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تصدر عن

قسمي اللغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية
في كلية العلوم الإنسانية

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THE QUR'ANIC PROVISIONS ON PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE: AN ANTIDOTE TO THE XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS ON NIGERIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria and South Africa are formerly British colonies and members of the Commonwealth and the African Unions. It is on record that the two countries have been supportive in surmounting the vicissitudes of life through enhancement of bilateral relations and trade over ages. Yet, immigrants from all walks of life including Nigerians have been experiencing untold suffering, discrimination, brutality and cruelty in the hands of South Africans despite the fact that religion is the way of life in their country. Although, survey revealed that South Africans are predominantly Christians, there is no gainsaying that Christianity does not shy away from proscribing racism, intolerance, unjust killings and all other forms of mischievous acts. In order to proffer solutions to the incessant attacks on the foreigners in the country particularly Nigerians, curtail reprisal attacks on South Africans in Nigeria and save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, this study attempts to explore the viability of Qur'anic provisions in curing the ailment of xenophobia. Through the use of historical, analytical and phenomenological approaches, the paper argues that the demanding quietude and harmonious relationship required in sustaining peace in the two countries will be achieved if the Qur'anic provisions on peace building are embraced. It recommends, among other things, that the victims of xenophobia should be rehabilitated in order to halt reprisal attacks that could lead to war and that stiffer punishment should be meted on the culprits of jungle justice.

Keywords: Antidote, Immigrant, Peaceful co-existence, Xenophobia

INTRODUCTION

It is not disputable that sustainable development and growth cannot be actualized in a community where peaceful coexistence is missing. This is one of the reasons why promotion of just, peaceful and all inclusive societies is one of the 17 Sustainable Development goals proclaimed by United Nations Members in 2015 with the objective of achieving peace and prosperity for all in the world.ⁱ

However, post independent history of Africa, as recorded by Kirsten is abundant with international and civil wars as well as strife of various kinds.ⁱⁱ For instance, Tunisia, which is ranked as the fourth developed country in Africa, is slowly gaining impetus due its years of conflict.ⁱⁱⁱ Countries like Mali, Central African Republic and DRC are trapped in cycles of violence.^{iv} Consequently, the absence of the required peace is one of the factors that accounted for the retrogression of African country and its status as less-developed or under developing continent in the world.^v

However, the vigorous attempt to building peace in the chaotic societies in Africa like South Africa and its ilk is one of the terrifying challenges for international peace and security. The occurrence of xenophobia (hatred and fear of foreigners) particularly in South Africa is no more a news on dailies and social media. The situation was so pathetic in 2008 when the South Africans launched its indiscriminate violent attacks on the foreigners including Nigerians that resulted to the death of about 60 people and displacement of thousands of people from their homes.^{vi}

It is important to state at this juncture that Nigerians and Nigerian government have been staunch enemies of the xenophobia, racism and ill-treatment of human beings. This is evident in their opposition to apartheid that flourished in South Africa for many years. Nigeria provided billions of dollars to aid anti-apartheid policies and parties like African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) between 1960 and 1995. It also recorded loss of billions of dollars for its failure to sell oil to South Africa as a demonstration of protest to end apartheid.^{vii} Yet, South Africans are reluctant to hospitalize foreigners in their country.

This paper, therefore, attempts to provide catholicon to the situation that has ravaged the lives of hundreds of people and their properties from the lens of Islamic teachings on the peaceful coexistence among people of different religions, colours, cultures, races and countries. This becomes imperative because the revelation of the Qur'ān took off in the 7th century characterized by tribalism in Arabian Peninsula and discrimination while it was obliterated with the provisions of Qur'ān.^{viii}

Genesis of Xenophobia

The word xenophobia is a combination of two Greek words. They are xeno and phobia meaning foreigner and phobia and it appeared first in print in English language towards the tale of 19th Century.^{ix} Webster's dictionary refers to it as fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or anything that is strange or foreign while Cambridge dictionary defines it to mean extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religions, etc.^x It is clear from these meanings that the lexicographical meaning of xenophobia revolves around fearing of stranger and the fear could be irrational and unreasonable. Other words that translate it, as documented in Collins Dictionary, include racism, nationalism, bigotry and isolationism.^{xii}

South African Human Rights as well as civil society define xenophobia as "deep dislike of non-nationals by nationals of a recipient state".^{xiii} This meaning of xenophobia illustrated by the commission would have solved the case if it is adequately understood by South Africans because it is internationally standard, except that it is too theoretical. In other words, it needs to be considered as an act demonstrating deep dislike to the non-nationals. From the political lens, Andreas Wimmer held that xenophobia is a component of a political struggle about who deserves to be cared for by the state and society.^{xiv} However, UNESCO drew attention to the fact that the terms xenophobia and racism overlap but there is distinction between the two. According to her, racism entails distinction built on physical characteristics like skin, colour, hair type, facial features, etc while xenophobia centres on the idea that someone is a foreigner or one is not a member of a particular community or nation.^{xv} This implies that racism is cultural while xenophobia is not. Also, racism can exist under xenophobia and not vice versa. Therefore, xenophobia is an attitude, prejudices or behaviour that rejects, excludes and often vilifies persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity.^{xvi}

Historically, the relegation of foreigners by Ancient Greek in early period as barbarians and the formation of opinion that their culture was inferior to the Greek culture are examples of early xenophobic sentiments including the belief that the barbarians were meant to be enslaved by the western people. Similarly, Ancient Romans believed that they were superior to other human beings.^{xvii}

More so, the persecution and annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators on the basis of racial and biological inferiority of Jews to German is also an example of ugly act of xenophobia. In United States, discrimination against racial, ethnic and religious minorities particularly African-Americans is not controversial. This prompted Philosopher Cornel West to view that racism is an integral part of American

culture and society. He submitted that it is acknowledged and pronounced in American laws and imbued in its dominant way of life.^{xviii} In addition, the murder of black families by the Ku Klux Klan is also an attestation to it.^{xix}

More so, the trait of xenophobia can also be found in the community of Jews in Madinah before the advent of Prophet Muhammad. The Jews, who frowned at collection of interest from the money borrowed to their members, legalized its collection from non-Jews. They justified their thought with an edict in Deuteronomy 23:20-21 that reads "You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite". We, however, hold that this can never be a verse revealed by God, who condemned injustice, but part of fabricated verses documented in the scripture. This is referred to as xenophobia, in our view, because they considered non-Jews as foreigners who should be maltreated.

Xenophobic Cases in South Africa and Its Causes

South Africa's national statistics body revealed that there are an estimated 3.6 million migrants out of 50 million people living in South Africa.^{xx} The data collected from South Africa and United Nation showed that 30,000 Nigerians live in South Africa.^{xxi} However, immigrants from all walks of life have been experiencing deadly attacks before the majority rule that criminalized the attacks in 1994. The aftermath of the rule that elected Black majority government in 1994, as believed by people, also worsens the situation.

In the recent period, the wave of the attacks on foreigners in South Africa has increased drastically. From 2005-2008, 16 attacks on foreigners from different countries were reported. The attacks reached the peak in 2008 and 2015. In 2008, record showed that more than 60 people were killed and thousands were displaced while millions of Rand's worth of property was looted. In 2012, 250 incidents were recorded leading to the death of 140 people and 250 severe injuries while the minimum of three attacks were recorded in 2013.^{xxii} In 2015, the eruption of violence and looting that targeted the businesses of foreigners left seven people dead. In 2019, at least 12 people were lost to xenophobia and foreign owned businesses were looted.^{xxiii} It is essential to state that none of the victims of death in the recent attack was Nigerian as established by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama but Nigerians were also victims of attacks while their businesses were targeted.

In a swift reaction to protect Nigerian citizens against untimely death, over 600 Nigerians were repatriated by Federal Government of Nigeria. The rationale behind this is the brutality of their experience in South Africa. The reportage of Aljazeera, which unveiled opinions of the people aftermath of the attacks, contained the stance of Uzoma, a Nigerian citizen, who has stayed in South Africa for 16 years. Recounting his ordeal as one of the foreign nationals left destitute by the unrest, Uzoma held that he would not invest anything

in South Africa again.^{xxxv} Samson Aliyu, a clothes seller who stayed in South Africa for two years, said that his shop was burnt and he had to hide to save his life.^{xxxvi}

Condemning this inhuman act, students including those from Zimbabwe and Ethiopia charged South Africans to learn how to accept people and stressed its significance. The students, who emphasized that its importance included learning about multifarious cultures of different people, condemned the wave of xenophobic attacks in the country.^{xxxvii}

It is interesting to note that our exploration of dailies both local and international unveils that the causes of xenophobia include the following:

- a. **Unemployment:** On this, a few research poll conducted in 2018 indicated that the foreigners are viewed by majority of South Africans as a burden on the society who usurp job and enjoy social benefits made available by their country.^{xxxviii} It is pertinent to put the record straight that the MTN network, a South African owned business, listed its Nigerian business at a valuation of about \$5bn.^{xxxix} Does this means that South African country has taken over the gains of Nigerian owned networks?
- b. **Perpetuation of Crimes by the Foreigners:** A few research poll conducted in 2018 showed that 61% of South Africans believed that immigrants are more responsible for crime than the nationals.^{xxxix} Contrary to this thought, the director of Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University, Loren Landau held that foreigners involve in crimes but there is no evidence to substantiate the assertion that the foreigners should be held responsible for the surge of the criminal rates because surveys suggest that 2% to 3% represent the foreigners arrest for crimes.^{xxx}
- c. **Apartheid:** The International Relations Minister of South African, Naledi Pandor identified the legacy of apartheid as the root cause of xenophobic attacks. The minister, who condemned the action, stated that the economic inequalities and poverty left by apartheid are responsible for making the nationals to losing their cool with foreigners.^{xxxi}
- d. **Racism:** The issue of racism cannot be left out while discussing xenophobia. The discrimination based on ethnicity can be said to be the root cause and it is widely believed that one of the evils procreated by apartheid in South Africa is the racism which has become innate in the minds of a great number of South Africans. The racism is very tense in the country because immigrants from Nigeria, the benefactor of South Africa after God, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Pakistan, India and other countries are only allowed to reside in the poorer countries. Yet, they are alleged of snatching jobs, marrying their wives and perpetuating crimes.^{xxxii} In other words, they are considered

c. **Production and Proliferation of Fake News by Social Media:** Undoubtedly, the video and reportage on social media also contribute significantly to the xenophobic attacks. For instance, the recipient of the fake news that the great number of Nigerians has been killed in the 2019 attacks in South Africa made some Nigerians, who were very resentful, to launch reprisal attacks on South African businesses in Nigeria. Consequently, South Africa shut down their embassy temporarily and Nigeria also recalled her High Commissioner to South Africa.^{xxxiii}

The Practice of Racism prior to the Advent of Islam

The period before the emergence of Islam among Arabs is known in Islam as dark-age (*Al-ʿAsru 'l-Jāhiliyy*). One of the features of the period was the resort of the Arabs to racism in all matters ranging from social, economy to politics. The scope of their racism covered all forms of intolerance against non-Arabs and the expat of the Gulf.^{xxxiv} Racism became the order of the day during the period because Arabs took tribal and ethnic groups as pride and the determinant of the social standard of the society. The racism was so reckoned with to the extent of exhibiting it in their proverbs and poems. They were deeply intoxicated in their adoration of racism and gave preference to it over other important issues. This is evident in the poem marshalled by Qurayṭbn 'Unayf while extolling the family of Māzin over their eagerness in defending their kin. A line from the poem is as follows:

لايسألون أخاهم حين يندبهم # في النائبات على ما قال برهان^{xxxv}

Meaning:

They do not question their brother whenever he invites them: (to assist him against others) in the calamities on the authenticity of his proof

The above line shows the height of their blind love to one another. Blind followership of the decision of their congregation was also a means of demonstrating loyalty and driving unity. This was very popular during the period and adherence to it was as important as the life even if the decision made was not in the spirit of righteousness. Durayd bn Aṣ-Ṣimah wrote:

وهل أنا إلا من غزية إن غوت # غويت وإن ترشد غزية أرشد

Meaning:

I am not but a staunch supporter of (the tribe of) Ghaziyyah and if it deviates from the right path: I also strayed and I am on the right track if Ghaziyyah maintains right track

ገ. 1872. 1072.

The Qur'anic Provisions on Peaceful Co-Existence: A Panacea

وَقِيلَ لِمَ تَدْعُونَ إِلَهُاتِكُمْ إِنَّمَا أَنْفُسُكُمْ تُدْعُونَ وَإِنْ يُشَاءِ اللَّهُ يَمْسَحْكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ مُخْلَقُونَ

O mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may you know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that who piety. Verily, Allah is All-

The profound look at the above message is enough to celebrate that Islam has remedied xenophobia and racism that aimed at propelling disunion. This is because the message of the verse is directed to all human beings without any exemption in recognition of the fact that xenophobia and racism emanate from them. The cause of the revelation of the verse as recorded by Al-Qurtubi, is as follows:

وَأَنشَأُوا لَكُمْ... XXXX

The Messenger of Allah ordered Banū Bayāḍah to offer their daughter in marriage to 'Abū Hind. They responded to the Messenger of Allah saying: Should we offer our daughters in marriage to our slaves? Then, Allah the exalted, revealed Q49:13

On the verse thirteen of chapter forty nine that castigates the forbiddance of inter-marriage championed by apartheid, Al-Qurṭubī remarks:

زجرهم عن التفاخر بالأنساب، والتكاثر بالأموال، والازدراء
بالفقراء، فإن الممدار على التقوى. أي الجميع من آدم وحواء، إنما
الفضل بالتقوى xxxvii

Meaning:

Allah restrained them from racism, piling up wealth, disdain of poor and that the pivot (of excellence is piety. (The verse implies that) all human beings are from Ādam and Hawā` and that the excellence is only determined by piety

In his enthusiasm to expound the message of the verse, stress that man is from the same progeny and that the grouping of people into different counties is for identification and not for ostentation or racism, Ibn 'Uthaymīn writes:

ليس الكرم أن يكون الإنسان من القبيلة الفلانية، أو من
الشعب الفلاني، الكرم الحقيقي النافع هو الكرم عند الله،
ويكون بالتقوى، فكلما كان الإنسان أتقى لله كان عند الله أكرم

Meaning:

It is not honour that a man is from a particular tribe or nation. The real and beneficial honour is the one from Allah and it is achieved via piety. The more man is conscious of Allah; the more he will be honoured in the sight of Allah. xxxviii

The above exposition of Ibn 'Uthaymīn is an indication that the spiritual training of soul is the emphasis made by the Qur'ān and this can be attained by purifying it from nursing grudges against others, staying away from minor and major sins and holding firmly to the injunctions of Allah.

Portraying xenophobia as a disease that is toxic that requires detoxification, Allah warns against mockery that could trigger it when He declares: Q49:11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْخَرُوا قَوْمًا مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءً مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Meaning:

Arabic: لا تسخر قوما من قوم عسى أن يكونوا خيرا منهم ولا نساء من نساء عسى أن يكن خيرا منهن ولا تلمزوا أنفسكم ولا تنابزوا بالألقاب

O you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former, nor let (some) women at other women, it may be that the latter are better, nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad is it, to insult one's brother after having faith? And whosoever does not repent, then such are indeed wrong-doers.

According to As-Suyūṭī, the verse was revealed to censure some family members of Tamīm who disesteemed destitute companions like Bilāl, Salmān, 'Ammār, Khabāb, Suhayb and Sālim, the freed slave of Ḥuzayfah.^{xxxix}

The message in the above verse, if put in practice, could therefore save the world from any form of xenophobic attacks. It is evident from the verse that Allah detests mockery in all its ramifications because of its evil result. It could be recalled that the failure to utilize the message was the root cause of apartheid which centred on discrimination between white and black people in South Africa. Explaining the Qur'anic position on racism and feeling superiority of a culture over other cultures, the Prophet (SAW) says: "There is no superiority on Arabs over non-Arabs and non-Arabs have no superiority over Arabs. There is also no superiority over the white on black and nor on the black over the black except by the virtue of piety".^{xl}

Vilification of people is also condemned by the Prophet in an attempt to guard against discrimination and ensure peaceful co-existence. Addressing the issue of ethnic identification among the Arabs, the Prophet (SAW) was very furious with 'Abū Dharr who referred to Bilālas a son of a black woman, as believed by many narrators. The Prophet says: "You are a man who still has the trait of ignorance period (jāhiliyyah)".^{xli} This response of the Prophet suggests that anybody that relates with others on the basis of

the skin colour and ancestry is a barbaric and lawless person. Therefore, it will be very unfortunate and unaffordable to resuscitate the lawlessness and barbarism of Arabs during 21st century.

Repelling evils with good (Q23:96) is another principle preached by Islam to nip crimes into bud. The teaching of the verse is to halt the flood of revenge in order to ensure harmonious relationship between the evil and good people. It is recorded that one of the allegations levelled against foreigners by South Africans is frequent commitment of crimes by them. This can, however, be stopped by charging them to court of law in lieu of jungle justice if repelling evils with the good cannot be bore. It is instructive to state that the vengeance is also encouraged if the victim cannot pardon the perpetrator of the crime as contained in Qur'an 2:179 but the required procedure must be taken.

The right to life is also an important aspect of Islam. In other words, sanctity of human life is observed and respected. This is the reason while murderer of a soul is seen as a murderer of all human lives (Q5:32). On the issue of illegal immigration that also triggers violence, Islam requires a stranger to initiate greeting and seek permission before entry into a place that is not owned by him. The issue of illegal migration, in my conviction, is addressed in Q24:27.

Another aspect of Islam that shows its resilience and its encouragement of mixing with people of different cultures is religious tolerance under Islamic rule. When Islam became the religion of state in Madinah, Qur'anic verse(s) was not revealed to impose Islam on the adherents of other religions. It was, rather, revealed to make unequivocal assertion that there is no compulsion in religion (Q2:256). In spite of the fact that Islam was strong politically, the Qur'an 6:108 warned Muslims against showing disrespect to the gods worshipped in other faiths in order to maintain peace and stability. It is important to state that the difference of religion is not mentioned as one of the causes of xenophobic attacks in South Africa but this position of Islam is essential in order to avert its occurrence. Equal treatment of people is also one of the moral teachings encouraged by Qur'an in order to foster peaceful coexistence among people of different religions, culture and race.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the teachings of Qur'an on peaceful co-existence with a view to find lasting solutions to the wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. It manifested that

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Conclusion

This paper has discussed the stance of Qur'an on peaceful co-existence with a view to find lasting solutions to the wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. It manifested that

The Qur'ān 16:90 declares:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ
الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Verily, Allah enjoins justice, kindness and giving to the kin and forbids evil deeds, detestable acts and rebellion. He admonishes you, that you may take heed

Commenting on the absoluteness of the messages of the verse, An-Nasafī writes:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالتَّسْوِيَةِ فِي الْحَقُوقِ فِيمَا بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَرَكَ الظُّلْمَ...
وَالْإِحْسَانَ إِلَىٰ مَنْ أَسَاءَ إِلَيْكُمْ

Allah enjoins equality in according rights to one another, abandonment of oppression and extension of kindness to the person that harms you

The implication of the above verse is that justice, doing of good and giving to the kin are not confined to the brethren in religion but to all people without any exemption. In fact, 'Uthmān bn Maz'ūn accepted Islam as a result of the courtesy of the verse. The verse is therefore, a compendium of injunctions on goodness and evil in the Qur'ān. This may be the reason why it is often repeated by Imams on Fridays so that their sermon can be all-inclusive of accepted and interdicted acts.

It is also important to state that Islam considers honouring a stranger or a visitor as part of belief in Allah. In other words, the belief in Allah is incomplete if one is not accommodating and hostile to the foreigners. Although the South African government recognizes the importance of hosting the foreigners, its failure to enact capital punishment for the default shows that it is indifferent to the act. The *Hijrah* of the Prophet and his companions is an example of foreign dominance that succeeded in improving human security in Madinah. In fact, the Madinites submitted willingly to the headship and viceroyalty of the Prophet (SAW) and the rightly guided caliphs despite being foreigners. This needs to be borrowed by the promoters of xenophobia.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the stance of Qur'ān on peaceful co-existence with a view to find lasting solutions to the wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. It manifested that

Islam advocates peace at all times and Qur'ān is profuse with the injunctions that propagate national and international peace. The paper revealed that the humiliation of other people's cultures by Greek and propagation of superiority of Roman people over others are examples of early xenophobia. It discovered that the reasons outlined as the causes of xenophobia are not sufficient to justify incessant attacks on the foreigners because they are not convincing. It, therefore, called for the utilization of Qur'ānic teachings on peaceful co-existence that included forbiddance of racism, sanctity of life, religious tolerance, encouragement of inter-racial marriage and equal treatment of people as antidote to the devastating act of xenophobia. In order to halt the attacks, the paper recommends the following:

- Punishment of the perpetrators of the xenophobic attacks: It is one of the primary responsibilities of the government to protect the citizens and the non-nationals and its inability to do so could lead to war. The revenge is prescribed in Islam in order to dissuade people from committing unjust killings and also to serve as a deterrent to others. The failure of South Africa to bring the culprits to book will automatically guarantee its reoccurrence in the future. Also, Nigerian government should discipline those who launched reprisal attacks in Nigeria so that the jungle justice could be curtailed.
- Rehabilitation of the victims by the South African government
- Passage of the law by the lawmakers of South Africa to proscribe maltreatment of foreigners
- Creation of awareness by the government on the effects of the xenophobic attacks on economy
- Frequent Engagement of South African Government by UN peacekeeping

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