

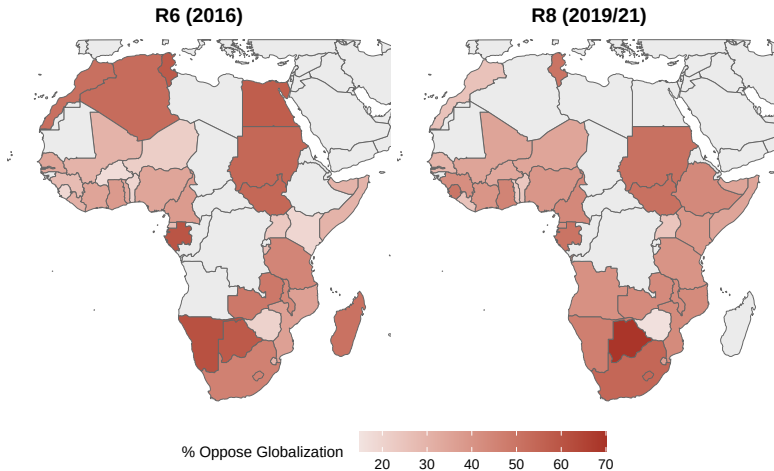
Welcome Goods, Unwelcome Neighbors: Regional Factor Abundance and the Globalization Backlash in Southern Africa

Sarah Brooks (Professor, Ohio State University)

Soohyun Cho (Assistant Professor, Bowdoin College)

IPES (October 23-24, 2026)

Globalization Backlash in Africa



The standard account misses the variation

Canonical Stolper–Samuelson:

- Developing countries = labor-abundant globally
- Low-skilled workers there should **support** openness — trade *and* migration

The standard account misses the variation

Canonical Stolper–Samuelson:

- Developing countries = labor-abundant globally
- Low-skilled workers there should **support** openness — trade *and* migration

But within the Global South:

- Protectionist attitudes in Argentina/Brazil rival OECD levels
- Anti-immigrant mobilization in South Africa rivals Western Europe's
- The “developed vs. developing” dichotomy overlooks this heterogeneity

The standard account misses the variation

Canonical Stolper–Samuelson:

- Developing countries = labor-abundant globally
- Low-skilled workers there should **support** openness — trade *and* migration

But within the Global South:

- Protectionist attitudes in Argentina/Brazil rival OECD levels
- Anti-immigrant mobilization in South Africa rivals Western Europe's
- The “developed vs. developing” dichotomy overlooks this heterogeneity

Our claim: *Relative factor abundance is not just global—it is also **regional**.*

A country can be labor-abundant *globally* and capital-abundant *regionally*. That distinction drives divergent responses to trade vs. migration.

A regional Stolper–Samuelson framework

Replace one reference point with two:

Goods markets: **globally** integrated

- Relevant comparison: κ_j vs. κ_{world}
- Zimbabwean workers compete with Chinese workers for export markets.

Labor markets: **regionally** segmented

- Relevant comparison: κ_j vs. κ_{region}
- Zimbabwean workers compete with South Africans for jobs in **Johannesburg**, not Frankfurt.

A regional Stolper–Samuelson framework

Replace one reference point with two:

Goods markets: globally integrated

- Relevant comparison: κ_j vs. κ_{world}
- Zimbabwean workers compete with Chinese workers for export markets.

Labor markets: regionally segmented

- Relevant comparison: κ_j vs. κ_{region}
- Zimbabwean workers compete with South Africans for jobs in **Johannesburg**, not Frankfurt.

The case:

$$\kappa_{\text{ZIM}} < \kappa_{\text{region}} < \kappa_{\text{SAF}} < \kappa_{\text{world}}$$

South Africa is labor-abundant globally but **capital-abundant regionally**.

Predictions

Prediction	Implication
Trade → <i>global</i> abundance	Both favor exports, no cross-country gap on trade.
Migration → <i>regional</i> abundance	SAF penalizes migration from ZIM, ZIM does not reciprocate.
Trade–migration asymmetry	SAF opposes migration from ZIM more than trade with ZIM.
Insecurity gradient	Within SAF, the insecure oppose migration more, not trade.

Why South Africa and Zimbabwe?

- Southern Africa's largest migration corridor: $\approx$ 1 million Zimbabweans in SAF ($\approx$ 45% of foreign-born)
- Canonical models treat them as *equivalent* (both labor-abundant developing democracies)
- The regional framework predicts they *diverge* sharply

Research design

1. Cross-national

- 39 African countries, Afrobarometer R6–R10 (2016–2025)
- Regional factor abundance (Penn World Table) vs. migrant stocks and income (World Bank)

Research design

1. Cross-national

- 39 African countries, Afrobarometer R6–R10 (2016–2025)
- Regional factor abundance (Penn World Table) vs. migrant stocks and income (World Bank)

2. Pre-registered conjoint

- South Africa ($n=1,543$) and Zimbabwe ($n=2,077$); 36,200 profiles
- Varies migrant origin, skill, destination, trade partner, trade goal
- Measures economic insecurity *and* xenophobia/nationalism

Cross-national: measures & model

Regional factor abundance: own vs. distance-weighted neighbors

$$\text{abund}_i = \log \omega_i - \frac{\sum_{j \neq i} w_{ij} \log \omega_j}{\sum_{j \neq i} w_{ij}}, \quad \omega_i = \frac{cn_i}{emp_i}, \quad w_{ij} = e^{-d_{ij}/d_0}$$

ω_i : capital per worker (PWT 10.0), d_{ij} : great-circle capital-city distance, $d_0=1,500$ km. **> 0: capital-abundant relative to its region.**

$$\text{Host}_{ir} = \beta \text{Abund}_i + \gamma \text{Recv}_i + \delta \text{Inc}_i + \tau_r + \rho_{g(i)} + \varepsilon_{ir}$$

- **DV** (Host): dislike “immigrants / foreign workers” as neighbors (1–5), Afrobarometer R6–R10 (39 countries).
- **Controls:** Recv = migrant stock % (receiver status), Inc = log GDP p.c. (PPP).
- Survey-round FE τ_r + subregion FE $\rho_{g(i)}$ (N/W/C/E/S Africa); SEs clustered by country.

Result 1: Abundance predicts backlash

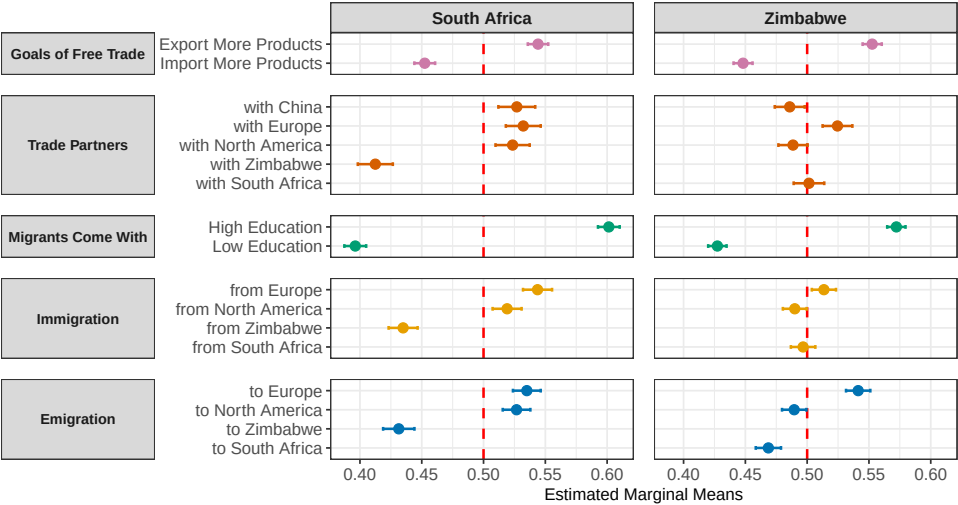
	<i>Dependent variable: anti-immigrant hostility</i>			
	Pooled (R6–R10)		Cross-section	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Regional K/L abundance	0.270 [†] (0.108)	0.294*** (0.086)	0.317* (0.121)	0.352** (0.118)
Receiver status (migrant stock)	−0.118** (0.039)	−0.034 (0.026)	−0.125** (0.040)	−0.047 (0.029)
Absolute income (log GDP p.c.)	0.029 (0.114)	−0.104 (0.092)	−0.015 (0.122)	−0.132 (0.113)
Survey-round FE	Yes	Yes	—	—
Region FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	166	166	39	39
R^2	0.409	0.682	0.451	0.705

SEs clustered by country in (1)–(2), HC1 in (3)–(4)). [†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Conjoint Design

Attribute	Levels
Open migration from	Zimbabwe / South Africa; Europe; North America
Open migration to	Zimbabwe / South Africa; Europe; North America
Migrant skill level	High skill; Low skill
Free trade with	Zimbabwe / South Africa; Europe; North America; China
Free trade to	Import more foreign products; Export more domestic products

Migration tracks regional abundance



Distributional, not symbolic

Moderator (SAF)	Trade penalty (−0.112 ^{***})	Migration penalty (−0.094 ^{***})
× Job insecurity (<i>economic</i>)	0.005	− 0.021 [*]
× Lived Poverty Index (<i>economic</i>)	0.010	0.008
× Nationalism (<i>symbolic</i>)	0.011	0.004
× Xenophobia (<i>symbolic</i>)	− 0.030 [*]	−0.020 [†]
<i>N</i> = 15,430 profiles, SEs clustered by respondent		

Distributional, not symbolic

Moderator (SAF)	Trade penalty (−0.112 ^{***})	Migration penalty (−0.094 ^{***})
× Job insecurity (<i>economic</i>)	0.005	− 0.021 [*]
× Lived Poverty Index (<i>economic</i>)	0.010	0.008
× Nationalism (<i>symbolic</i>)	0.011	0.004
× Xenophobia (<i>symbolic</i>)	− 0.030 [*]	−0.020 [†]
<i>N</i> = 15,430 profiles, SEs clustered by respondent		

Insecurity amplifies migration opposition but not trade
Labor-market competition, not animus.

Exposure, not proximity (South Africa)

Does proximity to Zimbabwe drive anti-migration attitudes? No.

	Anti-globalization	Dislike immigrants
Gauteng (Johannesburg metro)	0.342***	0.110
Border prov. (Limpopo, MP, NW)	-0.063	- 0.362 ***
<i>N</i>	1,543	1,554

border residents are *less* hostile → Labor-market concentration (Gauteng) drives hostility

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Goods and labor markets run at different geographic scales → Stolper–Samuelson travels to the Global South once abundance is measured **regionally**.

Conclusion

- Goods and labor markets run at different geographic scales → Stolper–Samuelson travels to the Global South once abundance is measured **regionally**.
- This reconciles *support for trade* with *opposition to migration* aimed at the same neighbor.

Conclusion

- Goods and labor markets run at different geographic scales → Stolper–Samuelson travels to the Global South once abundance is measured **regionally**.
- This reconciles *support for trade* with *opposition to migration* aimed at the same neighbor.
- South–South backlash is not cultural exceptionalism: the same factor-endowment logic as Germany or the U.S.

Conclusion

- Goods and labor markets run at different geographic scales → Stolper–Samuelson travels to the Global South once abundance is measured **regionally**.
- This reconciles *support for trade* with *opposition to migration* aimed at the same neighbor.
- South–South backlash is not cultural exceptionalism: the same factor-endowment logic as Germany or the U.S.

Thank You!

Gap is immigration-specific

Afrobarometer R8: "Would you dislike having ⟨X⟩ as neighbors?"

Out-group	SAF %	ZIM %	SAF – ZIM
Immigrants / foreign workers	38%	26%	+12 pp
Different religion	18%	14%	+4
Different ethnicity	15%	11%	+4
Homosexuals	25%	84%	–59

The SAF-high gap is concentrated on immigrants $\Rightarrow$ not general intolerance.

$N \approx 1,600$ (SAF), 1,200 (ZIM).

Insecurity $\times$ neighbor migration

	SAF	ZIM	Pooled
Neighbor Immigration	-0.085^{***}	-0.006	—
Neighbor $\times$ Insecurity	-0.041^*	0.003	—
Neighbor $\times$ Insecurity $\times$ SAF			$-0.045^\dagger$
<i>N</i>	15,430	20,770	36,200

Insecure South Africans impose a $\approx 50\%$ larger migration penalty, Zimbabwe shows no gradient.

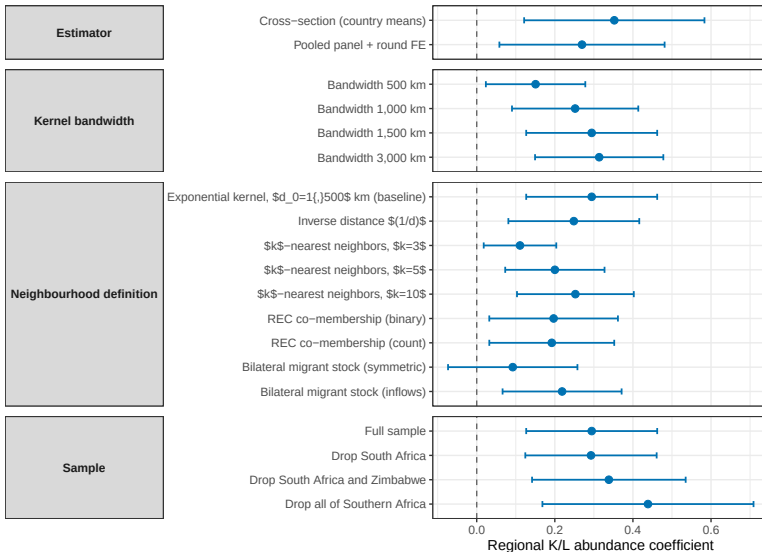
Insecurity works through distinct channels

	Xenophobia		Nationalism	
	SAF	ZIM	SAF	ZIM
Job (prospective) insecurity	0.071*	-0.004	-0.106***	-0.104***
Lived Poverty Index	0.063	0.127***	-0.042	-0.139***
<i>N</i>	1,543	2,074	1,543	2,074

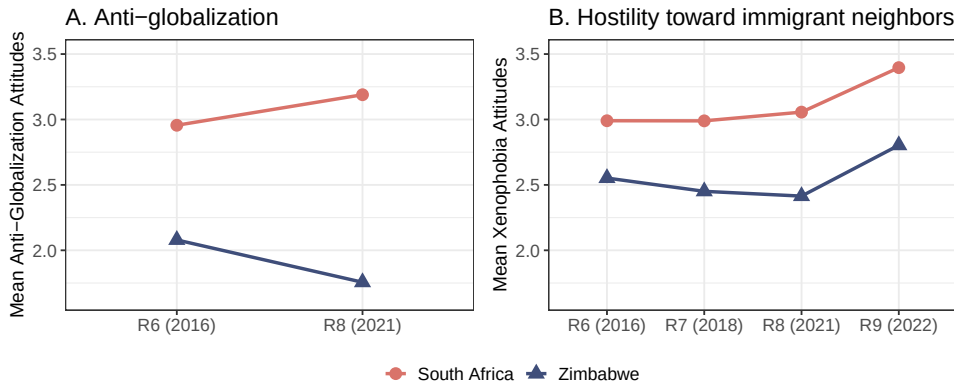
- **SAF** (receiving): prospective labor-market threat → xenophobia.
- **ZIM** (sending): chronic deprivation (LPI) drives hostility toward poorer migrants.

Job-insecurity coding harmonized across countries (correcting an earlier reverse-coding).

Robustness: specification



Divergence over time



SAF becomes more restrictive while ZIM becomes more open (R6–R10).

Pooled conjoint: full results

	Estimate	(SE)
<i>Main effects (Zimbabwe baseline)</i>		
Neighbor immigration (from)	−0.003	(0.007)
Neighbor emigration (to)	−0.045***	(0.008)
Neighbor trade	+0.001	(0.008)
Low-skilled migrant	−0.145***	(0.008)
Import products	−0.104***	(0.008)
South Africa (intercept shift)	+0.095***	(0.010)
<i>South Africa × Attribute interactions</i>		
SA × Neighbor immigration	−0.091***	(0.012)
SA × Neighbor emigration	−0.050***	(0.012)
SA × Neighbor trade	−0.113***	(0.012)
SA × Low-skilled migrant	−0.057***	(0.012)
SA × Import products	+0.014	(0.011)
N (profile evaluations)	36,200	