

Issues in Nigeria–Ghana Economic and Diplomatic Relations, 2015–2023

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ABSTRACT

Both geography and history are major determinants in the historical and inter-state relations between Nigeria and Ghana. Geography placed the two countries at a relatively closer proximity within the western hemisphere of Africa, impacting their historical trajectories and socio-economic inter-connections. Apart from the pre-colonial experiences in trading and commercial activities, colonial administration enhanced the pre-existing interlinks between the two countries. Both were British colonies and were once administered as a single colonial entity. Colonial economic policies united many aspects of their economies including currency, banking, agricultural production, and taxation. Though most colonial ties were loosened during the decolonisation periods; geographical, socio-economic, and political factors have continued to necessitate and facilitate the relations between the two countries. From the foregoing expositions, this paper examines the issues and contentions in the economic and diplomatic relations between the two countries. Using the precepts of pan-Africanism and regional economic integration, the paper expatiates the prospects and challenges of the interconnections between the two countries. The paper concludes that though the inter-state relations between the two countries yielded some benefits, there were occasions of disagreements and challenges.

Keywords: diplomatic relations, economic relations, Ghana, Nigeria, Pan-Africanism

INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic and socio-economic relations among African countries have been established before the attainment of independence. The numerous indigenous peoples of the continent have engaged in different forms of cooperation and collaboration prior to the establishment of contact with the Arabs and Europe. Relationships during this early period were majorly facilitated by economic activities (Englebert, 2000; Green, 2024). The trans-Saharan trade, which lasted for centuries, presents an example of such mechanism for economic interdependence among the ancient empires and kingdoms of Africa. However, pre-existing political affinity and diplomatic relations were consolidated during colonial rule leading to the evolution of modern state system in several parts of the continent. Decolonisation process which started immedi-

ately after the Second World War further strengthened the collaborations among African states, eventually culminating into the formation of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1963. The Organization was constructed on the philosophy of pan-Africanism which further enhanced intra-African relations. Apart from the desire for political cooperation, efforts were also geared towards economic integration which has been manifested at the bilateral and multi-lateral levels. The creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a typical example of the economic integration mechanisms in West Africa. Similar regional economic integration organizations such as the Southern Africa Development Commission (SADC) and the African Maghreb Union (AMU) were created in the southern and northern sub-regions of the continent.

Influenced by her enormous human and natural resources, Nigeria adopted a foreign policy posture that was basically afro-centric at independence. Her manifest destiny was fashioned towards playing a prominent role in the socio-economic and political emancipation of the continent from the shackles of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism. The country's overall foreign policy was therefore tailored towards making the continent's vast resources beneficial to indigenous Africans departing from what was obtained during the colonial period (Ezirim, 2010). The posture and framework were maintained in a concentric circle by the subsequent administrations in the country throughout the remaining part of the twentieth century. Though prevailing national and international manifestations in the twenty-first century have necessitated some modifications in the country's foreign policy orientations, she has endeavoured to sustain some of the traditional practices especially within the West African subregion. This is obvious in Nigeria-Ghana relations which have witnessed swings since the birth of the current century.

Ghana is one of the prominent countries in West Africa, though it is territorially small and has a relatively small population. Being the first country to gain independence from colonial rule in the sub-continent, Ghana has remained a powerhouse in intra-African politics and diplomacy since 1957. This is due to its economic strength considering the fact that it is endowed with considerable natural resources (Debra, 2002; Hug, 1989; Apter, 1972). The role of Ghana in the ideation and spread of Pan-Africanism during the decolonisation period cannot be over-emphasised. Ghanaian statesman, Kwame Nkrumah, was one of the promoters of unity and collaborations among African countries. Though not geographical, demographical, or economically buoyant as Nigeria, Ghana has been committed to furthering economic and political inter-relations among African countries as reflected in her foreign policy dispositions (Briggs, 2016; Asante and Franklin 2015; Owusu-Agve, 2012; Miller et al, 2009; Anquandah, 2013).

Apart from pan-Africanism and socio-historical connections between Nigeria and Ghana, both countries were ruled by the same colonial power. Their economic and socio-political trajectories were therefore tied in many fronts and have been sustained in certain measures during the post-colonial period, especially during the closing four decades of the twentieth century. For instance, Ghana played a prominent role in the events leading to the Nigerian civil war while Nigeria

served as the safe haven for Ghanaians during the period of economic hardships. However, the relationship was not cordial all the times, there were contours and situations of diplomatic and economic dissonance. By the turn of the twenty-first century, military rule which initially dominated the scenes and affected international relations in the two countries had become out-fashioned necessitating new dimensions in their socio-political interactions. The study uses the basis of afro-centrism and theories of economic integration to analyse the major themes and occurrences in the economic and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

HISTORY AND THE MAKING OF NIGERIA-GHANA RELATIONS

By many indications, Nigeria and Ghana are the two biggest states in West Africa. Demographically, Ghana's population is second to that of Nigeria within the West African sub-region (Olatoregun et al, 2014). In addition, the two countries are the biggest rivals in the politics and economy within the West African sub-region. However, the history of inter-state relations between the two countries preceded colonial period (Aremu, 2014), though it reached new heights during this period. Both countries were initially administered as a single unit through the British West Africa Force, the British West Africa Currency Board, and the British West Africa Cocoa Producing and Marketing Board (Kissenger, 2000; Kirk-Greene, 2022). During the pre-colonial period, inter-group relations between the people of both countries spread across political, economic, religious, cultural, and recreational fields. Trade and migration were the biggest facilitators of Nigeria-Ghana relations during the pre-colonial period. The trade relations were majorly between the Hausa people of Nigeria and the Alaga people of Ghana; and between the Yoruba people of Nigeria and the Akan people of Ghana (Boahen, 1975; Eltis and Jennins, 1988; Austin, 2009; Austin 2004). Boahen (1975) and Newburt (1960) in their respective studies reported that there was a prosperous gold and Gbanja kolanuts (*kola nitida*) trade between Hausa people in Kano (northern Nigeria) and the Salaga people (southern forest region of Ghana) during the trans-Saharan trade period. This was corroborated by Lovejoy (1980) who observed that slaves were used to transport kolanut from Gonja through Old Oyo to Kano during the pre-colonial period.

Economic cooperation in pre-colonial West Africa was so strong that Wolfson (2002) and Anaefi et al (2003) in their respective studies on the aspect of peasant agriculture and migration in Ghana maintained that trading activities along the trans-Saharan trade routes stimulated large flows of traders from neighbouring territories who brought various goods such as ivory, Gbanja kolanut, gold, cattle, sheep, hides and skin of wild animals and clothes for sale at the Salaga markets. Furthermore, Wangara traders oiled the wheels of Ghana-Nigeria relations by exporting gold extracted from the forest regions of Ghana through Begho to Kano in exchange for salt, swords, iron and horses (Aremu, 2014). The steady economic relations between the Akan people and the Hausa people in Kano paved the way for the Yoruba people in western Nigeria to open up new link of inter-group relations between Nigeria and Ghana by serving as itinerant labourers, gold mine workers, petty traders, and farm labourers among others (Eades, 1994; Eades, 2018; Falola, 2018). They ex-

ploited the Tran-Saharan trade routes that connected Ashanti to Kano through Oyo. Subsequently, by the time Ghana and Nigeria came under colonial rule there were more Nigerians migrating to Ghana than Ghanaians migrating to Nigeria (Aiguosatile and Neville, 2011). It is pertinent to note that beyond Ghana's economic stability in the colonial period, Nigeria-Ghana relations was accelerated during the period because of the colonial policies of the British.

However, when crude oil was discovered in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region and Nigeria gained independence in 1960; the wheels of Nigeria-Ghana relations started making a full circle. The economic buoyancy and the prosperity that crude oil brought to Nigeria made the West African country the new cynosure of attention in the sub-region and the continent at large. Thus, due to Nigeria's oil boom in the 1970s the pattern of migration flow started shifting in the favour of Nigeria. This meant that in the immediate post-colonial era in Nigeria, there was a migration reversal in Nigeria-Ghana relations. Because of Nigeria's oil-led economy and increased economic opportunities more Ghanaians started coming to Nigeria to do menial work than Nigerians going to Ghana for the same reason (Peil, 1974; Peil, 1979; Afolabi et al, 2016). Ghana-Nigeria relations during this period continued to thrive until a sour point was reached in the 1980s. During this period, Nigeria-Ghana relations experienced a rupture because of Nigeria's tit-for-tat response to Ghana's sending away of Nigerians living and working in the country (Adebayo, 2021; Daly, 2023). This Nigerian response birthed the "Ghana-Must-Go." phenomenon in the country, a phenomenon which has withstood the test of time in country.

POSTCOLONIAL NIGERIA-GHANA RELATIONS: BEYOND DISCORD AND CONCORD

The economic cooperation and collaboration that defined Nigeria-Ghana relations since the pre-colonial period turned into rivalry when nationalism and patriotism in both countries spiralled out of control. Fired by the spirit of nationalism, Ghanaian elites and Nigeria political elites became locked in a struggle for domination in West Africa and the continental Africa. This paved the way for Nigeria and Ghana relations to be entangled in discord and concord. Beyond this scenario however, there were pragmatic steps taken by Nigeria to foster neighbourliness among the countries in Africa through its Afrocentric foreign policy. This policy ensured that Ghana-Nigeria political discord that was fuelled by the fact that Ghana secured political independence before Nigeria was manageable. It is instructive to note that by 1960 when Nigeria attained sovereignty, Ghana was already three years older than Nigeria as a sovereign nation. Thus, Ghana had gathered significant experience in international politics that gave her an edge over her Nigerian rival. The country joined the United Nations as a member on March 8, 1957. This placed Ghana in a good stead to lead the other West Africa states, including Nigeria that joined the United Nations in 1960. However, due to Nigeria's population size and economic potential, when she gained independence in 1960 she began to tower above Ghana and was seen as the beacon of hope for the African continent (Odo, 2015; Folarin, 2010; Eferebo, 2022). The country was expected to provide both politi-

cal and economic leadership roles by attaining a high level of economic development. The Nigeria government thus embraced the foreign policy of Afrocentricism towards actualising its manifest destiny. The policy was geared towards the decolonisation of all African countries and the prevention of foreign exploitation of African resources.

But before Nigeria's Afrocentricism could engineer deep seated cooperation and collaboration with Ghana; it first had to triumph over the ideological divide of Kwame Nkrumah and Tafa-wa Balewa on the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). While the Ghanaian position canvassed by Nkrumah was for the OAU to be an integration of all African states to establish a United States of Africa of some sort (radicalism); the Nigerian position canvassed by Balewa was for the OAU to be in the first instance an association of African states (liberalism) as full integration was impractical (Wapmuk, 2014; Dogah, 2022). The triumph of the Nigeria position led to the birth of OAU in 1963 as a loose association of African states. Building on this foreign policy success, the Nigeria government made renewed efforts to go beyond rivalling with its West Africa neighbour. This foreign policy direction was more expedient as Aiguosatile and Neville (2011) explained that both countries were once victims of exploitative and dehumanising British colonialism. More so, in the post-independence era, both Nigeria and Ghana are plagued with economic problems such as mass poverty and misery coupled with military intervention in politics.

In charting a new relationship, therefore, Nigeria and Ghana moved beyond their mutual suspicion and jealousy that characterised their relationship from 1960-1966 (Mustapha, 2021). Consequently, from 1966-1975 Ghana-Nigeria relations entered the stage of cooperation. This new co-operation hinged on the fact that General Aguiy Ironsi who took over the helms of affairs in Nigeria after the 1966 coup and General Kotoka who took over power in Ghana were professional friends. And there was no ideological difference between them (Alazor, 2022). However, the outbreak of the Nigeria Civil war in 1967 and the 1969 General Elections in Ghana that brought President Busia to power later led to a strained relationship between the two West African powers. Putting this development into perspective, Otoghile and Obakhedo (2011) maintained that Ghana and Nigeria relations rotated between concord and discord up to 2010. Furthermore, it is also pertinent to note that from 1975 both countries also tried to tighten their international cooperation through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and through other individual aids and grants. These measures sustained Nigeria-Ghana rapprochement into the dawn of the twenty-first century when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were conceived in 2000. Included in the MDGs is the need for states to increase their international partnership in the fight against extreme poverty. However, since 2015 when the MDGs expired, the partnership that it inspired between Nigeria and Ghana experienced new concord and discord up to 2023.

It must be noted that the concord and discord both nations experienced also challenged the promise of friendship and cooperation that the spirit of ECOWAS fostered in the sub-region. International discord in Nigeria-Ghana relations reached its lowest ebb in 1983, when the Nigerian government gave an executive order demanding that undocumented migrants in the country

be expelled with immediate effect or be arrested. This expulsion order affected two million West Africans in Nigeria, half of whom were Ghanaians (Daly, 2023). This episode in Ghana-Nigeria relations is fondly remembered through the “Ghana-Must-Go-Bag,” a chequered bag that Ghanaians used to pack their stuffs while leaving Nigeria. This was Nigeria’s counter-reaction to Ghana’s Aliens Compliance Order initiated by Ghanaian Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia that forced many Nigerian undocumented migrants to leave Ghana. The bag was big, spacious, and sturdy enough for long-haul travel. Following the Nigerian government executive order, there was a surge in the demand for the bags. However, out of all the undocumented migrants in Nigeria from all over West Africa, it was Ghanaians that Nigerians used to name the bag. And this to an extent showed the level of rot in the Nigeria-Ghana relations (Ademola, 2016). The fact that the number of expelled migrants was largely dominated by Ghanaians gave further credence to this nomenclature. The lingering symbol and persisting usage of the cliché “Ghana-Must-Go.” has continued to reverberate an unforgettable historical diplomatic and economic experience.

Since the “Ghana-Must-Go.” incident in 1983, Nigeria-Ghana relations had deteriorated beyond political rivalry and economic competition. It became enmeshed in a perpetual ideological and socio-cultural rivalry. While the battle for supremacy between both countries cooled off in the socio-cultural spectrum; it became fierce in sporting competition involving Nigeria and Ghana (Dankwa, 2022). Over the years of the delicate discord and concord between both countries, their citizens became emotionally and psychologically opposed to each other to the extent that losing a football match to either side is seriously frowned at. Consequently, football matches involving Nigeria and Ghana since the 1980s have become a do-or-die contest where losing is considered unacceptable. Nigeria-Ghana discord has even expanded to include contestations such as “Ghana Jollof rice is better than Nigerian Jollof rice.” and controversies like “Ghana Bread is not better than Nigeria bread.” and many more (Kirk-Greene, 2022). Despite Nigeria’s Afrocentric foreign policy launched in 1960, what the fluctuating Ghana-Nigeria rivalry and cooperation show is the fact that Afrocentricism does not guarantee the absence of intra-West African states. Rather, Nigeria’s Afrocentricism has been shown to be the country’s version of the Roosevelt corollary. The policy is aimed at making Africa for Africans and promoting Africa solution to African problems; while keeping foreign hegemony in the continent at bay.

Ghana-Nigeria Political Relations, 2015-2023

Since the end of the Millennium Development Goals era, while the psychological and socio-cultural rivalry between Nigeria and Ghana rages on particularly on the football pitch; on the other hand Nigeria’s Afrocentricism has ensured that relationship between both countries did not collapse completely. It had kept the window of political cooperation between Nigeria and Ghana perpetually open. This Nigeria-Ghana political relations was kick-started in the post-colonial period when both states opened diplomatic missions and exchanged high commissioners. Overtime, Nigeria’s Afrocentricism made her to weather the persistent storms plaguing its relations with her Ghanaian neighbour. Political cooperation, economic aid, and grants have prevented things from

falling apart between the two Anglophone West African neighbours between 2015 and 2023. The Nigerian High Commission in Ghana and its counterpart the Ghanaian High Commission in Nigeria are the principal instruments for servicing Nigeria-Ghana political relations. For instance, in June 2015 when parts of Ghana was ravaged by flood and fire disaster, the Nigerian High Commission in Ghana responded by providing relief materials to support the victim in the spirit of “Big Brother.” and Afrocentricism (Omotuyi, 2021).

Beyond relief effort, Nigeria government has also partnered with the Ghanaian government to ensure democratic consolidation in Ghana. Through the Commonwealth, the African Union, and the ECOWAS, Nigeria collaborated with other democratic partners in Africa and abroad to preserve democracy in Ghana. They served as election observers during the December 2016 and December 2020 general elections in Ghana. For the 2016 election in Ghana, Joy Ogwu (former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria) served as Nigeria’s Commonwealth representative to observe the election. In addition, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) of Nigeria sent an international election observation mission to Ghana during the election. In the December 2020, Nigeria’s National Democratic Institute partnered with the International Republican Institute (IRI) to observe the 2020 general elections in Ghana.

Politically, Nigeria and Ghana have also cooperated in the area of internal security. In 2015, the Ghanaian government initiated a proposal to the African Union for the creation of a multinational force to help Nigeria fight against Boko Haram. Accra was of the view that Boko Haram in Nigeria and militants in Somalia, Kenya and Mali posed wider risk to African peace and security. Hence, the Ghanaian president advanced the view that when it comes to terrorism nobody is too far or too near. To this end, it is observed that, Ghana charge ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS) to reinforce surveillance in their respective territories, and sensitize their nationals in order to reduce the risks of infiltration by Boko Haram members inside their national borders, and to work to eradicate insurgents supply networks. It is pertinent to point out that this inter-African concern for Nigeria’s security spearheaded by Ghana is Nigeria reaping one of the dividends of its Afrocentricism. It had successfully engendered the view among Africa’s political elites in that Africa is for Africans and the peace and security of Africa is the collective responsibility of all Africans. Consequently, West African governments have increasingly collaborated to promote internal and regional stability, oppose military coups, and protect constitutional democracy.

NIGERIA-GHANA ECONOMIC RELATIONS, 2015-2023

Nigeria’s relations with her West African neighbours from 2015-2023 was sharpest in the economic sphere. This implies that Afrocentricism engendered tight economic cooperation and collaboration between Nigeria and Ghana during the period. Economic aids and grants and trade relations between the two countries reached new heights (Williams, 2019). This is more so, as both countries happened to be the biggest economies in West Africa. The economic strength of Ghana

can be seen in the fact that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country from \$49.41 billion in 2015 moved to \$72.84 billion in 2022; while Per Capita Income of the people moved from \$1,711 in 2015 to \$2,176 in 2022 (Ibrahim and Imhotep, 2022). On the other hand, Nigeria's GDP in 2015 was \$493.03 billion and \$477.39 billion in 2022, and the Per Capita Income of Nigerians moved from \$2,680 in 2015 to \$2,184 in 2022 (Ibrahim and Imhotep, 2022; Ihejirika and Bigbo, 2023). However, because of Nigeria's clear economic advantage over Ghana and through its Afrocentric Foreign Policy more of the economic aid moved from Nigeria to Ghana.

Ghana and Nigeria in the twenty first century are both economically bound together to the extent that economic development in Nigeria usually produced ripple effect in Ghana (Ademola, 2016; Mustapha, 2021). Close economic ties between Nigeria and Ghana resulted in the latter becoming Nigeria's biggest export destination in 2019. Nigeria Bureau of Statistics' report revealed that in the third quarter of 2019, Ghana imported N908.5 billion worth of cable sheaths of iron, submersible drilling platforms and crude oil from Nigeria. The Breakdown of the statistics showed that Ghana imported N876.5 billion non-crude oil products and N32.02 billion worth of crude oil from Nigeria. And this amounted to 17.18% of Nigeria's export.

This was a marked triumph for Nigeria Afrocentricism because from Nigeria being Ghana's third most important trading partner in 2010; and Ghana being Nigeria's ninth largest trade partners in the same year accounting for 1.3% of Nigeria's export economic relations evidently grew between both countries in 2019. In the same year, to further expand their trade relations, Nigeria set up a special trade corridor on its border with Benin Republic to allow Ghanaian goods to enter the country. But it must be said that economic relations between Nigeria and Ghana, in the period, has not been without its own problems. It has been fraught with the issue of corruption by state officials from both countries who hindered free trade. However, guided by the spirit of Nigeria's Afrocentricism the Nigeria made some efforts to smoothen economic relations with Ghana (Mustapha, 2021; Akoeda, 2023; Enakem, 2023).

Based on the effort of the Nigerian government to recalibrate Nigeria-Ghana economic relations, in 2020 Ghana was able to increase its export to Nigeria. Ghana exported products worth approximately \$57.2 million to Nigeria. The breakdown of this bilateral trade worth showed that chocolate amounted to (\$18.1 million), Garden tools (\$6.53 million), and Non-aqueous pints (\$4.43 million). Economic transactions between Ghana and Nigeria from 2015 boomed from an annual growth rate of 5.4% in 1996 that is from \$15.8 million in 1996 it moved to \$57.2 million in 2020 (Akoeda, 2023). Nigeria in turn, exported products worth \$382 million to Ghana. The main exports from Nigeria were planes, helicopters and Spacecraft that stood at \$149 million, Crude oil at \$132 million, and special purpose ships that stood at \$25.7 million. By 2020 therefore, Nigeria's export to Ghana increased from its annual rate of 3.16% (i.e. from \$181 million in 1996 to \$382 million in 2020).

In May 2021, the Nigerian government sent a high-powered delegation to Ghana to resolve the trade disputes between Nigeria and Ghana that led to the closing down of hundreds of shops

owned by Nigeria in Ghana. This gesture further demonstrates the economic aspect of the Nigerian Pan-Africanist Foreign Policy. The members of the Nigeria delegation included Nigeria's Minister of Trade and Investment and the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC). Their meeting with the Ghanaian counterparts led to the issuing of a joint statement approved by both countries. Nigeria responded to the meeting by setting up an inter-ministerial committee to implement the joint statement. The fallout of its economic reconciliatory meeting was that Ghana-Nigeria economic relation was reset and normalised. Consequently, in February 2022 the joint statement paved the way for the launching of the maiden edition of the CEO Forum. This economic cooperation framework organized by the Ghana-Nigeria Business Council (GNBC) and Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) was focused on deepening the longstanding economic relations between Nigeria and Ghana. The result of these pragmatic measures was that, they helped both countries to tighten their economic cooperation in the area of energy, finance, agriculture and industry.

Furthermore, in the pursuance of its Afrocentric foreign policy in West Africa, Nigeria increased its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Ghana. By August 2021, it was reported that global FDI projects in Ghana reached 570 projects, with Nigerians or Nigerian-based companies being the biggest investors (Akoeda, 2023). These FDI projects made up a total investment of 45.11 billion Euros. This means that the average foreign direct investment in Ghana between January 2003 and August 2021 was 79.18million Euros and this enabled Nigeria and other development partners to create a total of 110,223 jobs opportunities in Ghana. Nigeria and the United States of America are the biggest source of foreign direct investment into Ghana (Akoeda, 2023). It is without doubt that capital flow from Nigeria into Ghana in phenomenal proportion was one of the low hanging fruits of the country Afrocentric foreign policy. Afrocentricism was the international relations framework that enabled Nigeria firms such as Guaranty Trust Bank to undertake 14 FDI projects in Ghana; Access Bank with 10 FDI projects in Ghana; and Energy Bank with 7 FDI projects in Ghana in 2021.

Despite the fact that Nigeria and Ghana do not share land borders, economic relations between the two countries is closet and deepest in West Africa because of their historical ties. Beyond the fact that the people of both countries were colonized by Britain, they have been in touch with one another before the coming of the British imperialists. It would be recalled that during the pre-colonial economic relations were established through the early contact between the people of Ghana and Nigeria, particularly through the Trans-Saharan trade routes. Trading activities linked the Akan (Ashanti) people of Ghana, Yoruba people in Old Oyo, and Hausa people in Kano together in one economic traffic despite the fact that there were no common borders between them. Therefore, when the idea of Nigeria's manifest destiny was conceived preserving Nigeria's relations and friendships in West Africa and their benefits to the country was the true brain behind it. Hence, when Nigeria attained independence her Afrocentric foreign policy became the manifest continuation of the vision of Nigeria's manifest destiny.

NIGERIA'S RESPONSE TO XENOPHOBIA IN GHANA

As Ghana–Nigeria economic relations grew, so also was the economic tension and apprehension it created in both countries. The preponderance and dominance of Nigerian traders in Ghanaian market gave rise to the concern of economic exploitation. Some Ghanaians felt that Nigerian traders in their country were reaping them off. Their fears led to the rupturing of peaceful economic relations between both countries which manifested in the xenophobic attack against Nigerians in Ghana. This is similitude to what Nigerians witnessed in South African owing to the same argument of economic and social dominance. Therefore, between 2015 and 2023, the concord and discord that have always trailed Nigeria-Ghana relations reared its head. While both countries were recording increase trade in 2019, xenophobia feelings were brewing among some Ghanaians in Ghana at the same time. The Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) describes xenophobia as a crisis of moral panic, illusionary, irrational and perceived fear, or fear of the unknown in intra-African relations (Enakem, 2023). Its origin lies in the threats that migrants were perceived to pose to local population due to competition over job, as well as the alleged involvement of migrants in social ills like drugs and prostitution.

In December 2019, when one of the earliest xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in Ghana broke out, the Nigeria House of Representatives conceptualized the attack as a transfer of aggression by Ghanaians because of the closure of Nigeria's land borders. During the attack, over 600 shops belonging to foreign traders, particularly Nigerians, at the Kwame Nkrumah circle was locked by members of the Ghana Union of Traders Associations. This move showed that the xenophobic attack on Nigerians was partly caused by their economic dominance in Ghanaian markets and Ghanaian perceived fear of economic domination and exploitation. However on June 19 when the 2020 incident of xenophobic attack in Ghana against Nigerians broke out the frontiers of the attacks expanded beyond economic interest.

While this episode of xenophobia completely took the Nigerian community in Ghana by storm and perplexed the Nigerian government, the country's Afrocentricism arguably prevailed. It prevented a tit-for-tat response that followed the expulsion of Nigerians from Ghana in 1969 when Kofi Busia implemented the Aliens Compliance Order. It is true that the Ghanaian government of Nana Akufo-Addo severely condemned the attack, apologized for the incident, instigated an investigation into it, and promise to rebuild the destroyed Nigeria embassy housing. However, it must be emphasized that what save the day and prevented an escalation of the situation was Nigeria's commitment to its manifest destiny in Africa exemplified by her Afrocentric foreign policy. As at that time, while there were estimated 200,000 Nigerians living in Ghana; there were estimated 500,000 Ghanaians living in Nigeria. The breach of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was evidently salvaged by Nigeria's policy of friendship with her West African neighbours. Hence, despite the fact that it was later discovered that Nigeria did not have the land title deed of the land where it built its embassy in Ghana, this does not take away from the fact that under international law the diplomatic building on the land was protected and the land an extra-territoriali-

ty of Nigeria. Paradoxically, Nigeria did not withdraw its High Commissioner from Ghana, did not sever diplomatic and economic relations with Ghana, did not stop foreign direct investment from Nigeria into Ghana, and Nigeria ensured the safety of life and properties of Ghanaians in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria-Ghana relations from 2015-2023 was a continuum of the past. It followed the historical pattern and trajectory of concord and discord. The paper showed that while Nigeria and Ghana remain the biggest cooperating and collaborating units in West Africa; they were also the most competitive adversaries. In the period of study, it is discovered that political cooperation in the consolidation of democracy and in the fight against Boko Haram terrorism cemented the bond of friendship between Nigeria and Ghana. And the same political ideological values both nations share and their commitment to peace and security enabled trade relations to thrive between them and foreign direct investment to flow freely. Therefore, when the incident of xenophobic attack tried to rupture Nigeria-Ghana relations; this study concluded that Nigeria's Afrocentricism ensured that both countries remained permanent friends of some sort. It was the restraint that held the Nigerian state and arguably Nigerians, who were looking up to their leaders for signals on what to take, from repaying Ghana and Ghanaians in kind. Indeed, Nigeria-Ghana relations from 2015-2023 had been a delicate balance of discord and concord in order to avoid the tit-for-tat that ruined Ghana-Nigeria relations in the 1980s. The Nigerian government should continue to toe the line of pan-Africanism, though it should ensure that derivable benefits are considered in her overall diplomatic and economic inter-relations with neighbouring countries.

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