death of 121 Nigerians and properties belonging to thousands destroyed (David, 2018). More importantly, the South African government must address the current hesitation to punishing perpetrators of violence against foreigners. This is essential if deepened political engagement, trade, and people-to-people ties must be forged beyond the present level.

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