Migrant mineworkers and South Africa’s diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho, 1906-2006

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Abstract: Migrant labour has played a critical role in the diplomatic relations of South Africa for more than 100 years. The discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa in the late 1800s transformed the country into a mining giant in Southern Africa. The South African mines needed a large number of mine workers that their country could not provide. South Africa’s demand for mine workers extended to the whole of Southern Africa and beyond, to countries as far as Libya, Uganda, and China. Using the migration diplomacy framework, this article analyses the role and impact of migrant mine labourers in facilitating South Africa’s diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho. It holds that migrant mineworkers facilitated South Africa’s relations with Botswana and Lesotho despite different political systems and major world political changes. It argues that relative economic gains sustained a consistent supply of migrant mineworkers from Botswana and Lesotho to South Africa for more than a century beginning in 1906. Moreover, South Africa’s demand for migrant mine workers enabled capital accumulation at the expense of Lesotho and Botswana. Furthermore, it argues that South Africa’s mining corporations facilitated migrant-based diplomatic relations that remained consistent for more than 100 years.

Keywords: migration; diplomacy; states; labour; mines; political; corporations

1. Introduction

In 1896, large gold reserves were discovered in South Africa following those of diamonds in 1867 (Harington et al., 2004; Schutte, 1977). The discovery of both gold and diamonds transformed South Africa into a mining giant in Southern Africa. The South African mining industry grew and became one of the country’s biggest employers (Schutte, 1977). The demand for mine workers could not be met by the local population at the time, resulting in the recruitment of mineworkers from other countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Tanzania (Harington et al., 2004; Schutte, 1977; Taylor, 1987; Wilson, 1976). Soon after the Anglo-Boer war of 1899–1901, the South African mines embarked on an expansion programme and needed more mine labourers to increase production that had been disrupted during the war. Consequently, the mines mobilized inter-continental migrant labour and recruited more than 60,000 Chinese between 1903 and 1906 (Jeeves, 1986; Richardson, 1977; TEBA, 2002).
South Africa cooperated with Botswana (previously called Bechuanaland) and Lesotho (previously called Basutoland) in the supply of migrant mineworkers beginning in 1906. Botswana and Lesotho under both the colonial and democratic systems were able to cooperate with both the South African apartheid and democratic regimes for the supply of migrant mineworkers. This research uses migration diplomacy to analyse the role and impact of migrant mineworkers in South Africa's diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho from 1906 to 2006. According to Adamson and Tsurapas (2019) migration diplomacy refers to the role of migrants in the negotiations, cooperation, control and management of cross-border movement and agreements. Within the framework of migration diplomacy, this research assesses the contribution of migrant mineworkers to the cooperation of the apartheid and democratic state of South Africa with the colonial and post-colonial states of Botswana and Lesotho. It evaluates the quest for migrant mineworkers by apartheid South Africa and the rationale for their consistent supply by Botswana and Lesotho during their colonial and democratic dispensations. Furthermore, this research also interrogates the effects of consistent demand-supply cooperation on migrant mine workers for more than 100 years. Lastly, the role of South African mining corporations in their country's cooperation with Botswana and Lesotho on the supply of migrant mineworkers is also analysed in this research.

This research makes the following findings. First, South Africa's migration-based diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho were facilitated by migrant mine workers. The demand for migrant mineworkers in South Africa and their supply by Botswana and Lesotho remained consistent for more than 100 years despite different political systems and major world events like world wars, decolonization and democratization. For much of the period of supply of migrant mineworkers, South Africa was an apartheid system based on racial discrimination, while Botswana and Lesotho were British colonies, with the former administered by the chiefs, while the latter was a monarchy until they attained independence in 1966. Second, the relative economic gains informed South Africa's cooperation with Botswana and Lesotho on the supply of migrant mine workers. Third, the cooperation on the supply of migrant mine workers resulted in capital accumulation. Fourth, the South African mining corporations played a critical and active role in facilitating migration diplomacy between South Africa, Lesotho, and Botswana, while the state played a passive role of allowing contracting negotiations to be handled by the corporations.

2. South Africa's quest for migrant mine workers and their supply by Lesotho and Botswana

Southern Africa has been characterised by labour migration flows from time immemorial. Prior to and during the colonial era, nation-states in southern Africa had formal and informal agreements on the supply of migrant labourers to work in households, farms and mines (Lucas, 1985; Taylor, 1987). Migrant workers moved across the region in search of economic opportunities. By 1911, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), received thousands of migrant labourers from Nyasaland (now Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Mozambique and Bechuanaland (Botswana) to work in the country's gold mines and plantations (P. Scott, 1954). Besides sending migrant workers to Southern Rhodesia, some countries like Malawi also sent migrant workers to Zambia, Congo and Tanganyika (Tanzania) during the colonial era (Sanderson, 1961). During the independence era, southern Africa continued to realize migrant flows either for security or economic reasons. Liberation struggles and wars that took place in Southern Africa from the 1950s displaced many people from their countries to safer and stable ones in the region and beyond (Morapedi, 2012; Wilson, 1976).

To manage migration flows in search of economic opportunities and/or political refuge, states in Southern Africa established bilateral and multilateral relations in the post-colonial period. For instance, South Africa established several bilateral agreements on migrant labour with some countries such as Mozambique and Lesotho, and Memorandum of Understanding on migrant labour with Zimbabwe, Cuba and Tunisia (Klaaren & Rutinwa, 2004). At the regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted several migration-related protocols in the 1990s although the organization was established in 1980. The adopted regional protocols
included, the 1997 SADC Draft Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons (although it was never implemented), the SADC Protocol on Education and Training of 2000, the SADC Charter on Fundamental Social Rights of 2003 and the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour of 2013. The aforementioned regional protocols facilitated the management of labour migration flows in the SADC region. Furthermore, non-state entities that provided training, policy debate and advocacy on migration in southern Africa were also established. These include the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) established in 1996, and the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) in 2000.

The demand and supply of migrant labour across Southern Africa during the colonial and post-colonial era facilitated South Africa’s cooperation on migrant mineworkers demand and supply with Botswana and Lesotho. The discovery of both diamonds and gold in the mid and late 1800s, respectively, transformed South Africa into a mining giant and the preferred destination for migrant labourers in Southern Africa (Harington et al., 2004; Lucas, 1985; Yudelman & Jeeves, 1986). The South African mining industry grew fast such that by the mid-twentieth century, the demand for mine workers was almost half a million (Jeeves, 1986; Massey, 1983; Schutte, 1977; Yudelman & Jeeves, 1986). The quest of South Africa for mine labourers could not be satisfied by the country’s labour force, resulting in the decision to recruit migrant mine labourers from the neighbouring countries and beyond (Crush et al., 2001; Prothero, 1974). Consequently, South Africa established long-standing migrant labour agreements with other countries within Southern Africa, amongst them, Botswana and Lesotho (Fitzgerald, 2006; Taylor, 1979; TEBA, 2002; Wilson, 1976; Yudelman & Jeeves, 1986). To effectively address the growing labour demand in the mines, in the early 1900s, the South African mines formed joint recruiting companies, namely, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), commonly referred to as “wenela”, and the Native Recruiting Corporation Limited (NRC) to help in recruiting mine labourers, especially migrants (Crush et al., 2001; Harington et al., 2004; TEBA, 2010). WNLA and NRC recruited a lot of migrant mine labourers, such that, the South African gold and diamond mines relied heavily on migrant black workers throughout the apartheid era.

For more than a century starting from 1906, Botswana and Lesotho were some of the consistent migrant-sending states to South African mines. In 1906, there were 81,000 mine workers, and 18,000 (22 percent) were South Africans, 2,000 (2.5 percent) were from Lesotho, and 300 were from Botswana (Harington et al., 2004; Wilson, 1976). That meant more than 60,000 (77.2 percent) were migrant mineworkers from within Southern Africa, East Africa, and as far countries as Libya and China (Harington et al., 2004; Richardson, 1977; Wilson, 1976). According to Richardson (1977), more than 63,000 Chinese labourers were recruited by the South African mines between 1904 and 1906. However, the recruitment was discontinued in 1906 due to the high mortality of the Chinese migrants as they could not stand the Transvaal cold weather conditions resulting in most of them contracting pneumonia and dying (Harington et al., 2004; Wilson, 1976). By 1912, the total number of migrant mineworkers in South Africa constituted 89 percent while South Africans were 11 percent, and Mozambique was the largest contributor of migrant mineworkers at 48 percent of the total number of mine workers (Harington et al., 2004; Jeeves, 1986; Wilson, 1976). As Table 1 below indicates, in 1936, the number of mineworkers in South Africa was 318,000 and the total of migrant mineworkers from both Lesotho and Botswana was 53,000, while South Africans were 166,000, and the remaining 99,000 were from other parts of Africa, especially within Southern Africa (Harington et al., 2004; Wilson, 1976). The total number of mine workers increased to 397,000 in 1960, of which 51,000 were Lesotho citizens and 16,000 from Botswana while South Africans were 145,000 and other immigrants were 185,000 (Harington et al., 2004; Jeeves, 1986; Lucas, 1985; Taylor, 1979; Wilson, 1976).

According to Table 1, the number of migrant mineworkers increased drastically by 1970 to 304,000, with Lesotho migrants standing at 71,000, and Botswana remaining at 16,000, while the number of South Africans dropped by almost 33 percent to 97,000 within a decade (Lucas, 1985; Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013; Taylor, 1979; Wilson, 1976). Realizing the growth in demand for
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Table 1. South African Mine Workers, 1906–2006

| Year | Lesotho migrants | Botswana migrants | South Africans | Other migrants | Total no. of Mineworkers |
|------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1906 | 2 000            | 300               | 18 000         | 60 700        | 81 000                 |
| 1946 | 38 000           | 7 000             | 126 000        | 134 000       | 305 000                |
| 1960 | 51 000           | 16 000            | 145 000        | 185 000       | 397 000                |
| 1970 | 71 000           | 16 000            | 97 000         | 217 000       | 401 000                |
| 1975 | 86 000           | 17 000            | 122 000        | 140 000       | 365 000                |
| 1990 | 99 707           | 14 609            | 199 810        | 62 347        | 376 473                |
| 1995 | 87 935           | 10 961            | 122 562        | 70 444        | 291 902                |
| 2000 | 58 224           | 6 494             | 99 575         | 66 394        | 230 687                |
| 2006 | 46 082           | 2 992             | 164 989        | 53 831        | 267 894                |

Source: (Wilson, 1976); (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013); (Taylor, 1979)

migrant workers, South Africa established some long-term recruitment measures and agreements with the neighbouring countries such as the merging of WNLA and NRC in 1977 to form The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA). TEBA ensured the continuous supply of migrant mine labourers to the South African mines. Consequently, by 1984, the number of mineworkers had grown to 480,000, before dropping down to 303,000 in 1994, out of which South African nationals constituted almost 50 percent while the rest were migrant workers (Fitzgerald, 2006; Harington et al., 2004; Lucas, 1985).

3. Migration diplomacy

Migration diplomacy refers to the role and impact of migration flows on relations amongst states and other actors by focusing on the management of cross-border mobility through diplomatic means, processes, and procedures (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019; Hamilton & Langhorne, 2011). In migration diplomacy, states derive their interests and bargaining position with respect to other states based, amongst others, on whether they are migrant-sending, migrant-receiving, or transit states (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019). According to Gabbacia (2012) and Thiollet (2011), there is a relationship between migration and other forms of state diplomacy. Migration directly influences how states conduct their affairs and negotiate with other actors (Gabbacia, 2012; Thiollet, 2011). Moreover, migration diplomacy is shaped by power relations and the competing interests of states (Brubaker, 1989; Krasner, 1999). A state, owing to its sovereignty and interests, determines who may be admitted or denied entry into its territory (Adamson, 2006; Krasner, 1999). Visas and asylums are instruments of migration diplomacy, and the state’s decision on such is often influenced by its interest in using migration as a strategy to achieve its foreign policy objectives (Mitchell, 1989; Teitelbaum, 1983).

There are three (3) strategies or approaches to migration diplomacy, namely, immigration which deals with a state receiving migrants, then emigration focusing on the state sending migrants, and transit wherein a state serves as a transit route for migrants (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019). The state’s interest in what it can benefit from migration flows informs its diplomatic strategy on migration. Whatever migration flow strategy a state adopts, it directly impacts its relations with other states. For example, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have been migrant-receiving (immigration) states for many decades (Brubaker, 1989; United Nations, 2015). Most developing states in Africa and South America have been emigration states (Akyeampong, 2000; Bank & Fröhlich, 2018; Durand & Massey, 2010; Twaddle, 1975; Winks, 1997). The migration flows from Africa and South America have somehow impacted USA migration policies. In Southern Africa, South Africa was a predominantly immigration state during the apartheid era and the status quo obtains in the democratic dispensation, while most countries in the region have been
emigration states. Only a few states in the sub-region were immigration and emigration or transit states—at the same time, subject to their interests and the goal of migrants into, through, and out of their territories. Botswana is an example of the states that have been immigration, emigration, and transit states. The migration diplomacy framework has been used to analyse other areas, but not any state in Southern Africa.

4. Methods
This is a comparative historical research. According to Schutt (2006) and Bernhard and O’Neill (2021), comparative historical research has time and place dimensions, and examines historical events to provide valid explanations. Among others, comparative historical research puts emphasis on identifying similarities and differences across different cases, as well as the uniqueness of each case (Skocpol & Somers, 1980). Accordingly, this research seeks to find the role and impact of migrant mine labourers in facilitating South Africa’s diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho by drawing comparisons over time and space. It compares the supply of migrant mine workers to South Africa by Botswana and Lesotho. It also compares South Africa’s demand for migrant mine workers and their supply by Botswana and Lesotho at different historical, political and economic times. This research used Pitt (1972) and Lange (2013) procedures for collecting data in comparative historical research that include identification, selection and classification. Sources on migrant mine workers to South Africa were searched and identified through Google and Google scholar. The search yielded some archival data from secondary sources of data that include, journal articles, books, official reports, statistics and newspaper articles on the research topic. Sources were selected and classified on the basis of their relevance to the research topic. Data triangulation was employed by comparing multiple sources on one process or event to ensure accuracy in the reflection of social realities that are remote in time and space (Deflem, 2015).

The data collected from the aforementioned sources were subjected to both thematic and content analysis. In thematic analysis, the text or data is examined and analysed to identify common themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Content analysis entails the interpretation of data through studying it to understand the context, meanings, themes, concepts and their relationship (Cole, 1988; Holsti, 1969). Following analysis of the collected data in this research, the following themes were generated: (a) resilient migrant mineworkers-based cooperation of South Africa with Botswana and Lesotho; (b) relative economic gains and the consistent demand-supply of migrant mine workers; (c) migration flows enabling South Africa’s capital accumulation; (d) the role of mining corporations in facilitating South Africa’s migration-based diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho. The aforementioned themes constitute the findings and results of this research. Therefore, they are discussed in the following sections, prior to the conclusion and recommendations.

5. Resilient migrant mineworkers-based cooperation of South Africa with Botswana and Lesotho
South Africa established migrant-based relations with Botswana and Lesotho that remained consistent for more than 100 years. Botswana and Lesotho supplied South Africa with thousands of migrant mine workers (see, Table 1). The major world events between 1914 and 1989 such as World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, Africa’s decolonization and liberation struggles, democratization and the Cold War, did not have a significant impact on Botswana’s and Lesotho’s supply of migrant mineworkers to South Africa. During the period of migrant mine workers supply by Botswana and Lesotho, South Africa was also experiencing major socio-economic and political changes, all of which did not have much impact on the demand and supply of migrant mine workers. In 1914, South Africa went through some political instability arising from the Afrikaner Rebellion, the General Strike, and the Mahatma Gandhi protests, but the migrant mine labour recruitment was sustained (Hirschmann, 1973). In 1921, some few years after World War I, migrant mineworkers constituted more than 60 percent of South Africa’s mineworkers (Massey, 1983). The number of migrant mineworkers continued to increase in the 1930s during the Great Depression and reached 152,000 out of 318,000 mineworkers by 1936 (Hirschmann, 1973; Wilson,
Soon after World War II in 1946, the number of migrant mineworkers increased to 179,000 (Hirschmann, 1973; Massey, 1983; Wilson, 1976). In the 1960s, South Africa consolidated its racially discriminating apartheid system, largely in response to the struggle for liberation and racial equality by the black majority. The liberation struggle in South Africa resorted to the use of arms against the systemic racial discrimination, driven by the National Party governments from Prime Minister DF Malan in 1948 to Hendrik Verwoerd in the 1960s (Hirschmann, 1973; Wilson, 1976). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s South Africa experienced a lot of political uprisings that culminated in the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, and the life imprisonment of the struggle leaders including Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Denis Goldberg, Andrew Mlangeni, Lionel Bernstein and others (Hepple, 2004; Linder, 2010). Despite the political changes and instability at the time, the apartheid government continued to ensure a consistent mining-based migration diplomacy policy with Botswana and Lesotho, among others (Hirschmann, 1973). For instance, in 1960, the number of migrant mineworkers was 252,000 mine workers (Table 1), before increasing to 304,000 by 1970 (Hirschmann, 1973; Massey, 1983; Wilson, 1976). In 1995, a year after the end of the apartheid system, South Africa had 169,340 migrant mineworkers out of 291,902 (Table 1). However, the number of migrant mineworkers reduced drastically following the introduction of the democratic dispensation in South Africa. By 2006, there were 102,905 migrant mineworkers out of 267,894 mineworkers in South Africa (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013; TEBA, 2010).

Botswana and Lesotho’s independence in 1966 also did not bring any migration policy changes. On the eve of the end of the Cold War in 1985, Botswana migrant mineworkers in South Africa were 18,079, while those from Lesotho were 97,639 (Fitzgerald, 2006; Yudelman & Jeeves, 1986), thus making Lesotho the largest single contributor of migrant mineworkers that year. However, as the apartheid system came to an end in 1994, the number of migrant mineworkers from both Lesotho and Botswana decreased sharply (Table 1). For example, at the inception of a democratic system in South Africa in 1994, Botswana migrant mineworkers decreased to 11,099, while Lesotho dropped to 89,237 (Fitzgerald, 2006; Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013). The number of migrant mineworkers from Botswana and Lesotho dropped further to 6,494, and 58,224, respectively by the year 2000 (Fitzgerald, 2006; Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013; Taylor, 1990). Six years later, in 2006, the number of migrant workers from both Lesotho and Botswana dropped further down to 46,082 and 2,992, respectively (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013). The decline in the number of migrant mineworkers in South Africa’s democratic dispensation could be a result of several reasons. First, in 1977, when TEBA was introduced, part of its mandate was to reduce the number of migrant mine workers (Crush et al., 2001; Harington et al., 2004). Second, the black South Africans started to have ownership of mines in 1996 with Kuyasa Mining as the first black-owned mine (R. Scott, 1998). The working conditions and wages of miners also improved, thus making mining more attractive to South African citizens as they no longer regard the mining industry as a tool of the apartheid system. Third, the robust economic development in Botswana in the 1990s (Leftwich, 1993; Samatar, 1999) might have also contributed to the sharp decline in the number of migrant mine workers to South Africa as employment opportunities became available locally. However, despite the decline in the number of migrant mineworkers from both Lesotho and Botswana, South African mines remain one of the largest employers of Lesotho migrant mine workers.

6. Relative economic gains and the consistent demand-supply of migrant mine workers
The relative gain strategy informed South Africa’s relations with Botswana and Lesotho on migrant mine labour flows. In international relations, the relative gain is a strategy or an action of a state based on what it stands to gain by relating with others (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019; Powell, 1991). Relative gain is the opposite of absolute gain strategy which is a zero-sum game wherein a state looks at its benefits without regard to others (Powell, 1991). Consistent with the relative gain approach to diplomacy, the actions of South Africa in relating with both Botswana and Lesotho on migrant labour demand-supply, focused on achieving economic interests, but not much on politics and security. Prior to 1994, South Africa’s political system was apartheid and
premised on institutionalised racial discrimination in all aspects of human life—social, economic, and political (Hirschmann, 1973). Botswana and Lesotho on the other side, were predominantly black states that were not racially discriminating. However, the demand for mine workers by South Africa, and the socio-economic challenges in both Botswana and Lesotho resulted in cooperation on the supply of migrant mineworkers by the latter two (2) countries.

The cooperation of Botswana and Lesotho with apartheid South Africa was made possible by the fact that although the two former High Commission Territories got political independence in 1966, they remained economically dependent on South Africa (Prothero, 1974). Due to a lack of economic development, both countries supplied South Africa with migrant mine workers during the colonial times and continued to do so after their independence, notwithstanding their indifference to South Africa’s apartheid system prior to 1994. When other countries like Tanzania and Zambia banned the recruitment of their citizens to the South African mines in solidarity with South Africa’s black liberation movements that rejected the oppressive apartheid system (Crush et al., 2001; Prothero, 1974), Botswana and Lesotho remained consistent in their supply of migrant mineworkers, in consideration of their economic gains from South Africa. The South African mines provided employment that neither the economy of Lesotho nor that of Botswana could offer their citizens. Both Lesotho and Botswana were very poor and their economies somehow relied on remittances from migrant mine workers to meet the socio-economic demands of their people, at least at the household level (Prothero, 1974). Although there is limited data on the benefits that migrant-sending countries accrued from migrant mine labourers, according to Breytenbach (1975) and Wilson (1976) the remittances and deferred payment of mineworkers in the 1930s stood at R4.4 million for Lesotho, and R1.1 million for Botswana, before Lesotho’s increased to R5.8 million in 1972. Botswana and Lesotho benefitted from emigration, however, South Africa emerged as a bigger beneficiary and grew its economy through cheap black migrant labour. For instance, in 1963, “the combined GDP of Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland was $1.363 million, while in the year ending 31 March 1964, the tax revenue accruing to the South African government from the gold mines alone was $170 million” (Wilson, 1976, p. 484). Some countries like Malawi had provisions that required the recruiting companies like WNLA and NRC to deduct tax from their migrant citizens and pay it directly to the migrant-sending state (Nolutshungu, 1975; Wilson, 1976), but Botswana and Lesotho did not have such arrangements. Both Botswana and Lesotho, along with Mozambique, supplied a lot of migrant mine workers to South Africa, tax revenue derived from South African mines could not benefit these countries (Wilson, 1976).

7. Migration flows enabling South Africa’s capital accumulation
The migrant mineworkers from Botswana and Lesotho enabled capital accumulation by South African mines (Wilson, 1976). Capital accumulation is an increase in assets from profits or investments for the sole purpose of increasing the value of the initial investment (Richards, 2013). It focuses on the maximization of profits and minimizing the costs using whatever means possible (Richards, 2013; Yunker, 1977). Wilson (1976:472) correctly observed that “the migrant system has enabled more efficient allocation of resources to take place and hence caused economic growth.” As such, the South African mines paid migrant workers low wages, provided no formal training or skills development, the safety of the mines was rudimentary, accommodation for migrant workers was hostels shared by more than a dozen men, and family members of migrant workers were not allowed to stay with the mineworkers at the mines during their contract period (Wilson, 1976), thus maximising profits. Consistent with capital accumulation, the migrant mineworkers had no political power and the capital surplus could not be used for their benefit due to national boundaries (Wilson, 1976).

Some migrant-labour sending countries like Mozambique required their migrant labourers to South African mines to remit a certain portion of their earnings to their families back home on regular basis, in order to protect their families from severe socio-economic hardships (Breytenbach, 1972; Wilson, 1976). Malawi required that a certain portion of their migrant workers
be a deferred payment made available at the end of the mine workers’ annual contracts (Breytenbach, 1972; Wilson, 1976). According to Wilson (1976), Botswana also had a law that required migrants to send a certain portion of their income home, but Lesotho did not have that kind of law until 1975. These agreements were negotiated at the state level and implemented by mining companies (Wilson, 1976), thus making relative economic gain trickle down to migrant mine labourers. As much as migrant mineworkers earned revenue for their families, that was not without a cost. Labour migration to South Africa resulted in the decline in the agricultural sector in both Lesotho and Botswana because of the transfer of labour to South African mines (Morapedi, 1999; Schapera, 1947; Wilson, 1976). Some households had to bear the social cost as some migrant mineworkers neglected their families and did not remit them on regular basis (Breytenbach, 1972; Crush et al., 2001; Wilson, 1976). At the state level, the cost was that both Lesotho and Botswana absolved themselves of the responsibility to create favourable conditions that could provide economic opportunities or employment for their people because South Africa provided such through reception to migrant labour.

The role of mining corporations in facilitating South Africa’s migration-based diplomatic relations with Botswana and Lesotho

The mining corporations played a prominent role in the migration diplomacy of South Africa with Botswana and Lesotho. The mining corporations include, amongst others, Anglo-American Corporation, De Beers, West Rand Consolidated Mines Limited, East Rand Proprietary Mines, Kloof Gold Mining Corporation, and Consolidated Goldfields. The mining corporations facilitated the institutionalization of migration flows from across Southern Africa to South Africa. Following the discovery of gold and diamonds, the South African Chamber of Mines established some recruitment centres and agencies across Southern Africa, and in Botswana and Lesotho specifically. In 1902, some South African gold mines formed a joint recruiting company called the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), also called “wenela” by the South Africans (Schutte, 1977; TEBA, 2002). WNLA was formed at the end of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1901 which had negatively impacted the South African mining industry and disrupted the recruitment of men to work in the mines (Harington et al., 2004; Richardson & van Helten, 1984). As a result of the war, several gold mines were closed and some migrant mineworkers could not return to their countries (Harington et al., 2004; Schutte, 1977). At the end of the war, the mining activities resumed, and WNLA was established to recruit mine labourers from Mozambique, but its jurisdiction for recruitment later expanded to other countries in Southern Africa and beyond to as far as Liberia, Egypt, Uganda, and China (Richardson, 1977; Schutte, 1977). WNLA proved effective in both the intra- and inter-continental labour mobilization such that between 1904 and 1906 it had managed to recruit over 60000 mine labourers from China to the South African mines, especially for the East Rand Proprietary mines (Richardson, 1977).

In 1912, almost a decade after the establishment of WNLA, the Native Recruiting Corporation Limited (NRC) was formed (Harington et al., 2004; TEBA, 2010). The NRC was an amalgamation of recruiting organizations for the South African mines that had been in place for some decades since the inception of the first mine in South Africa in 1867 (TEBA, 2002; Harington et al 2003). NRC established offices throughout Southern Africa and its mandate, amongst others, was to recruit mine workers from the “native territories” or black people’s homelands within South Africa such as Transkei and Ciskei, and from the British colonies such as Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho), Swaziland, Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Angola and South-West Africa (Namibia; Harington et al., 2004; Jeeves, 1986; Schutte, 1977). NRC and WNLA worked closely with each other as their Board of Directors were the same people, and they required that mines that wanted to be a member of WNLA, also be members of the NRC (Schutte, 1977).

From its inception in 1912 until the mid-1970s, WNLA was an instrument of capitalism and colonialism as it focused on the exploitation of the richest goldfields in aparthied South Africa by
the giant mining corporations and the British Empire (Hirschmann, 1973; Richardson & van Helten, 1984; TEBA, 2002). The British Empire tasked its then Imperial Secretary, J. F. Perry, to use gold proceeds to rebuild the then British colonies of Transvaal and the Orange Free State following their destruction by the Anglo-Boer War from 1899 to 1902 (TEBA, 2002). In the late 1970s, WNLA and NRC merged to form The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA). TEBA, amongst others, focused on the recruitment of organized migrant labour in Southern Africa and strengthened the relations of South African mines with the emigration states. As part of its reforms in South Africa’s democratic dispensation, TEBA put emphasis on the retrospective benefits of former mineworkers of South African mines as they were exploited during the apartheid era (TEBA, 2010). In 2010, TEBA partnered with the relevant ministries in Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and Mozambique to establish a dedicated programme for the screening and compensation of ex-mine workers for tuberculosis, and registered more than 600,000 patients (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013; TEBA, 2010). Through this arrangement by TEBA, many former mineworkers or their beneficiaries have been paid billions of rands, although access by migrant workers was very difficult due to difficulties in locating them and other reasons (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013). In their contribution to migration diplomacy, WNLA, NRC, and TEBA, at some stage negotiated directly with the authorities in Botswana and Lesotho for the supply of mine labourers (Schutte, 1977; TEBA, 2002). Furthermore, the mining corporations and their recruitment agencies influenced the migration policies of South Africa, Lesotho, and Botswana. They assisted in the documentation of migrant mine workers and their repatriation to their native countries at death or at the end of their employment contracts in the mines (Schutte, 1977; TEBA, 2002).

8. Conclusion

South Africa had migration policy that established cooperation with both Botswana and Lesotho. Despite apartheid South Africa’s limited political freedoms or lack of democratic credentials before 1994, the country was able to forge diplomatic relations based on migrant labour with Botswana and Lesotho (Taylor, 1987; Wilson, 1976). A highly racially discriminating South African state successfully cooperated with and recruited migrant mineworkers from non-racially discriminating countries of Botswana and Lesotho for over a century (Taylor, 1979; Wilson, 1976; Yudelman & Jeeves, 1986), hence migration diplomacy. Furthermore, the successive South African regimes were also able to establish some migrant-labour agreements with other countries throughout Africa and beyond to as far countries as China (Jeeves, 1986; Richardson, 1977). However, for reasons already stated in this paper, the democratic South African state (1994 to present), has not been able to forge and sustain migration diplomacy to the levels at which it was during apartheid. The cooperation of the three (3) states remained consistent during major world events, such as world wars and decolonization, that effected foreign policy changes across the world. The economic benefits of cooperation on migration by South Africa with Botswana and Lesotho outweighed their political and ideological differences at a time when other countries were opposed to cooperation with South Africa because of the country’s racial discrimination. More importantly, the multi-national corporations in mining facilitated South Africa’s migrant-labour-based relations with Botswana and Lesotho. They influenced and implemented migrant labour policies. The expansion of the scope of TEBA in 2010 from focusing on serving mine workers to including the former mine labourers in areas beyond South Africa also enhanced migrant-based diplomatic relations with the affected countries as they do not have to bear the burden of health problems endured by the ex-South African mineworkers alone (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2013).

Notwithstanding the economic benefits of South Africa’s migration diplomacy with Botswana and Lesotho, there were also challenges, that include among others, exploitation of mine workers, deplorable living and working conditions of mine workers, capital accumulation and loss of agricultural development in Botswana and Lesotho due to emigration (Wilson, 1976). Therefore, this study recommends the optimal utilization of cross-border migration for socio-economic development as it benefitted South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho for more than a century. For instance, South Africa, and its mining industry in particular, grew exponentially as a result of the huge savings due to the acquisition of cheap labour and capital accumulation.
from Botswana and Lesotho. The latter two (2) had their citizens employed in South Africa, hence making it possible for them to pay local taxes and support their families through remittances. The research also recommends better living and working conditions for mineworkers including migrants, which the South African mining industry still relies on their labour. Furthermore, this research recommends migration cooperation as a possible catalyst to regional integration which is one of Africa’s Agenda 2063 aspirations. Lastly, the participation of non-state actors such as private corporations can enhance diplomatic relations or serve as cooperation brokers, and needs to be promoted, especially where political differences make it hard or impossible for states to negotiate directly with each other. The research was not exhaustive, therefore, further studies can explore similar research with respect to other countries in Southern Africa.

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