

**XENOPHOBIC RECIPROCITY AND ITS IMPACTS ON NIGERIA-GHANA
RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.**

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Abstract

The paper explores the implications of xenophobic reciprocity on Nigeria-Ghana relations with emphasis on socio-economic and political impacts between the two countries. Using a qualitative methodology, the research draws on secondary sources, including academic literature, governmental reports, and media analyses to understand the historical context and contemporary manifestations of xenophobia. The thematic approach of research was also adopted. The research findings indicate that xenophobic actions have strained bilateral relations, impacting trade, migration, and cultural exchange negatively. The study underscores the importance of proactive policy measures and regional cooperation in addressing these tensions and fostering a more harmonious relationship between Nigeria and Ghana.

Keywords: Xenophobic, Reciprocity, Nigeria, Ghana, Inter-State Relations.

Introduction.

Nigeria and Ghana have shared a deep and complex historical connection, shaped by their colonial legacies, cultural similarities, and mutual economic interests. During the colonial period, both countries were part of the British Empire, which facilitated significant cultural and educational exchanges. Post-independence, Nigeria and Ghana continued to maintain close ties, driven by their leading roles in the Pan-African movement and their

efforts to promote regional integration in West Africa. Both nations can be described as ‘brothers’, as what happens in one, affects the other. For instance, the agitation for political independence from British colonial rule began in both Nigeria and Ghana during the 1940s. Ghana achieved success first, gaining independence in 1957, which accelerated Nigeria’s own path to independence, culminating in 1960. Both countries experienced their initial military coups in 1966. Between 1966 and 1979, Ghana underwent four successive military administrations and one civilian administration. Similarly, Nigeria experienced four successive military regimes, with Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration considered a continuation of Murtala Mohammed’s regime.

In 1979, both Nigeria and Ghana re-introduced democratic rule in their respective countries (Ibekwe, 1982). Both nations have historically cooperated on various regional issues, ranging from economic integration to political stability. The relationship between Nigeria and Ghana has been characterized by periods of both cooperation and tension, influenced by the movements of their citizens across borders for trade, education, and employment. These interactions have often fostered mutual respect and collaboration, yet they have also occasionally led to friction, particularly when issues of immigration and competition for economic opportunities arise.

Xenophobic reciprocity refers to the phenomenon where hostile or discriminatory actions taken by one country towards foreign nationals are mirrored by similar actions from the affected country. This concept is crucial in understanding the cyclical nature of retaliatory behaviors between states, particularly in the context of Nigeria and Ghana. Xenophobic incidents often arise from economic anxieties, social tensions, and political rhetoric, leading to a tit-for-tat dynamic that exacerbates diplomatic and social relations. In the case of Nigeria and Ghana, xenophobic reciprocity has manifested in various forms, including the expulsion of foreign nationals, restrictive trade policies, and inflammatory media coverage, each triggering a corresponding response from the other country.

Statement of Problems.

The incidence of xenophobic attacks in both Nigeria and Ghana has assumed a monumental proportion. Unfortunately, available literature on the subject matter tends to ignore the possibility of such incessant xenophobic attacks culminating in a shooting war between Nigeria and Ghana. Related literature on the subject matter has not adequately addressed the possible consequences of such xenophobic attacks, which are capable of escalating into a major conflict with the concomitant effect of jeopardizing the fragile peace in the African region. This study is therefore, attempt at bringing to the fore, the danger inherent in xenophobic reciprocity between Nigeria and Ghana, with a view of stemming the tide, while at the same time highlighting the need for peace and regional cooperation.

Conceptual Clarifications.

Xenophobia, derived from the Greek words "xenos" (foreigner) and "phobos" (fear), is a term that describes an irrational and intense fear or hatred of people perceived as foreign or different. Hammar (1985) define "Xenophobic" as an irrational fear or hatred of people from other countries or cultures. It often manifests in discriminatory practices, social exclusion, and violence against individuals from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Xenophobia can be fueled by various factors, including economic insecurities, cultural misunderstandings, and political rhetoric. For instance, in times of economic downturn, immigrants might be scapegoated for taking away jobs or resources from native citizens, leading to increased xenophobic sentiments. Historically, xenophobia has been observed in numerous societies, leading to significant social and political repercussions, including the implementation of restrictive immigration policies and the perpetuation of social divisions.

On the other hand, the concept of reciprocity entails responding to the actions of another state with equivalent actions, creating a system of mutual influence and balance

(Mok, 1989). In international relations, it is often understood as a return action or tit-for-tat, and it plays a crucial role in shaping interactions between states. The concept is foundational to many aspects of diplomatic and economic exchanges, ensuring that cooperation and compliance with international norms are incentivized and that violations are met with proportional responses.

Relating reciprocity to xenophobia, the term "xenophobic reciprocity" can describe a scenario where nations or groups engage in tit-for-tat behavior driven by fear or hostility towards outsiders. In such contexts, reciprocity is not based on mutual benefit but on retaliatory or protective measures aimed at preserving perceived national or cultural purity. For instance, if one country enacts restrictive immigration policies fueled by xenophobic sentiments, other countries might respond similarly, leading to a cycle of exclusion and retaliation. This form of reciprocity undermines international cooperation and can exacerbate tensions and conflicts, highlighting the negative impact of xenophobia on global relations. Instead of fostering mutual respect and understanding, xenophobic reciprocity perpetuates division and mistrust, hampering efforts to address common challenges and build a more inclusive international community.

Theoretical Framework.

The Realistic Group Conflict Theory has been deployed as an analytical tool in explaining reciprocal xenophobic attacks, and its implication on Nigeria-Ghana relations. Although, other theories of international relations could explain the phenomenon of xenophobia, the choice of Realistic Group Conflict Theory is due to its appropriateness for understanding the phenomenon of xenophobic attacks between Nigeria and Ghana. In simple terms, the Realistic Group Conflict Theory postulates that competition for access to limited resources results in conflict between groups. Proponents of Realistic Group Conflict Theory like M. Sherif, O.J Harvey, B.J. White, W.R Hood, and C.W Sherif are unanimous in exposing the notion that because resources are naturally scarce and limited, competition for such limited resources between groups, often leads to prejudices against

the “out-group”, whose members are viewed by the “in-group” as a source of competition. The “out-group” can be seen as the alien or foreign elements, who are mostly seen as migrants or foreigners by the “in-group” group that claims indigeneship or aborigins.

In applying the Realistic Group Conflict Theory to this study, the “out-group” and “in-group” factors have always played out in the series of xenophobic attacks between Nigeria and Ghana. Depending on the location of such attacks, both Nigeria and Ghana citizens have always competed for scarce resources. Such unhealthy competitions have been at the centre of prejudice and bloody conflicts between citizens of both countries, either in Nigeria or on Ghana soil. From the 1935 anti-foreigner sentiment in Ghana Deportation Act of 1957, Ghana’s Aliens Compliance Order of 1969, Nigeria’s Expulsion Order of 1983, up to the recent Ghana Union of Traders Association Actions of 2019 – 2020, “out-group” and “in-group” factors run as a motif in the entire xenophobic reciprocity in Nigeria-Ghana relations. Realistic Group Conflict Theory is apt in analyzing the xenophobic reciprocity in Nigeria-Ghana relations.

Factors Contributing to Xenophobic Sentiments in Both Countries

The factors contributing to xenophobic sentiments in Ghana and Nigeria are multifaceted and interlinked. They include:

Historical Legacy and Nationalism: The historical legacy of colonialism and post-independence nationalism has significantly contributed to xenophobic sentiments in both Ghana and Nigeria. In Ghana, anti-foreigner sentiments date back to the 1930s, driven by fears of economic competition and job security. The post-independence era under Kwame Nkrumah saw the introduction of policies like the Deportation Act of 1957, targeting foreigners, especially Nigerians, who were perceived as economic threats (Ekanem, 2023). Similarly, in Nigeria, the oil boom of the 1970s attracted many Ghanaians, leading to xenophobic reactions during economic downturns. The Nigerian government's

expulsion orders in 1983 and 1985 were direct responses to economic pressures and fears of job competition from Ghanaians and other foreigners, reflecting deep-seated nationalist sentiments.

Economic Competition: Economic competition is a primary driver of xenophobic sentiments in both countries. In Ghana, the enforcement of laws requiring foreign traders, including Nigerians, to invest substantial amounts to qualify to do business has been a significant source of tension. These laws are seen as discriminatory, aiming to reduce competition from Nigerian traders. Nigerian businesses in Ghana often offer goods at lower prices, undercutting local traders and fueling resentment. In Nigeria, high unemployment rates have led to perceptions that foreign nationals, particularly Ghanaians, are taking jobs meant for locals. This was evident during Nigeria's expulsion of Ghanaians in the early 1980s when economic downturns and job scarcity intensified xenophobic sentiments.

Sociopolitical Dynamics and Hostility: Sociopolitical dynamics play a crucial role in fostering xenophobic sentiments in both Ghana and Nigeria. In Ghana, hostility towards Nigerians is evident at both governmental and grassroots levels. Actions by groups like the Ghana Union of Traders Associations (GUTA) influence government policies against Nigerians, reflecting a deep-seated public resentment. In Nigeria, xenophobic sentiments towards Ghanaians are fueled by similar socio-political dynamics, including perceptions of Ghanaians as being involved in criminal activities and economic exploitation. These sociopolitical factors create an environment where xenophobia is not only tolerated but sometimes encouraged by political and social leaders.

Migration Patterns and Demographic Pressures: Migration patterns and demographic pressures significantly contribute to xenophobic sentiments. The substantial presence of Nigerians in Ghana, historically constituting a significant portion of the population, has been a source of friction. This demographic pressure is perceived as a threat to local

resources and opportunities, leading to xenophobic reactions. Conversely, during Nigeria's economic boom, large numbers of Ghanaians migrated to Nigeria, creating similar tensions. When economic conditions deteriorated, these migrant populations became scapegoats, leading to their expulsion and reinforcing xenophobic sentiments among the local populace.

Cultural Misunderstandings and Media Influence: Cultural and social misunderstandings, often exacerbated by media influence, play a significant role in driving xenophobic sentiments. Nigerians in Ghana are sometimes accused of engaging in criminal activities, leading to stigmatization and hostility. Negative media portrayals of Nigerian immigrants contribute to these perceptions, amplifying fears and prejudices. Similarly, Ghanaians in Nigeria have faced suspicion and stigmatization, particularly during periods of economic strain. Sensationalist media reports highlighting instances of criminal activities by foreigners can lead to broader stigmatization and calls for restrictive policies. The role of media in shaping public perceptions and fueling xenophobic sentiments cannot be underestimated, as it often propagates stereotypes and deepens cultural misunderstandings.

Case Studies of Reciprocal Xenophobic Actions

Xenophobic reciprocity between Nigeria and Ghana has manifested in various high-profile incidents that underscore the cyclical nature of retaliatory measures. These include:

- i. The 1935 anti-foreigner sentiment in Ghana: The indigenous traders and entrepreneurs of Akyem Abuakwa had to establish the National Crusade for the Protection of Ghanaian Enterprise in self-protection against foreign influence, particularly targeting Nigerians (Akinterinwa, 2020).
- ii. Ghana's Deportation Act of 1957: Under President Kwame Nkrumah, the Deportation Act allowed the expulsion of any foreigner considered a threat, resulting in the deportation of Nigerians.

- iii. Ghana's Aliens Compliance Order (GACO) of 1969: By 1969, Nigerians living in Ghana constituted about 20 percent of Ghana's total population. To contain further growth, Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia enacted GACO law. He also enforced this order, leading to the expulsion of over 3 million foreigners, primarily Nigerians (Ekanem, 2023).
- iv. Nigeria's Expulsion Order of 1983: President Shehu Shagari ordered all undocumented foreigners, including many Ghanaians, to leave Nigeria within two weeks (Ekanem, 2023). The expulsion, widely known as "Ghana Must Go," was driven by Nigeria's economic downturn and rising unemployment, leading to a public and political push to remove foreign nationals perceived as taking jobs from Nigerians. This mass expulsion not only strained diplomatic ties but also left a lasting mark on the relationship between the two nations. In response, Ghana experienced a surge in anti-Nigerian sentiments, which laid the groundwork for future reciprocal actions.
- v. The Ghana Investment Promotion Council Act of 1994 includes specific prohibitions for non-Ghanaians. It restricts foreign nationals from engaging in various activities such as selling goods in Ghanaian markets, petty trading, hawking, selling from kiosks, operating taxi services, car hire services, pool betting businesses, lotteries (excluding football pools), and running beauty salons and barber shops. The Act primarily targeted at Nigerians. Oladimeji (2013) notes that the Act allows exemptions for foreign investors who invest a minimum of US \$300,000 in equity capital and ensure the employment of at least 10 Ghanaian citizens (Ekanem, 2023).
- vi. In 2004, the Nigerian government banned 96 Ghanaian products, ranging from textiles, garments, and starch to plastics (Oladimeji, 2013).
- vii. Between 2007 and 2009 and again in 2012, Nigerian businesses in Ghana were closed by the Ghanaian authorities for alleged non-compliance with the 1994 investment law, which places restrictions and prohibits non-Ghanaian from engaging in retail business.

- viii. Closure of Nigerian Shops in Ghana in 2018: The Ghanaian government's inter-ministerial committee (including Immigration, Police, Customs, Ministry of Trade, Internal Revenue) shut down Nigerian-owned shops for allegedly not paying a \$1 million investment levy.
- ix. Ghana Union of Traders Associations (GUTA) Actions, 2019-2020: GUTA forcefully closed Nigerian-dominated markets, including the Roundabout mobile phone accessories market, from December 2019 to July 2020.

Impact of Xenophobic Reciprocity Between Nigeria and Ghana

Xenophobic reciprocity between Nigeria and Ghana has had profound and far-reaching impacts on both nations, influencing their economic, social, and diplomatic spheres. Economically, the restrictive policies and retaliatory actions have disrupted trade and business activities between the two countries. The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act of 1994, imposes stringent requirements on foreign businesses, particularly affected Nigerian traders. The requirement for a minimum investment of US \$300,000 and the employment of at least 10 Ghanaian citizens has been a significant barrier for many Nigerian small business owners. This law has led to the closure of numerous Nigerian-owned shops in Ghana, triggering economic losses and heightening tensions. Similarly, Nigeria's border closure in 2019, which aimed to curb smuggling and boost local production severely impacted Ghanaian exporters, straining economic relations further.

Socially, the cycle of xenophobic actions has created an environment of fear and insecurity for migrants in both countries. Nigerian traders in Ghana and Ghanaian migrants in Nigeria often face harassment, discrimination, and threats. The closure of Nigerian traders' shops in Ghana, for example, led to protests and accusations of xenophobia, highlighting the precarious position of foreign nationals in hostile environments. The attack on the Nigerian High Commission in Accra in 2020, where parts of the building were demolished, further exemplified the physical and psychological

impacts of xenophobic sentiments (Akinterinwa, 2020). These incidents contribute to a climate of mistrust and animosity, undermining the social fabric of both nations.

Diplomatically, the recurring tensions have strained bilateral relations, necessitating frequent interventions and negotiations. High-level meetings between Nigerian and Ghanaian officials have been held to address these issues, focusing on improving bilateral relations, trade agreements, and the treatment of migrants. Despite these efforts, the cycle of retaliation continues to undermine long-term stability and cooperation. The adherence to regional agreements, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocols, has been inconsistent, further complicating diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts and promote regional integration. The impacts of xenophobic reciprocity between Nigeria and Ghana underscore the need for sustained diplomatic efforts and mutual respect for the rights of migrants. Both nations must prioritize dialogue and cooperation to break the cycle of retaliatory actions and foster a more inclusive and collaborative relationship.

Measures Taken to Address Xenophobic Tensions

The recurring xenophobic tensions between Nigeria and Ghana have necessitated a range of measures aimed at fostering better relations and addressing underlying issues. These measures have involved diplomatic engagements, legal reforms, economic collaborations, and efforts to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation at both governmental and grassroots levels.

One significant step has been the establishment of high-level diplomatic dialogues and bilateral meetings to address specific incidents and broader issues of concern. For instance, following the demolition of the Nigerian High Commission building in Accra in 2020, there were urgent diplomatic engagements between the two governments to resolve the matter (Ayodele, 2021). These meetings often result in mutual assurances of respect and protection for each other's citizens and properties. Additionally, both nations have

periodically reaffirmed their commitment to the protocols of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which advocate for the free movement of people, goods, and services within the West African region.

Legal reforms have also been implemented to mitigate the causes of xenophobic tensions. In Ghana, amendments to the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act have been discussed to provide a more favorable business environment for foreign traders, including Nigerians (Ayodele, 2021). These amendments aim to reduce stringent investment requirements and protect the interests of small business owners. In Nigeria, measures have been taken to ensure the fair treatment of Ghanaian businesses and migrants. Both countries have emphasized the importance of upholding ECOWAS agreements that guarantee the rights of West African citizens to live and work in member states (Olademeji, 2013).

Economic collaboration initiatives have been launched to enhance bilateral trade and investment, thereby reducing economic competition that often fuels xenophobia. Joint business forums and trade missions have been organized to explore opportunities for mutual economic growth. These initiatives aim to create a conducive environment for businesses from both countries to thrive. By focusing on shared economic benefits, Nigeria and Ghana hope to build a more integrated and resilient regional economy. Moreover, efforts to harmonize trade policies and address non-tariff barriers have been prioritized to facilitate smoother and more equitable trade relations.

Grassroots initiatives and people-to-people exchanges have been promoted to foster mutual understanding and cultural appreciation. Educational and cultural exchange programs, as well as joint community projects, have been organized to bring Nigerians and Ghanaians together, highlighting their shared history and cultural ties. These initiatives aim to break down stereotypes and build trust among the populace. Civil society organizations, religious groups, and community leaders have played a crucial role in promoting dialogue and reconciliation at the local level.

Finally, media campaigns and public sensitization efforts have been undertaken to address misconceptions and promote peaceful coexistence. Both governments have engaged with media outlets to disseminate messages of unity and cooperation, countering narratives that fuel xenophobia. Public awareness campaigns have been launched to educate citizens on the benefits of regional integration and the contributions of migrants to their host countries' economies and societies. By promoting positive narratives and fostering an inclusive national identity, these efforts aim to reduce the prevalence of xenophobic attitudes.

In conclusion, addressing xenophobic tensions between Nigeria and Ghana requires a multifaceted approach involving diplomatic, legal, economic, grassroots, and media initiatives. Sustained efforts in these areas are essential for building a stable and cooperative relationship that benefits both nations and the broader West African region. By working together to address the root causes of xenophobia and promote mutual respect, Nigeria and Ghana can pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Comparative Analysis

Xenophobic reciprocity in Nigeria-Ghana relations, characterized by retaliatory measures and escalating tensions, mirrors similar patterns observed in other regions where economic competition and nationalist sentiments drive xenophobic actions. For example, in South Africa, xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals, particularly those from other African countries, have led to reciprocal actions by the affected countries. This cycle of violence and retaliation often disrupts diplomatic relations and economic interactions, similar to the Nigeria-Ghana context.

In Europe, incidents of xenophobia have also led to diplomatic and economic repercussions. For instance, Brexit was partly fueled by anti-immigrant sentiments in the UK, which led to reciprocal changes in immigration policies and attitudes towards British

nationals living in EU countries. The tit-for-tat measures in policy changes and public opinion reflect a pattern of xenophobic reciprocity driven by economic anxieties and national identity politics, akin to the Nigeria-Ghana scenario.

In the Americas, the United States' stringent immigration policies under certain administrations have prompted reciprocal measures from countries like Mexico. These include changes in border security, diplomatic protests, and retaliatory economic measures. The underlying factors of economic disparity and national security concerns in these incidents are similar to those driving xenophobic reciprocity between Nigeria and Ghana.

Identification of Patterns and Differences

A comparative analysis reveals several patterns in xenophobic reciprocity across different regions. Firstly, economic competition and unemployment are common drivers of xenophobic sentiments. In Nigeria and Ghana, economic pressures lead to the scapegoating of foreign nationals, similar to the dynamics in South Africa and parts of Europe. Nationalist rhetoric and media portrayal further exacerbate these sentiments, creating a cycle of retaliation.

Secondly, the immediate diplomatic responses often involve summoning ambassadors, issuing public condemnations, and enacting reciprocal policy measures. This pattern is consistent across various regions, indicating a common approach to addressing xenophobic incidents through official channels (Olademeji, 2013). However, these measures often fail to address the root causes and can lead to further escalation.

Differences also emerge in the specific contexts and historical backgrounds of the regions. In Nigeria-Ghana relations, historical ties and past migrations play a significant role in shaping contemporary xenophobic actions. The "Ghana Must Go" expulsion in 1983 and its lasting impact is a unique historical factor that influences current relations. In contrast, the European context involves historical colonial ties and the recent political

shifts following Brexit, while South Africa's apartheid history shapes its contemporary xenophobic landscape.

Another key difference lies in the role of regional organizations. ECOWAS in West Africa actively mediates conflicts and promotes regional integration, playing a significant role in addressing Nigeria-Ghana tensions. In Europe, the EU serves a similar function, though its mechanisms and political landscape differ significantly from ECOWAS. In South Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has a more limited role in mediating xenophobic conflicts compared to ECOWAS.

Implications of Xenophobic Reciprocity for Nigeria-Ghana Relations

The implications of xenophobic reciprocity for Nigeria-Ghana relations are significant and multifaceted, affecting diplomatic ties, economic interactions, social cohesion, and regional stability. These tensions, driven by reciprocal xenophobic actions, have the potential to undermine the longstanding relationship between the two countries, which has been characterized by periods of cooperation and conflict.

Diplomatically, xenophobic reciprocity strains bilateral relations and complicates efforts to foster mutual trust and cooperation. Incidents of xenophobia, such as the demolition of the Nigerian High Commission building in Accra in 2020 or the expulsion of Ghanaian traders from Nigerian markets, led to diplomatic protests and the souring of official engagements. These tensions require constant diplomatic attention, diverting resources and focus from other important bilateral and regional issues. Moreover, they can lead to a cycle of retaliatory measures that further erode trust and goodwill between the two nations.

Economically, xenophobic actions have detrimental effects on trade and investment. Both Nigeria and Ghana are key players in West Africa's economy, and their economic interactions are vital for regional prosperity. Reciprocal xenophobic actions, such as restrictive business laws and hostile treatment of foreign traders, disrupt trade flows and

deter investment. For instance, the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act of 1994, which restricts foreign participation in certain economic activities, and Nigeria's retaliatory policies can hinder the free movement of goods and services. This economic friction can lead to reduced economic growth, job losses, and higher prices for consumers in both countries.

Socially, xenophobic reciprocity fosters animosity and division between the citizens of Nigeria and Ghana. Hostile actions and rhetoric fuel negative stereotypes and prejudices, which can lead to discrimination and violence against migrants. This social discord undermines the cultural and historical ties that bind the two nations. For example, Nigerian migrants in Ghana and Ghanaian migrants in Nigeria may face harassment, exclusion, and violence, leading to a breakdown in community relations. Such social fragmentation can have long-lasting effects, making reconciliation and rebuilding trust more difficult.

Regionally, xenophobic tensions between Nigeria and Ghana can have broader implications for West African integration and stability. As influential members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the actions and policies of Nigeria and Ghana set precedents for other member states. If these two countries engage in reciprocal xenophobia, it undermines the principles of free movement and regional integration promoted by ECOWAS (Olademeji, 2013). This can weaken the organization's effectiveness and hinder collective efforts to address common challenges such as security threats, economic development, and political stability in the region.

Recommendations for Policymakers in Managing and Mitigating Xenophobic Tensions

Managing and mitigating xenophobic tensions requires comprehensive and nuanced approaches from policymakers. Lessons from the recurring xenophobic incidents between Nigeria and Ghana offer valuable insights into effective strategies for addressing such

tensions. These lessons emphasize the importance of proactive measures, inclusive policies, regional cooperation, community engagement, and robust diplomatic efforts.

Firstly, proactive measures are essential in preventing xenophobic tensions from escalating. Policymakers should anticipate potential flashpoints and implement early warning systems to identify signs of rising tensions. This involves monitoring public sentiment, media narratives, and social media trends to detect xenophobic rhetoric and actions. By addressing grievances before they escalate into violence, governments can prevent crises and maintain social harmony. For example, regular consultations with community leaders and stakeholders can help identify and resolve issues before they lead to broader conflicts.

Secondly, inclusive policies that promote economic opportunities for all residents, regardless of nationality, can mitigate xenophobic tensions. Policymakers should focus on creating a level playing field where both citizens and foreign nationals can thrive economically. This includes revising restrictive business laws and ensuring fair treatment for all entrepreneurs. Economic policies should aim to reduce competition-driven xenophobia by fostering collaboration and mutual benefit. For instance, joint ventures and partnerships between local and foreign businesses can promote economic integration and reduce perceptions of economic threat.

Thirdly, regional cooperation is crucial in managing xenophobic tensions. Policymakers should leverage regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to address cross-border issues collaboratively. ECOWAS protocols on the free movement of persons, goods, and services. By adhering to these protocols and working together on common challenges, member states can build a more cohesive and stable region. Regional dialogue and joint initiatives can also foster a sense of shared destiny and reduce the allure of nationalist and xenophobic sentiments.

Fourthly, community engagement is vital in addressing the root causes of xenophobia. Policymakers should promote intercultural dialogue and understanding through community programs, educational initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. Engaging local communities in discussions about the benefits of diversity and the contributions of migrants can help counteract negative stereotypes and prejudices. Programs that celebrate cultural diversity and promote social cohesion can create an environment where xenophobia is less likely to take root. For example, community forums, cultural festivals, and educational exchanges can enhance mutual understanding and respect.

Lastly, robust diplomatic efforts are necessary to manage and resolve xenophobic tensions. Diplomatic channels should be utilized to address grievances and negotiate solutions that respect the rights and interests of all parties involved. High-level diplomatic engagements, including bilateral talks and joint commissions, can help defuse tensions and foster cooperation. Diplomats should work towards mutually beneficial agreements that address the concerns of both countries while promoting regional stability. Diplomatic efforts should also include public diplomacy to communicate the benefits of strong bilateral relations and counteract xenophobic narratives.

Conclusion.

The paper however, has examined the implications of xenophobic reciprocity on Nigeria-Ghana relations, and thereby focused on the socio-economic and political impacts of these tensions. The study revealed that xenophobic actions, often manifesting in restrictive economic policies and social hostility and have significantly strained bilateral relations, disrupting trade, migration, and cultural exchanges between the two nations. The historical context of these tensions underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the factors driving xenophobic sentiments and the importance of addressing them through comprehensive policy measures.

It was discovered in the research work that xenophobic reciprocity not only undermines the economic integration and mutual benefits derived from trade and investment but also

exacerbates social divisions and distrust among citizens. Policymakers must adopt proactive strategies to mitigate these tensions, including promoting inclusive economic policies, enhancing diplomatic engagement, and fostering community-level dialogues to build mutual understanding. Strengthening regional cooperation frameworks, such as ECOWAS, and emphasizing the shared cultural and historical ties can play a pivotal role in ameliorating the negative impacts of xenophobic actions and fostering a more harmonious relationship between Nigeria and Ghana.

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