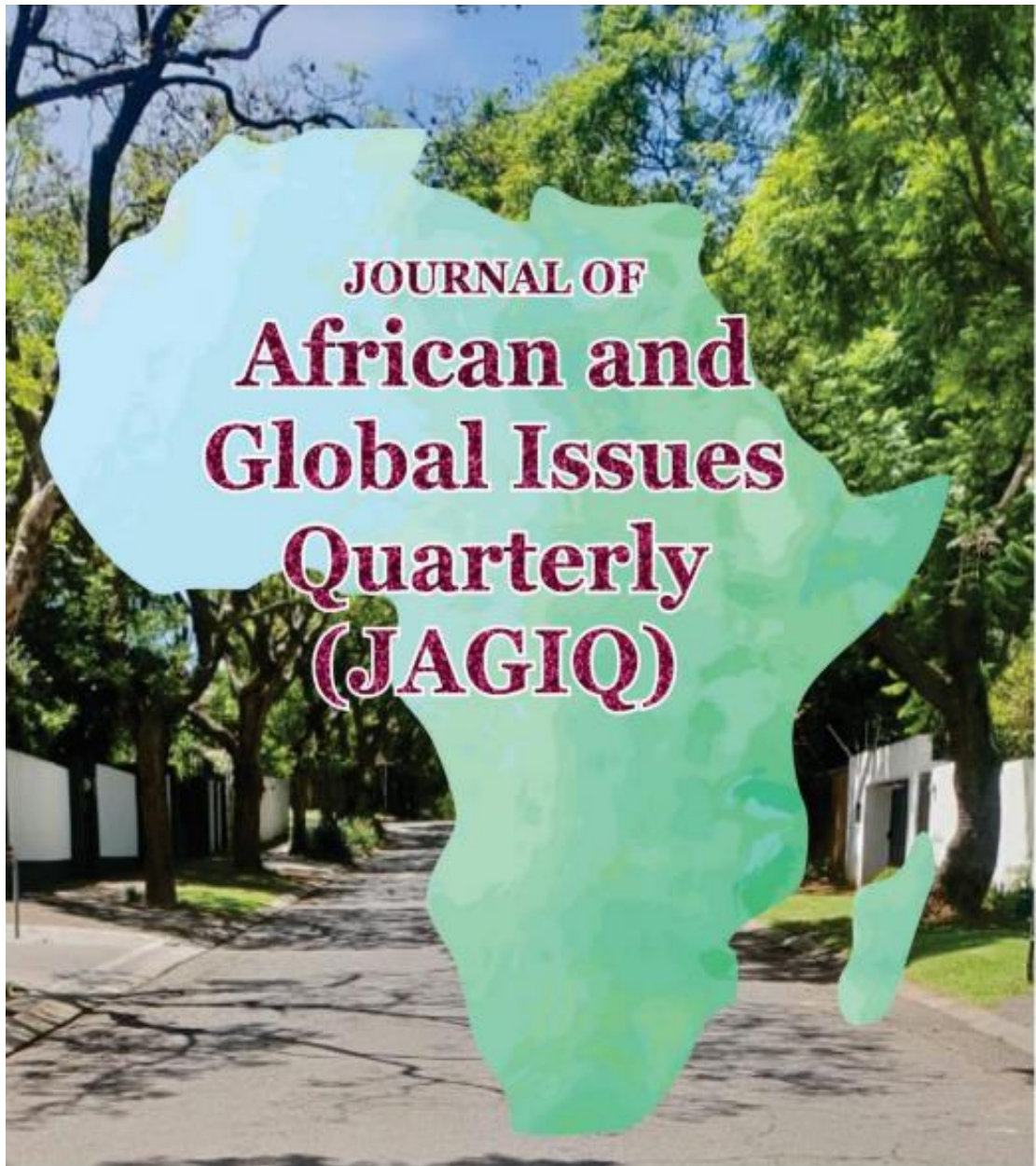




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EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume represents concerted calls within and outside Africa on the need for multidisciplinary collaboration and research output. Specifically, papers were drawn from all disciplines and research focuses, which has further increased the quality of research and collegial engagement. Hence, topics covered in this volume cut across the areas of economics, politics, security, ICT, indigenous knowledge, development studies, finance, trade, youth engagement, agriculture, democratization, and nation-building, among others.

For instance, Thizwilondi Josephine Mudau in *African Youths and the Promotion of Sustainable Development through the Lens of Indigenous Knowledge (IKS) in the 21st Century* employed qualitative desktop research methodology in synthesizing existing literature to argue that IKS represents a dynamic body of wisdom encompassing sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and community resilience and offers proven, contextually grounded solutions to modern challenges like climate change and food insecurity. The analysis highlights youth-led initiatives across the continent that are revitalizing indigenous crops, integrating traditional ecological knowledge with climate adaptation strategies, and using digital platforms for cultural preservation. Mudau concluded that for Africa to achieve authentic and sustainable development, a concerted effort is needed to empower youth through inclusive education, supportive policy frameworks, and intergenerational dialogue, thereby transforming indigenous knowledge from a cultural heritage into a living toolkit for a resilient future.

Masila Joshua Masipa in *Beneficiaries of Corruption? An analysis of the function of South African banks in handling and making money from crime proceeds* adopted institutional theory and the political economy of corruption and a qualitative research design that combines semi-structured interviews with compliance officers, financial regulators, and civil society actors with document analysis of Zondo Commission and Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) reports, legal statutes, and policy papers in examining how, in spite of strict anti-money-laundering (AML) and anti-corruption laws, South African banks may profit from, handle, or ineffectively stop the flow of monies associated with corruption. Specifically, with an emphasis on whether banks directly or indirectly benefit from the proceeds of crime, Masipa investigated the relationship between financial institutions and illegal financial flows within the following objectives: (1) assess the regulatory framework that oversees AML compliance; (2) examine high-profile cases of corruption in which banks are implicated; (3) evaluate due diligence and institutional accountability; and (4) suggest changes to improve ethical banking governance.

Then Sipho Patrick Bhengu-Mancosa & Andrisha Beharry-Ramraj in *Advancing Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise Growth through Digitalized Enterprise and Supplier Development in South Africa* examined the current state of Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) in South Africa, investigated the role of digitalization in enhancing ESD, identified the challenges and opportunities in digitalizing ESD, and provided recommendations for policymakers, corporates, and Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). A qualitative secondary data approach was employed, drawing on thematic analysis of existing literature, reports, and industry initiatives. For key findings, Bhengu-Mancosa & Beharry-Ramraj indicated that ESD adoption remains limited; digitalization (Mancosa) significantly enhances market access and supplier diversity; infrastructure and skills gaps persist; and strategic digital integration can unlock growth opportunities for SMMEs.

Lere Amusan & Ebenezer O. Oni, in their study, ***Disinvestment of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in Developing Areas: An Assessment of Shoprite Disengagement in Nigeria, started by reflecting on why***, at the global level, many MNCs have started to disengage from their host states. In a bid to respond to the possible reasons, Amusan & Oni pushed further into examining possible reasons that could explain why Shoprite, a large South African retailing company, disinvested from Nigeria after operating in the country for about 15 years, using secondary sources supported by primary data and personal observations. For them, the reasons range from political, economic, marketing, and legal to civil society attitudes towards their business. Employing the twin theories of neoliberalism and oligopoly that facilitate globalization, Amusan & Oni concluded that, aside from losing litigation to its erstwhile Nigerian business partners, competition from domestic and foreign retail companies contributed in no small measure to why Shoprite exited the Nigerian market.

In A sober teacher is a problem”: Unpacking Political Ideology and Emancipatory Struggles Within teacher unionism, Zwane Thembinkosi Trevor & Matsepe David adopted the grounded postcolonial theory in examining how teacher unions embody and deploy political stances and ideologies to promote the emancipation and freedom of education, as well as the broader communities they aim to serve. Clearly, Trevor and Matsepe employed a qualitative interpretivist approach to analyze data from narrative interviews with unionized educators, along with further examination of public union discussions. Key findings of their research indicated four interrelated themes: (1) political consciousness as both a threat to order and a driver of democratic emancipation; (2) teacher unions functioning as a counter-hegemonic force challenging neoliberal geopolitics and political norms; (3) the ideological repositioning of teacher unions as intellectual activists rather than compliant officials; and (4) tensions between political agency and professional identity.

Douglas Nyath in Rural Youth and the Future of Farming in Sub-Saharan Africa: Revisiting the Abandonment Debate explored whether rural youth are truly abandoning agriculture or are instead redefining their involvement through diversified livelihood strategies. It examines the socio-economic, institutional, and cultural factors influencing youth decisions and analyzes how emerging hybrid forms of engagement—such as agripreneurship and part-time farming—are reshaping rural economies. A systematic desktop synthesis of peer-reviewed literature (2000–2025) was conducted using databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. Nyaath observed that youth disengagement from agriculture is not uniform but context-specific, and the key determinants to such disengagement include land scarcity, education, labor market structures, gender norms, and limited access to finance and technology.

Then, in ***Equal Ideals, Unequal Realities: Gender Dynamics in the Workplace of an International Religious Non-governmental Organisation in Eswatini***, Thembumenzi Jomo Ntshalintshali & Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza examined attitudes, experiences, and organizational practices regarding gender roles, power dynamics, and inclusivity by drawing on in-depth interviews and focus groups with 20 employees from a range of departments and hierarchical levels. The results of their findings show that male participants, who were primarily ideologically devoted to gender equality, showed conflicted feelings about shifting power dynamics. Unconscious bias, policy implementation gaps, and organizational culture were equally identified as the primary obstacles to change. The results emphasize that in order to guarantee changes in gender equality, context-specific solutions are required that go beyond the adoption of policies.

In Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Conservation *Ngugi's Petals of Blood*, Thabo Prince Zondo started by reflecting on members of the impoverished and socio-economically disadvantaged community who are distressed by incessant drought and who consult a seer and offer sacrifices to seek solutions. Using this as a point of departure, Zondo explored how text gestures and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) address the real dilemmas faced by Africans following the extensive and cross-generational crises that accompany coloniality. In this, Zondo provided an ecocritical reading of the text, drawing on relevant postcolonial/decolonial ideas to illustrate the ways in which indigenous African epistemologies can indeed boost efforts at environmental conservation and poverty alleviation in rural communities today.

Also, **Rendani Tshifhumul in Exploring the Role of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Healing Practices and Resilience During the COVID-19 pandemic in Thohoyandou**, presented a narrative inquiry into the experiences of individuals who survived COVID-19 without requiring hospitalization, based on in-depth interviews with three respondents. For Tshifhumul, among the identified practices were the inhalation of steam treated with stones and salt, as well as the application of various herbal concoctions, including *Tshiumbeumbe*, *Musese*, *Mufula Musudzungwane*, *Miora*, and *Mubomo*, guava leaves, and lemon grass tea, including a mixture that comprises onion, ginger, lemon, honey, and garlic. Therefore, Tshifhumul concludes that these findings not only shed light on the adaptive strategies employed by individuals in response to the pandemic but also underscore the significance of traditional healing practices in the context of contemporary health crises. Khulisile Judith Nkuna & Sikhumbuzo Sibuso Khoza, in their work, **Capturing Cultural Heritage: Exploring the Poetic Elements of Domesticated Animal Praise**, carried out an analytical analysis of the lyrical components found in the praises of Siswati domestic animals. Nkuna & Khoza observed that expressing gratitude to animals for their contributions to human life remains a significant goal of animal praise. Reflecting on case studies, they noted that the Nguni people view domestic animals as very close environmental companions, particularly for those who live in rural areas. Praise poetry's primary goal is to commemorate great men's accomplishments. However, the reverse is the case for the Swati people, who have a tradition of honoring non-human animals in their poetry, including the wild animals they encounter in their environs as well as the domestic livestock they raise.

Intaher M. Ambe, Ellsworth C. Jonathan, Phathutshedzo D. Lavhelani,* and David H. Selby, in their study, **Exploring the landscape of demand management practices in the public health sector in the Gauteng Province, South Africa: An Empirical Analysis**, employed secondary sources in determining what demand management practices are employed within Gauteng, South Africa, and public health sector institutions. Findings in their study revealed substantial obstacles in organizational structure, demand management techniques, budget, and alignment between demand planning and strategic goals, as well as supply chain management (SCM) rules, regulations, and specifications. They conclude that the paucity of demand management implementation in public sector organizations reveals a misalignment between strategic goals, demand management, and demand planning, resulting in a loss of value for public sector organizations.

Aderinsola E. Kayode, Shalini Sing, & Patricia P. Badenhorst's research, ICT for Indigenous Knowledge Dissemination and Education in Africa: A Systematic Review, conducted a systematic review of literature published between 2015 and 2025 to examine how ICT tools and platforms have been deployed to support indigenous knowledge dissemination and education in African contexts. The findings of their research indicated that ICT can enhance indigenous knowledge preservation, improve youth engagement, facilitate intergenerational learning, and broaden global visibility of African

knowledge systems when implemented with community participation. However, challenges remain regarding digital access, cultural sensitivity, intellectual property rights, and the sustainability of technology-driven initiatives.

In ***Donald Trump-Twitter Diplomatic Disruptions And Impact On The Post-World War II International Order.***, Ndivhoniswani Aaron Tshidzumba & Puseletso Nthate examine how President Donald Trump's unprecedented use of Twitter as a direct channel for foreign policy communication disrupted established diplomatic norms inherited from the post-World War II international order. Through content analysis of Trump's social media communications, examination of foreign policy outcomes, and comparative analysis with traditional diplomatic practices, Tshidzumba & Nthate demonstrated that Trump's social media presidency constituted a significant departure from institutional diplomacy and contributed to broader challenges facing the established international order. Further findings reveal that digital direct engagement by heads of state bypasses institutional constraints, undermines multilateral consensus-building, and creates new vulnerabilities in international relations.

Furthermore, in ***Determinants And Effect Of Small-Scale Livestock Production On Household Income In Malawi: Evidence From Fifth Integrated Household Survey***, Gladson Andrew Chipala, Christopher Chombo & Hannah Dunga examined the determinants and effects of small-scale livestock production on household income among farmers in Malawi, using cross-sectional data from the Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS5) with a sample of 8,795 households. Their key findings indicate that household size, access to credit, access to extension services, landholding size, distance to the market, and location in the Northern region significantly increase the likelihood of participation in livestock production. Notably, households engaged in livestock production earned, on average, an additional MWK 36,405.76 compared to non-producing households, demonstrating its important role in improving economic welfare.

In ***Navigating Artificial Intelligence Personalization and Consumer Privacy in Digital Marketing across South Africa and Global Contexts***, Suraksha Moothura and Andrishah Beharry-Ramraj critically examined how AI-driven hyper-personalization in digital marketing influences consumer privacy, with a specific focus on its ethical implications and regulatory challenges in South Africa in comparison to global standards using desktop literature review methodology. Moothura & Beharry—Ramraj observed that ethical concerns such as manipulation, algorithmic bias, and reduced consumer autonomy were found to be inadequately addressed in South Africa, where legal instruments like POPIA lack the specificity and enforcement capacity evident in global standards like the GDPR. Taleat, Bisiriyu Abiodun & Lukamba, Muhlya Tshombe's article, ***Energy Sustainability and Sustainable Development Agenda: The Role of Public-Private Partnership in South Africa***, investigated the role and effectiveness of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in South Africa's energy development towards sustainability using a qualitative desk research methodology to analyze secondary data from policy documents, scholarly literature, and government publications. For Abiodun & Tshombe, key findings demonstrate that PPPs have attracted a substantial amount of private investment and benefited the economy through job creation and community development. However, institutional and systemic barriers, e.g., Eskom monopoly, regulatory uncertainty, grid integration constraints, and institutionalized dependency on coal, impede the full implementation of PPPs in accelerating the energy transformation. Hence, they recommend policy stability, energy regulation reform, enhancing financial methods, and ensuring that social equity consideration is factored into PPP structures.

For Olukayode Idris Lasisi in *The Governance–Development Nexus in Nigeria: A Conceptual Synthesis of Good Governance and Policy Discourse Theories*, a qualitative, conceptual, and desk-based review approach was employed, relying on the literature, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks in reevaluating the governance development interface in Nigeria in terms of the role of institutional weaknesses, the inconsistency of policies, and discursive framing in the determination of sustainable development outcomes. Findings revealed that weak institutions, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, low accountability, and marginalization in policymaking processes bedeviled Nigeria’s sustainable development, thereby distorting policy implementation and weakening effective service delivery. Lasisi concludes by calling for the need to strengthen institutions, improve transparency, guarantee policy sustainability, encourage civic participation, and apply digital governance solutions, which is essential to attaining sustainable development.

Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo & Mpho Chaka in *The Effect of Ethnicity And Politics on the Democratization of African Nations* examined the theoretical challenge that ethnicity poses to the African state and the challenges it poses for democratization on the continent. To guide the discourse, critical questions are raised: What kind of connection exists in Africa between politics and ethnicity? Under what conditions may ethnicity either support or undermine democracy? Can citizenship rights be reconciled with ethnicity?. Furthermore, Adanlawo & Chaka explored the evolution of ethnicity from the viewpoints of development communication and provided it with a psycho-social meaning. In their conclusion, Adalanwo & Chaka posited that, if ethnicity has an informative component, we should anticipate that voters' reliance on ethnic cues will decrease when certain forms of higher-quality information become available.

Lindokuhle Senamile Ntuli & Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza in *Does Resource Scarcity Constrain Rural Women’s Entrepreneurial Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?*, examined whether resource scarcity significantly constrains the entrepreneurial performance of rural women in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. Anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study adopts a quantitative research design using survey data collected from 273 rural women entrepreneurs across uMhlabyalingana, Big5Hlabisa, and eJozini municipalities. Ntuli & Nojiyeza revealed statistically significant relationships between entrepreneurial performance and seven resource-based constraints: leadership skills, financial institutional barriers, entrepreneurial experience, regulatory constraints, access to financial resources, technological limitations, and limited training opportunities. Lastly, in *Transformative Governance Frontiers: Relational Public Administration for Smart City Inclusivity*, Melvin Diedericks examined the conceptualization of informal systems in the context of South African smart city initiatives. By repositioning informal systems as co-creators in urban governance, this study advocates for a paradigm shift from technocratic optimization to relational inclusion. This reframing aligns with South Africa's constitutional and developmental goals, enabling transformative governance and the effective localization of SDGs in sustainable cities.

It is expected that these works compiled in this volume will further enrich the discourse and provide policy options to individuals, governments, and countries, particularly in Africa.

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DISINVESTMENT OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN DEVELOPING AREAS: AN ASSESSMENT OF SHOPRITE DISENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Multinational corporations (MNCs) in emerging markets are increasingly facing disinvestment pressures. This paper examines the exit of South Africa's Shoprite retail chain from Nigeria in 2020 after 15 years of operation, analyzing the interplay of market, legal, and political factors. Drawing on case study methodology and data from corporate reports, legal documents, and media analysis, we argue that Shoprite's disinvestment resulted not from a single cause but from a confluence of intensified local and online competition, a costly legal dispute with a former partner, and the deteriorating bilateral political environment between Nigeria and South Africa. The case challenges simplistic applications of neoliberal and oligopolistic theories to African retail markets, revealing instead how hyper-competitive local ecosystems and geopolitical tensions can undermine MNC strategies. The study contributes to understanding MNC exit decisions in developing economies and highlights the risks of overlooking non-market factors in corporate planning.

Keywords: *Nigeria, Shoprite, Neoliberalism, Oligopolistic thesis, Disinvestment, Multinational corporations*

1. Introduction

In business parlance, disinvestment means selling off certain assets such as manufacturing plants, divisions, subsidiaries, or product lines. It can be a total close-down of operation in a host country for political, economic, legal, and several other reasons. Disinvestments can take the form of divestment which involves selling a subsidiary's investments, assets or divisions to increase the overall value of the parent company or a reduction of capital

expenditures. When a line of production is sold off, it may be an attempt to improve on other line/s that are more viable in the medium or long term. Disinvestment also refers to the use of concerted economic boycotts to arm-twist a government (of either home or host country), industry, or company towards a change of policy, or in the case of governments, to affect a regime change. This found expression in Nigeria during the apartheid regime in South Africa when a radical military regime of Murtala Mohammed/Olusegun Obasanjo nationalised British interests such as Barclays Bank, Standard Bank, and British Petroleum (BP) with effective

and prompt compensation (Amusan, 2006). It is also a withdrawal of invested funds from, or the cancellation of financial aid, subsidies, investment plans, and property in a neighbourhood or foreign country.

Shoprite, a retail superstore with the parent company in South Africa had outlets in most of the African countries until recently, when it started to face stiff competition from other foreign retail and emerging local stores. The overconfidence of Shoprite Nigeria Limited (SNL) that competition from similar shops was unlikely, could have led to the demise of the grocery retail outlet in Nigeria. Many retail companies have come up with innovations that gave them a competitive edge over the more financially strong Shoprite, which many retail companies had considered too intimidating to compete with. Studies have shown that the core responsibilities of any retail outlet are to offer lower prices that can be trusted and to provide true one-stop shops comparable to what other neighbourhood outlets such as Hub Mart and Grocery Bazaar (both will be discussed later in this paper) offer (Amusan, 2006; Rozenwurcel, 2007). In the local retail market, for example, a combination of “wet” and “super” markets is observed despite the cost of energy in the country (The Nigerian Retail Report, 2014/2015). The capital outlay in establishing Shoprite in a bid to intimidate other retail shops turned out to be a liability due to the cost of maintenance in an era of uncertainty. As a result of globalisation, a situation where any company can enter the market and compete for space in a neoliberal environment as stipulated through Washington Consensus caused the early exit of SNL from the Nigerian market (Phillips, 2017, Rozenwurcel, 2007, Sterlin-Folker, 2016). Shoprite seems to have failed when one considers the principle of corporate social responsibilities (CSRs) of MNCs. This is arguably because of the perceived

arrogance and lack of basic social justice as pushed forward by John Rawls in the company’s modes of operation in the country (Rawls, 1971; Shaw and Shaw, 2019).

Another factor that contributed to the disinvestment of Shoprite in Nigeria is the lawsuit with AIC Limited, a company of Late Chief Harry Akande, which served as a pacesetter for SNL into West Africa, Nigeria included. In 2011, AIC sued the company for alleged breach of a joint venture (JV) agreement. The court awarded \$10 million against Shoprite Nigeria, and Shoprite South Africa – its parent company. Due to this, Shoprite decided to divest its business in Nigeria and a volte-face decision was taken in 2020 (Wainainah, 2020) that:

Following receipt of various approaches, and in line with our reconsideration of the group's operating model in Nigeria, the board has initiated a formal process to consider the potential sale of a majority stake of, or its entire shareholding in, Retail Supermarkets Nigeria Limited, a subsidiary of Shoprite International Limited.

Standoffish competition from local and international retail companies is another factor that affected SNL business activities in Nigeria. Competitors combine the best of supermarkets (structure, convenience, systems) with the best of wet markets (better pricing, local knowledge, product, and taste) to offer a balanced, affordable, and convenient shopping experience to the ordinary Nigerian (The Nigerian Retail Report 2014/2015: 32). This approach is more suitable for the Nigerian environment than Shoprite’s imported approach which, is not conscious of the prevailing reality. Offering products at almost the same

prices as SNL, competitors also introduced many stimulus packages such as loyalty cards and neighbourhood touchpoint marts. Other factors are political motivations as well as Nigerian attitudes towards South African businesses in Nigeria. Nigeria's apex bank, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), applied its foreign exchange (FX) policy to make foreign currency unavailable for the importation of goods, possibly to revive the ailing manufacturing companies, or to frustrate the foreign retail outlet of a rival nation and to stop xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa (Amusan and Mchunu, 2018; Amusan and van Wyk, 2011; Ogunnubi and Amusan, 2018).

The relationship between Nigeria and South Africa is a complex mixture of cooperation, competition, and conflict at various international organisations to which the two belong. This brings about a need to examine the activities of Shoprite in Nigeria from two, seemingly interrelated, but different theoretical frameworks. Hence, a need to examine the neoliberal thesis that believes in international organisations as a *sine qua non* for peaceful co-existence and promotion of economic development. The examination will also be conducted on the utility of the liberal oligopolistic thesis in unravelling how long Shoprite could have dominated the Nigerian market in an era of a liberal system where forces of demand and supply determine where, when, and how to allocate resources. This receives examination in the next section.

2. Neoliberalism and Liberal Oligopolistic theses and Shoprite activities in Nigeria

Neoliberalism, neoliberal internationalism, is a theory that calls for international institutions to achieve common goals in form of political stability and economic development. Based on this, the theory has some attributes of structural realism where the

State is the unit of analysis, a unitary system, central in nature, and controls the activities of non-state actors such as MNCs because of its presumed rationality in decision making. Also, the theory shares some attributes of utilitarianism that turned out to be the basis of neoclassical economics (Bhatia 1978). Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism's core argument centres on use-value, that is, pleasure and pain. In every society, everybody wants pleasure, and this could have led to the emergence of many retail shops in the neighbourhood to avoid the pain of travelling for a long distance to get the same pleasure that could be given by the larger retail shops such as Spar and Shoprite. Also on the same platform is the decision of a State, being a unit of analysis and central, which determines the pain and pleasure of its subjects through the enactment of domestic law and being a signatory to various international organisations, mostly supranational, do sometimes inflict pain on people as against pleasure. An example of this is the imposition of the tenets of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other global international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). What these connote is that there is a need for every member state to subscribe to the laws and regulations of such organisation/s without considering their lapses at the domestic level. Utilitarianism goes beyond the pleasure and pain of goods and services but also captures international regimes to which it belongs. As defined by Krasner (1983: 2), international regimes consist of a "set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in each area of international relations. To this, the State may enter into an agreement that will bring about pain as many African States did in the 1980s and brought about a structural adjustment program (SAP), a policy that handed over developing areas to developed states, which brought about deindustrialisation,

unemployment, misery, mono-crop farming system and unhealthy diet (Amusan and Setlalentoa, 2017; Otero, 2018; Paarlberg, 2013).

The essential features of neoliberalism or what some term new right (Dealove and Saunders, 2000) are: belief in freedom, that is, freedom to embark on business at any choice area in the globe; freedom, democracy, and equality; personal responsibility; competition and innovation; and market economy. As mentioned above, the main areas of focus of this paper are competition, innovation, and the market as captured in the works of Shaw and Shaw (2019). This paper is conscious of two major variants of oligopolistic theses: radical and liberal. For this paper, the focus will be on liberal oligopolistic theory as captured by Adebayo Olukoshi (1989). It is a middle ground between monopoly and competition. It is a situation where a few businesses dominate the market. These businesses are to determine the prices of their products despite competition commissions put in place by many States. It is a system where a few are in the market to preserve their influence in the pricing of their products and reduce such a state to a rentier enclave (Rozenwurcel, 2007: 464). Some of the attributes of oligopoly businesses are that they are, on one hand, less concentrated than monopoly, but on the other hand, more concentrated than the competitive market (Bhatia, 1978: 339-340). In terms of pricing, they tend to lower prices to check other possible competitors from entering their market. There is not much room to increase the prices of products as it may negatively affect selling turnover. Oligopolists offer similar products and services, the only areas of dissimilarities are levels of advertisement, value-added features, and packaging that may attract

people to such products. Also, of importance in the oligopoly school of thought is a competition that still exists among a few; a series of incentives such as favourable financing openings may contribute to the level of competition and market capturing. Small scale marketing or production is not an option in an oligopolistic market. The ability to buy inputs in bulk qualifies them to enjoy a very generous discount from the supplier. Other means of enjoying oligopolistic advantage sometimes come from a government with a ceiling on the number of licenses issued to participants; this is also applied through membership of a state of some international regimes such as WTO that promote patenting through intellectual property rights (IPRs) (Amusan; 2018; Bond, 2006; Norwood and Mix, 2019). These do not only work against an oligopolistic theoretical framework, but it is also a theory that hardly observes concepts of antitrust law and consumerism, where consumers' interests are secondary when one examines the tenets of IPRs that sabotage the rights of people through mortgaging the future of the vulnerable stakeholders like Nigeria; though some retail companies embark on CSRs but at the cost of ethical practices regarding environmental issues (Wilks and Nordhaug, 2013). The question that arises from this is, who benefits from it? In many cases, it is the executives' and directors' villages and towns that receive such gestures (Chang, 2010).¹

Having examined the twin theories, it is evident that the ambition of Shoprite in going to establish its subsidiaries in Nigeria could not satisfy the attributes of the theories because of the competition it faced among the local retail shops that were selling at the same price. Many of these retail outlets as discussed below

¹ Note that in most cases MNCs only appoint politically connected individuals in their home and host states as directors as political

resources to promote their interests whenever there is a need. For more information on this, see Amusan, 2018; Chang, 2010; and Korten, 2015.

sourced their wares from the same sources as Shoprite. Added to this is the Artee Group which later awarded Spar a franchise that gave more incentives than Shoprite as discussed below (Games, 2020).

3. Shoprite Disinvestment in Nigeria

Before the 1980s, the much-celebrated issue was a foreign direct investment (FDI), which all developing States always aspired to have their share. For them to achieve this, they would go as far as creating free trade zones, industrial areas, and other business-enabling environments such as tax holidays, and easy access to work permits for both qualified and unqualified immigrants that applied for work permit visas (Brown, 2017). Shoprite's disinvestment in Nigeria in August 2020 after operating for 15 years will have many positive as well as negative implications on the economy of Nigeria. It had 26 outlets and employed about 2000, out of which 99% were Nigerians (*Nairametrics*, 2020). In its decision, the company intended to sell the majority or all of its stake in the country. As discussed above, disinvestment takes several approaches such as host or home government's sanctions, unfavourable business conditions, and many more. For this paper, an attempt is made to look into why Shoprite was disinvested in Nigeria. This section is divided into three major parts: from oligopoly to neoliberalism, then liberalism; legal crisis; and hegemonic and xenophobic politics between Nigeria and South Africa.

3:1 From Liberal Oligopoly to Neoliberalism and back to Liberalism

As alluded to above, under the theoretical framework, Shoprite enjoyed an oligopolistic advantage with Spar supermarket for some time before local grocery shops started to emerge in full

force in the same market. Not only was the competition in place, but these shops were also selling the same products at almost the same price and obtained most of their groceries from the same source. There were stiff and stringent barriers to entry in form of high capital outlay. This, therefore, gave grocery business to only two credible outlets – Shoprite and Spar, until recently. This turned out to be a cartel-like behaviour that manipulated consumers for some time and maintained price stability because the two dominant shops were able to jointly fix prices. Inelasticity in consumers' choice breeds exploitation of the masses because there was little to choose from.² This leads to the “rule of thumb”. In such scenarios, consumers may buy products of compromised quality, and some that offer little or no utility to their lives.

Shoprite could not enjoy oligopolistic advantages for a long time, as discussed above. Spar shop, another foreign grocery company, came to Nigeria as a stiff competitor to Shoprite. Spar's approach to business is a little different from Shoprite's. While Shoprite occupied large spaces in remote areas that were not accessible to low and middle-income Nigerians, the reverse was the case for Spar which operates in the same neighbourhoods as other indigenous grocery shops. Spar started as Park n Shop but was rebranded as Spar with more funds injected into its operation in Nigeria. As of 2020, the retail shop had 14 outlets in the country. Despite the high turnover of Shoprite, its operating expenses were very high, which rendered it unable to satisfy its shareholders and executives who were profit motivated. Closely related to this is that the expanse of land on which Shoprite was situated across the country necessitated for consumers to pay for parking. This became another minus for the grocery

² We thank Mr. Akin Adebisi, marketing director at Glo communication for this vital information.

shop. The cost of parking in Nigeria was seen as an additional cost, especially when competitors provide free parking and other stimulus packages. Park n Shop, now a subsidiary of Spar, launched a retail co-brand credit card and later introduced a plastic gift card in form of a loyalty card where customers scored points for every transaction they made in the shop. This was against the interest and profitability of Shoprite, a shop that relied on slogans such as “lower prices you can trust, “one-stop-shop” where all needs can be purchased. This is not a Nigerian approach to shopping because an average Nigerian may spend some hours window shopping and haggling before deciding where, when, and how to buy goods and services.

Another challenge aside from the Spar competition with Shoprite was the springing up of local grocery shops that operated at a lower cost than the discussed multinational grocery shops. These are grocery shops that source their products from the same source as the multinationals. In most cases, consumers would get a good bargain from neighbourhood supermarkets. Shops such as Addide, Best Choice, Everyday Group, Hub Mart, Grocery Bazaar (GB), City Dia, Ebeano and many more in neighbourhoods that serve as a perfect substitute to Shoprite due to their nearness to consumers are well patronised by consumers. This means that the cost of parking and transport is not in the budget of buyers. It is instructive that these local supermarkets are into both wet and supermarket business, always called wet-

super markets despite the cost of energy arising from poor electricity supply in the country.

The asphyxiation of Shoprite is more instructive in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State of Nigeria. A city of not more than 1.402. million that has eleven supermarkets located in strategic places accessible to low and middle-income people who do not have transport of their own to take them to perceived exclusive areas.³ Out of the eleven super-wet markets in Owerri, five are located at Ikenegba, while Shoprite is at Mbaise Road. This means that consumers may prefer to shop at Ikenegba where a shop is a walking distance of one another in case customers could not find all items needed under a single “tree”. In Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt and Ilorin, the author’s observation reveals that very many of those who patronise Shoprite were youths who liked to take pictures in the shopping mall because it accommodates other South African shops such as Games, Woolworths, Truworths, Mr Price, and Pep Store.⁴ Many of the malls that accommodate Shoprite in the country have turned out to be a mecca for window shopping. The impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, runaway inflation, and evanescent government policies such as border closure, and currency regulation caused another shock for Shoprite as discussed below.

COVID 19, being a global pandemic as opposed to epidemics like Ebola, localised around West and Central Africa, has been a menace to the retailing

³ The super-wet markets in Owerri are Destiny, Maris, Johnney, Everyday, Priceless, Aniby, Market Squire, Beedel, Evistae and Victory Supermarkets. The author’s field trip to Owerri between 5 and 7 January 2021 reveals that many of these supermarkets are located around where the majority of people in Owerri stay.

⁴ Almost at the same time, Mr Price equally announces its readiness to divest in the

Nigerian economy due to lack of patronage. This will be discussed under the politics of xenophobia between Nigeria and South Africa below. For further information on this, see <https://nairametrics.com/2020/08/06/shoprite-controls-22-of-nigerias-formal-retail-future-to-be-driven-by-indigenous-retailers/>

industry. The lockdown imposed in every state also affected Nigeria's retail business. In 2020, while some Nigerian states imposed a total lockdown on businesses, other states imposed a partial lockdown. Lagos, the hub of business, was doubly affected by the COVID and #EndSars crises that crippled supermarket businesses in Lagos and many other parts of the country.⁵ The outcome of these two major developments led to the emergence of online shopping. This emanated because of the high level of internet connectivity to every nook and cranny of the country. To this effect, some shops, see Table 1 below, started to gain more prominence in grocery and other retail businesses in the country. To adjust to the new normal, Spar and Ebeano started to offer online shopping where goods ordered were delivered to consumers'

doorsteps. SNL, being a conservative retain outlet, neither adjusted to the new reality nor offered a loyalty scheme that its major competitors in the business introduced and thus kept on losing customers to other grocery shops (*Nairametrics*. 2020). It was the opinion of SNL, as observed by its CEO Whitney Basson, that the company was not expecting any competition so soon (Games, 2020). Booming online business led Konga to acquire Zinox Technology in 2018, but retained Konga's name as a well-known brand in the country. Later, the same company merged with Yudala to gain more market in the country (Kazeem, 2018). Konga's ability to combine online with brick-and-mortar influenced its ability to perform effectively in all parts of the country.

Table I: Major Online Retailers in Nigeria

S/N	Outlet Name	Established	Speciality
1	Jumia Nigeria	2012	General merchandise
2	Konga	2002	General merchandise
3	Kaymu Nigeria	2013	General merchandise
4	Taafoo/Coliseum	2009	Fashion and gadget
5	Shopaholic Nigeria	2009	Clothing and perfumes
6	Dealdey	2011	General merchandise
7	MyStore	2013	Clothing accessories
8	Kara	2012	General merchandise
9	Adibba	2013	General merchandise
10	Gloo.ng	2012	General merchandise
11	HelloFood	2012	Food vendor
12	Supermart.ng	2014	Food vendor

Sources: Matuluko, 2015; Nwaeze, 2018.

It is instructive that some of the above online retailers deal in food except for Taafoo/Coliseum, Shopaholic Nigeria, and MyStore. This implies that Spar, Park n Shop, HelloFood and Supermart.ng were taking Shoprite's space due to its conservative approach caused by its self-

perceived unmatched capital outlay; such notion contributed to what drove the company out of Nigeria. According to the June 2020 end of year financial report, the company's sales declined by 6.3% year on year. The decline increased during the COVID-19 lockdowns as online grocery

⁵ #EndSars was a protest among Nigerian youths against the police special elite, Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The movement drew tens of thousands of youth in the country to protest against human rights

abuses. This led to the death of more than 12 youths. The movement crippled the economy of the country for more than two weeks. For more information on this, see Strong 2020 and Singh 2020.

shopping and promotion of essential services took the place of the traditional shopping approach of Shoprite.

Despite the neoliberal approach to the economic development of Nigeria, the current administration under Nigeria's Mohammed Buhari has been creating an enabling environment for the local industry through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). Getting foreign exchange to import goods for the retailing sector became difficult. This forced Shoprite to depend on local wares to the tune of 80 per cent (Games, 2020). This implies that those that believe in Shoprite as a foreign grocery retail shop could not find their taste in the shop, most especially South Africans and other Southern African citizens resident in Nigeria. This rendered some shelves empty as the Nigerian government, in a bid to salvage local industries, embarked on neo-mercantilism that has never worked for the country due to its membership in WTO. Constant devaluation of the Naira, possibly to promote local production, is counterproductive for an economy like Nigeria's that relies on primary products as a source of foreign exchange. It also eroded the profit margin of SNL since the Naira would be converted to the America Dollar before the same is converted to the South Africa Rand. Currency restriction, which is not in line with the stimulus packages accorded to Shoprite when it moved to Nigeria, also impeded profit repatriation; and this too is against neoliberal tenets. Aside from the crises of neoliberalism and liberal oligopoly challenges, another salient reason is the legal battle that the company contended with is discussed below.

3.2 Legal Crisis

It is documented that MNCs in general are all out to make profits to satisfy both the executives and shareholders, irrespective

of the impacts of their activities on stakeholders. AIC Limited, a company owned by late Chief Harry Ayodele Akande⁶ in 2011 sued Shoprite South Africa and its subsidiary in Nigeria, SNL, for a breach of agreement of Joint Venture (JV) entered in 1998. A Nigeria High Court in Lagos found SNL and its parent company in South Africa liable for a breach of contract regarding JV between the two and a fine of \$10 million was imposed on SNL to be paid to AIC. SNL and its parent company were not satisfied with the judgement and therefore challenged the high court's judgment at the appeal court. The three judges of the appeal court unanimously upheld the judgment of the High Court in May 2020 (Akinsanmi, 2020).⁷ In an attempt to disinvest in Nigeria, SNL decided to leave Nigeria, but AIC went to court to stop the retail company from such a move. In a judgement handed down by Mohammed Liman of the Federal High Court in Lagos, the Mareva injunction was granted by the justice, making it impossible for SNL to move out of the country until the \$10 million fine was paid and mandating Shoprite to continue its business in the country. Based on the 14 July 2020 injunction the Justice stopped SNL:

from transferring, assigning, charging, disposing of its trademark, franchise, and intellectual property in a manner that will alter, dissipate or remove these non-cash assets and other assets, including but not limited to trade receivables, trade payables, payment for the purchase of merchandise, from within the jurisdiction of its honourable court.

Due to the maze nature of MNCs' activities in developing countries they can

⁶ Harry Ayodele Akande, considered a multimillionaire in US dollars was the owner of AIC Limited died of COVID-19 on 5 December 2020 at the age of 77.

⁷ For a comprehensive judgement handed down, see Akinsami 2020.

leave their host countries within weeks because in most cases, their operating inputs are outsourced. To avoid this, the court asked SNL to declare its audited financial statements for 2018 and 2019 to determine the company's financial capability at the time. To portray Nigeria as difficult terrain for business, some opined that what SNL was experiencing in the country amounted to a regulatory problem from the government, political risk and nosedive sales in Nigeria (Madubela, 2021). Another factor that might have forced SNL to leave Nigeria could be related to the rivalry between Nigeria and South Africa on hegemonic superiority and the influence of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in particular and other black Africans in general in South Africa.

3.3 Hegemonic and Xenophobic Politics

Nigeria and South Africa's relations are an admixture of conflict, cooperation, and competition (Amusan, 2006). The deterioration of relations between the two countries could be traced to the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa, a playwright and environmentalist and eight other Ogoni people in 1995 when the Commonwealth of Nations was holding its summit in Auckland, New Zealand. The government of South Africa under Nelson Mandela called for economic sanctions against Abacha military regime in Nigeria. The call was perceived by Nigeria as undiplomatic and an act of ingrate from a country on which Nigeria expended so many resources during their anti-apartheid struggle. Since then, the two countries have always seen each other as rivals on the continent (Tella, 2019). The relationship got to a low ebb when in 2018 and 2019 many Nigerians were killed in South Africa under questionable circumstances. As Abike Dabiri, President Muhammed Buhari's Senior Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora said, not less than 181 Nigerians were killed in xenophobic related attacks in South Africa. These attacks were

perceived to have been supported by the South African government because of the apparent partiality of the South African police officers during the attacks. This led to the seven-day ultimatum given to South African business interests to leave Nigeria. In a meeting between the National Association of Nigerians Students (NANS) and Dabiri, the Association called for attacks on South African businesses. These led to incessant attacks on Shoprite and other businesses such as MTN Nigeria, MultiChoice, and IBTC Bank that were of South African origin (Olalekan, 2019).

In South Africa, an average citizen of the country is of the view that Nigerians are in the country to take up their jobs, take their wives, and put more pressure on inadequate social amenities. Added to this is the perception that Nigerians are the only drug traffickers and drug peddlers in the country. It is observed that many South Africans are drug addicts because of Nigerians who deal in it. These have been a subject of contention between the citizens of the two countries. Known to be a country that is a rentier state like Nigeria, with the introduction of disruptive technology in mining and farming, many workers are no longer needed, and this has resulted in a high rate of unemployment. As of July 2018, the unemployment rate was 27.2 per cent, in January 2021 it rose to 32.5 per cent (*Trading Economics*, 2021). This development always leads to xenophobic attacks in a country where foreigners are creating business and getting employed in highly skilled sectors. Despite the principle of *Ubuntu*, many foreigners were killed, and the government of South Africa hardly did anything to forestall the crisis until it spread to the whole of the country as it happened in 2018 (Amusan and Mchunu, 2018).

Nigerians believe that an average South African is xenophobic or Afrophobia as has been described elsewhere (Amusan and Mchunu, 2018). As a foreign policy

instrument of a failing Nigeria, any attack in South Africa, even against non-Nigerians, the government from Abuja would take it upon itself to attack South Africa as late President Yar Adua of Nigeria did when he flew to South Africa to address an issue in which Nigerian interest was not at stake (Asagba, 2008). Therefore, the perceived Cold War between the two countries is deeper than the acclaimed xenophobia; it is also an attempt to remain *primus inter pares*. In the United Nations, each of the two countries wants to be the sole representative in the Security Council. The zero-sum game between the two countries is against the South African principle of *Ubuntu* on the one hand, and on the other hand, is antithetical to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as entered in 2020. From South Africa, Pretoria also took an undiplomatic stance in 2012, when it deported 125 Nigerians who were said to have no original yellow card of immunisation (Thekiso and van Wyk, 2019). In retaliation, Nigeria reciprocated the same in line with the principle of reciprocity in diplomacy (Kerr and Wiseman, 2018: 232). It took a high-powered delegation from South Africa, led by President Jacob Zuma, to Nigeria before the two countries could normalise their relationship *ad interim*.

At the continental and global level, the two countries always engage in unhealthy competition, which is one of the reasons why Africa has been reduced to a chess pun in the hands of the great powers. This does not only have negative impacts on the political relationship, but private businesses are also directly affected as South African businesses are always under attack each time there is a crisis between the two countries.

Not too far from hegemonic rivalry is the rate at which some businesses were introduced to some parts of Nigeria. For instance. Fakunle High School, a strategically located private school in Osogbo, Nigeria, was demolished by the government to make way for Shoprite. This contributed to anti-Shoprite sentiments among many Nigerians. Not only did this lead to animosity against the retailing giant, but it also almost cost the ruling party the governorship election in 2019. Due to the exit plan of the grocery shop in Nigeria, the project was abandoned, and the place became a den of criminals; many people believe that if not for Shoprite, the school would have continued to maintain its glory and that the current criminal activities would not have occurred.⁸

4. Conclusion

Having examined the futility of neo-liberal and oligopoly theses with some flavour of liberal theory, this paper concludes that these theories are not all the time applicable in the age of ultra-capitalism where forces of demand and supply determine what to produce, where to produce, and for whom goods and services will be produced. Development of retail businesses reappeared in Nigeria after a long lull caused by the Washington Consensus through SAP that reduced the enclave to inputs producers, an outcome that violated every tenet of industrialisation of the county. Rather than development in the manufacturing sector, Nigeria experienced deindustrialisation, capital flight, and promotion of service sectors. The ease with which both indigenous and foreign grocery shops are accommodated in the country brings about competition against an oligopoly that accommodates a few sellers that control the prices of goods and

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[http://citymirrornews.com/news/2016/04/demolished-fakunle-school-turns-to-](http://citymirrornews.com/news/2016/04/demolished-fakunle-school-turns-to-comfort-zone-for-indian-hemp-smokers-dumping-site/)

[comfort-zone-for-indian-hemp-smokers-dumping-site/.](http://citymirrornews.com/news/2016/04/demolished-fakunle-school-turns-to-comfort-zone-for-indian-hemp-smokers-dumping-site/)

services. It is not only the reverse in the Nigerian environment, all the attributes of Shoprite are also applicable to other outlets, even the neighbourhood touchpoints that are less stressful and cost-effective. The introduction of online trading with an emphasis on grocery shops during the COVID-19 lockdown challenged the hegemonic power of Shoprite.

As discussed above, the legal crisis between AIC and Shoprite, which was not in favour of the retail company contributed to its exit from the Nigerian market. The bid to diversify and protect consumers may have led to the proliferation of retail shops in Nigeria. Unlike in South Africa where the White capital dominates retailing business, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Unspoken animosity between Nigeria and South Africa, which is being transferred to their citizens, could have been the cause of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, a development that led to the boycott of South African products and other interests

in Nigeria. Generally, physical attacks on South African businesses in Nigeria are not uncommon. With the notion that the interest of MNCs executives and their shareholders is paramount, issues of CSRs and the welfare of stakeholders are reduced to a secondary position. This could have led to a radical decision of exiting the Nigerian aside from the “unfavourable climate of fear” that pervades the economy. With a notion that Nigeria and South Africa are the uncontested hegemons in Africa, there is a need for the two to embark more on cooperation than engaging in unhealthy competition and conflicts, at least for the development of Africa. Doing this will bring to reality, the much-touted Africa Union (AU) and its objectives in the 21st century. At the same time, there is a need to tame the activities of MNCs in the continent. Though they are empowered to embark on ultra-capitalism, the issue of the human face should be their guiding principle as dictated by the principle of Corporate Social Responsibility.

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