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XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND INTRA-AFRICAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

Xenophobia is not a phenomenon that is limited or restricted to South Africa. It is prevalent in other countries like India, Pakistan and Germany. Since the 1980s, Xenophobia has become a source of concern to scholars because of its adverse effects on the people; notably Africans and indeed, Nigerians, who struggle to benefit from the available resources with South Africans. The objective of this paper is to carry out an in-depth analysis of the concept of Xenophobia; its causes such as unemployment and decaying infrastructure and how the series of attacks would impact on intra-African relations since the first case of Xenophobia was recorded in 1994, till 2017. The paper has revealed that if the attacks persist, it will result in diplomatic row, especially, between South Africa and African states. This paper was anchored on the linkage theory while the research methodology that was employed was qualitative, using mainly secondary data. This paper recommends that African states and people should depend less on South Africa and look inward by developing their economies, encourage more foreign direct investments and ensuring that lives and property of Africans are always protected, either at home or abroad.

Keywords: African Relations, South Africa, Violence, Xenophobia,

Introduction

Violence is an issue that has existed over a long period of time. It evolved from conflict, which is inevitable in human interactions. It is equally important to note that violence is a global phenomenon and it is of various dimensions and magnitude. Xenophobic attack, as a form of violence, is prevalent in some countries like India, Pakistan and Germany such that it has become an annual ritual just like and more like an epidemic for South Africans to engage in xenophobic attacks against their fellow black Africans that are resident in their country (Onwuka, 2012).

Xenophobic violence in South Africa first started in 1994 and since then, the incidence has been on the increase as many South Africans have taken the law into their hands and displayed brutal justice on some foreigners (Kupoluyi, 2017). This sad development has made the situation to become worrisome to international

observers, diplomats and the home governments of the non-nationals that are resident in South Africa. Victims of the attacks were found to have been murdered gruesomely by the natives, wielding all sorts of weapons like cutlasses, bricks and knives (Kumolu, 2017). It has been established that in most of the attacks that happened in 1994, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2017, respectively, blacks from African countries like Nigeria, Somalia and Zimbabwe were found to have mainly been the target victims (Kumolu, 2017).

Xenophobic violence in South Africa might have been accentuated by the fact that South Africa has a history of influx of refugees and asylum seekers, which dates back to the 1980s (South African History Online, 2017). It is on record that a large number of Mozambicans also found their ways into South Africa during this period while the number of refugees and asylum seekers had increased over the years. South Africa's strategic location and endowment with natural resources such as minerals and agricultural had made it attractive to the White minorities that are citizens.

Similarly, in the 1860s and 1880s, the world's largest deposits of first diamond and then gold were said to have been discovered at Kimberly and Johannesburg, respectively (Davies *et al*, 1988). The discovery of mineral resources shattered the existing social systems in what is today South Africa by hurling men and women into new types of social lives. Moreover, capitalism was found to have been ushered into South Africa, which brought about perceived exploitation. This in turn, brought about the underdevelopment of South Africa as a country. It is, therefore, not surprising that some South African nationals manifest hostility towards non-nationals (Davies *et al*, 1988). Objectives of the study are to examine the causes of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, the likely impacts of xenophobic attacks in South Africa on intra-African relations, and suggest ways by which future xenophobic attacks can be prevented.

Statement of the Problem

The quest by every nation is to live in peace and harmony because the absence of peace is tantamount to insecurity and stalled development. The fact that violence is a daily occurrence in the human society cannot be over-emphasised. Violence erupts in many forms and dimensions. It can be physical, domestic or even psychological in nature. Violence affects both developed and developing countries of the world. The concern about violence is that where it happens, it often lives in its trail, destruction of lives and property. Hence, it should be properly managed through diplomacy and active negotiation (Jensen, 1988).

Xenophobic violence is of serious concern because of its impact on non-nationals, who are made to feel the impact of hatred and envy from their attackers (Kumolu, 2017). It is even more painful when the attackers are discriminatory such as those targeted at Nigerians, Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and other non-nationals in South Africa (Davies *et al*, 1988). What this means is that the continued violence against Africans by South Africans has the tendency to create diplomatic row, breakdown of harmonious relations and unhealthy bilateral relations that do not augur

well for the affected nations, especially over unsubstantiated and **mischievous** evidence (Kupoluyi, 2017). Therefore, the paper seeks to examine **xenophobic attacks** in South Africa and the implications for intra-African relations by finding **out the** causes of xenophobic attacks in South Africa; the likely implications of **xenophobic** attacks in South Africa for intra-African relations; and how xenophobic attacks **can** be prevented in the future.

Research Methodology

The research methodology that was used for the study was qualitative. It involved the use of secondary data like textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers and the Internet. Case studies of past attacks were reviewed, to ascertain their implications for the affected nations and peoples.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that has been considered suitable for the paper is the Linkage Theory. This is because it seeks to link one system to another system. The theory is one of the theories considered imperative in the field of international relations. Some other theories are Realism, Liberalism and Balance of Power. The theory was propounded in 1942 by a scientist; Johan Bjorksten (Ward, 2017). The theory is related to the General System analysis (Johari, 2014). As Johari (2014) further posited, the term 'linkage' denotes any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system and is reacted to in another. That is to say Linkage theory "peeps into the perennial problems relating to the connection between domestic politics and foreign policy by taking the spheres of national and international politics as interacting systems" (Johari, 2014:138). Similarly, as Stein (1980) observed, linkage is a state's policy by which its course of action is determined by another state's behaviour in a different issue area. Linkage seeks to explain relationships between two things. The theory lays emphasis on input and output, and through this, we have three types of linkages which are Penetrative, Reactive, and Emulative linkages (Johari, 2014).

The Penetrative linkage exists where a country is participating in the political and economic activities of another country. For instance, the issues of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in a developing country like Nigeria (Johari, 2014). Reactive linkage involves boundary-crossing without direct foreign participation in the decision made within the unit or country. For instance, hostility of one country can bring about increase in the defence effort of others (Johari, 2014). Emulative linkage is a situation where a state tries to match another state in development. It is imitative if a state copies another without any expectation of matching it (Johari, 2014). A benefit of the Linkage Theory is that it provides a framework for analysis on how domestic happenings could affect foreign issues.

However, Johari (2014) opined that the theory may be criticised on the grounds that it is being sustained by oversimplified generalisations. He further asserted that the distortion it made between various environments is also **not** satisfactory while it is erroneously difficult to apply it to real life. The relevance of

the theory to the paper could be seen in the fact that the theory strives to use occurrences in the domestic scene to explain happenings in the international scene. Xenophobic attacks in South Africa remain a domestic issue affecting non-nationals from other African states. These attacks have triggered negative reactions in the home countries of the non-nationals like Nigeria and Ghana that demands urgent attention.

Conceptual Clarification

The concepts to be clarified are 'xenophobia' and 'violence' because of their importance to the paper.

Xenophobia: Xenophobia has been conceptualised in different ways by scholars. South African History Online (2017) and the South African Human Rights Commission opined that xenophobia is the deep dislike of non-nationals shown and exhibited by the nationals of a recipient state. As further asserted by South African History Online, it is also a form or manifestation of racism, meaning that xenophobia connotes hatred for certain nationals and the desire to avoid them. According to Olawale (2017), xenophobia has been defined by the World Conference Against Racism as the attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that segregates, rejects, excludes, and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or a nation's identity. This definition implies ethnocentrism and it is a condemnable attitude towards other people. Xenophobia thus connotes racism and hatred for fellow human beings from other climes.

Violence: This is another important concept in discussing xenophobia. Violence is any avoidable action that leads to the violation of a human right in its widest meaning or which prevents the fulfillment of a basic human need (Salmi, 1993). Violence can exist in different forms such as the maltreatment of a toddler, gender discrimination, genocide, war crimes, rape, kidnapping and torture, threat to human life (Salmi, 1993).

Historical Evolution of South Africa

The history of South Africa can be seen as a history of settlement and struggle. It involved the Bantu peoples while reaching the Southern tip of the African continent in the eighteenth century, where they met the Dutch and unsuccessfully attempted to displace them (Calvocoress, 2006). However, the Dutch were displaced by the British, who were effectively able to colonise South Africa. The British maintained a stronghold on South Africa, as a result of its mineral resources and also on the conviction that South Africa was a vital link in British imperial communications (Calvocoress, 2006). The strategic location of South Africa and its climatic condition also made it attractive to settlers, migrants and the likes. It shares its land border with Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland, while two great oceans; the Indian and the Atlantic form its extensive coast line (Olaopa, 2010).

South Africa operates a quasi-federal system of government. This is evident in the existence of a central government at the apex and provincial, municipal and local authorities below (Olaopa, 2010). The local government system in South Africa is also multi-tiered in nature. The apartheid system featured prominently in the history of South Africa, and has no doubt, shaped the public sector reforms in the country. Apartheid formally ended with multi-racial elections that brought in the late President Nelson Mandela, as its elected president in 1994 (Olaopa, 2010). South Africa has an open/liberal government as it allows for freedom of speech, freedom of the press and open discussion of sensitive political issues (Picard, 2005).

South Africa and Xenophobic Attacks

Xenophobia is not a recent development in South Africa. The first attacks in the country occurred in 1994; the year that South Africa had its first multi-racial elections (Kumolu, 2017). Foreigners had witnessed up to 15 attacks between 1994 and 2017 with blacks from neighbouring African countries like Nigeria, Somalia and Zimbabwe becoming victims (Kumolu, 2017).

Xenophobic attacks in South Africa cannot be attributed to a particular cause; rather, there exist the remote and immediate causes. In the first place, there is exposure of South African to the apartheid policy. Apartheid comprises four elements which are: (a.) forceful separation of the whites and blacks, (b.) the control of the movement of Africans and employment (c.) separate development of black groups and (d.) police-state apparatus (Rubin & Winstein, 1976). A prominent promoter of apartheid was Prime Minister Henrik F. Verwoerd, who strengthened control between 1958 and 1966 over the blacks and have them concentrated in the Bantustans (Palmer & Perkins, 2005).

The South Africans' experience of 250 years of armed resistance to the invasions of their fatherland, progressive seizure of their lands and systematic enslavement of their people by first, the Dutch settlers and eventually, the arrival of the British military forces, which ended with the defeat in 1906 of an armed Bambata uprising in Natal (Ekpebu, 1999). As Ekpebu (1999) further observed, the armed resistance was eventually replaced by peaceful protest. These, over the years, changed the cultural orientation of the blacks, as they became hostile and aggressive in nature (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower & Sears, 1939). With the numerous years of protests and killings, human lives had no meaning to some of them anymore. They became heartless, embarked on discriminatory killings and lootings as they (South Africans) were careful enough not to attack Pakistanis, Indians and the Chinese living in their country (Onwuka, 2015). However, those that were being attacked remained mainly blacks; because of the colour of their skins.

The second cause of xenophobic attacks in South Africa bordered on the issue of migrants. Since South Africa exists as the economic hegemony of the African region, migrants from other African countries regarded it as a safe haven for them in terms of employment (Schaefer & Edinger, 2015). There is also the belief that South Africa would provide them with employment opportunities, which were not readily available in their home countries. With the advent of black majority rule in South

Africa, international economic sanctions were lifted and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country started increasing rapidly. For instance, economic growth rose from less than 1.5 per cent, which it was between 1980 and 1994 to slightly under three per cent between 1995 and 2003 (Niyi-Akinmade, 2014). Over time, South Africa had demonstrated a greater focus than Nigeria in political organisation and sound economic management, making the country to become a member of the economic power block that is made up of countries like Brazil, Russia and China (Zabadi & Onuoha, 2012). The presence of South African companies like MTN and Multi-choice in other African countries also gave migrants the impression that all was well with South Africa.

Against this backdrop, however, is the issue of high unemployment rate in South Africa, which stood at about 25 percent in 2014; a rate higher than what it was in 1994 (Ogunnaike, 2014). As at 2015, the economy could not provide jobs for about eight (8) million people. This invariably implies an increase in poverty among the citizens (Schaefer & Edinger, 2015). There is the erroneous belief among the people that migrants are the cause of unemployment in South Africa and hence, the reason or basis for the misfortune of the South Africans (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower & Sears, 1939).

There is also the issue of dearth of basic infrastructure like electricity. The country continues to witness frequent power cuts, which had severe impacts on the manufacturing sector (Schaefer & Edinger, 2016). As the manufacturing sector was adversely impacted, there is the multiplier effect on productivity, employment and economic growth. Cumulatively, government's inability to provide quality service delivery for blacks in several parts of South Africa had resulted into frustration of its citizens, which in turn led to the spate of xenophobic attacks that were experienced by Nigerians and some other Africans living in the country. This situation has been further compounded by the seed of discord, manifested as hate speech, sown by some leaders and politicians to the effect that migrant workers are the ones responsible for unemployment in South Africa (Olawole, 2017). Though, it must be acknowledged that the immediate cause of the 2015 attacks was the employment of migrants to replace South Africans, following a labour dispute in a supermarket. There was also the pronouncement of Goodwill Zwelithini, King of Zulu ethnic group that suggested that foreigners had to pack their belongings and exit from South Africa (Schaefer & Edinger, 2015).

In addition, the seeds of discord have been sown by politicians between the South African nationals and non-nationals because of their inordinate ambition to govern. As Kumolu (2017) has observed, politicians in the past and even in the present are exploiting xenophobia statements in their campaigns, in order to secure electoral victories. This selfish attitude no doubt fuels the embers of xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

Criminal activities of African migrants have also fueled the incidences of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. For instance, out of the ninety-seven (97) deported Nigerians from South Africa in the first quarter of 2017, six were alleged to have had drug-related cases in South Africa. Ten of the deportees were arrested for

other criminal offences, while the rest had migration offences against them (Hua, 2017). Alleged criminal activities of some Nigerians had not given the country a good image globally and in South Africa in particular. Reported ostentatious living of some Nigerians in South Africa arising from criminal activities had also made them source of envy and, therefore, vulnerable to attacks from the nationals in that country.

South Africa's government insensitivity to xenophobic attacks in the past had encouraged further attacks on foreigners in that country. In spite of the people's outcry over the 2008 attacks on resident Africans, "it took weeks for the government to condemn the attacks and take measure to get the situation under control" (Schaefer & Edinger, 2015:32). As aptly put by Onwuka (2017), the body language of the South African President, Jacob Zuma, seems to be encouraging xenophobic attacks in South Africa, meaning that government's perceived insensitivity had been taken as the tactical approval of attacks against fellow black Africans.

Furthermore, it is also perceived that South Africa has a buoyant economy. This, no doubt can be attributed to the estimation that South Africa is Africa's most industrialised country on the continent. This has made it to attract thousands of foreign nationals every year, seeking refuge from poverty, economic crises, war and government persecution in their home countries (South African History Online, 2017). It is on record also that refugees come from different countries, precisely; African countries like Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe while some of the non-African countries, whose nationals migrate into South Africa include Pakistan and Bangladesh (South African History Online, 2017). The issue of migration from Nigeria to South Africa might have further been compounded by the World Bank's classification of Nigeria as a fragile state. This was done in 2008, arising from lack of good governance, weak institutions and low life expectancy in the country (Omole & Omotosho, 2010).

The public sector reforms carried out in South Africa, though had their own advantages, they are also laced with their huge drawbacks. The new government that was formed in 1994, as a result of multi-racial government had inherited an over-bloated civil service. This was as a result of the decision of the country to look inward following the sanctions on it because of the protected apartheid policy. This actions stifled public administration and the calls for rapid reforms (Jensen, 1988). The reforms were to bring about the overhauling of public sector organisations, rationalisation of their services and improvement in service delivery (Olaopa, 2010). This, no doubt, contributed to the unemployment malady in the country that could have been responsible for the hostilities being meted out to foreigners, mostly African peoples.

There is also the issue of primordial attachment of the South Africans. The reason for this is not far-fetched. During the apartheid period, as a way of promoting racial segregation, the blacks were organised, based on their ethnic groups, into territorial homelands known as Bantustans as Transkei, Verde and Labowe, among others (Olaopa, 2010). These Bantustans have not been dissolved and are now integral parts of South Africa (Olaopa, 2010). The segregation made the people to

develop a sense of 'we' against 'them', which aided xenophobia, being experienced in the country.

Implications of Attacks in South Africa for Intra-African Relations

As could be observed, the relationship between African states has been cordial over the years. The African Union, known as the foremost regional organisation, exists as a means of fostering collaborative engagement within the African continent. Intra-regional organisations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also play prominent roles in this regard in promoting bilateral relations. However, if the spate of the xenophobic attacks continues among the African states and in particular, between South Africa and African states like Mozambique, Somalia, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, collaborative efforts among these states face a bleak future in the following ways:

In the first place, xenophobic violence can result in reprisal attacks; a spontaneous action that can threaten relations among the African states. For instance, with the xenophobic attacks that occurred in South Africa early 2017, the National Assembly in Nigeria warned that if the trend continued, Nigeria would have no choice, other than to embark on reprisals against South African businesses (Ibrahim, 2017).

In spite of the fact that no Nigerian was killed in the latest attacks in South Africa, there were protests by some youths at the South African Embassy, Lagos against xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The protesters urged Nigeria's then Acting President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, to close down South African High Commission in Nigeria, declare the High Commissioner and other officials as 'personae non grata', as a measure to demand that, it was time for the safety of Nigerians to be guaranteed (Ibrahim, 2017). If this suggestion had been taken by the Federal Government, it would have resulted in a diplomatic row between the two countries. The agreement to co-operate on military weaknesses that was signed by the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshall Sadique Abubakar, and his South African counterpart, after the attacks, would possibly not have come up (Ajibade, 2017).

There is no doubting the fact that the envisaged diplomatic row would have negative effects on the future of collaborative engagement between Nigeria and South Africa, which is in tandem with the argument of the Linkage Theory (Johari, 2014). For instance, for refusing Nigerians entry into South Africa over alleged holding of fake Yellow Fever vaccination cards, the former Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2013 said, after deporting 136 South African in retaliation that "it will be measure for measure, we will not let it go unreciprocated. The signal must go out, not just to South Africa, but also to the rest of the world" (Ijediogor, 2013:49).

The protests against the attacks were understandable in the sense that in the last two years, Nigeria had lost about 116 persons to the attacks. In the attacks of February 2017, no Nigerian was reportedly killed but their properties were looted and torched (Ibrahim, 2017). According to Schaefer and Edinger (2015), another potential African backlash is in the area of trade. Schaefer and Edinger (2015) opined that, in 2014, African economies received close to one-third of South African exports by

making the continent to be the second most important export market after Asia and an important importer of South African value-added goods. As they further asserted, South Africa became Africa's largest internal investor, with South African companies like SAB Miller, MTN, Multi-choice and Shoprite, extending their activities to the frontiers of other African states.

With the hostilities, these companies would be negatively affected and this would impact on South Africa's economies. More so, when in the light of the violence in 2015, civil society organisations in Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe were already calling for the boycott of South African brands, products and services (Schaefer & Edinger, 2015). In addition, there is the issue of regional integration, which hitherto had been on a sound footing, with calls from South African politicians for stronger economic integration (Jensen, 1988). Stronger ties definitely would be difficult to promote when in actual fact, these politicians fail to take action to contain xenophobic attacks on their fellow Africans and peoples (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower & Sears, 1939), an unpleasant experience, which led Kupoluyi (2013:52) to ask whether the "Big Brother policy of our diplomacy should be critically reviewed". Furthermore, African government should improve their economies and, as a matter of priority, attract foreign direct investment that can drive their citizens' home, by looking inward and focusing more on staying at home rather than embarking on greener pastures despite the huge risk involved.

Lastly, xenophobic violence can affect social interactions among the nationals of the African states, in particular; between South Africans and other Africans (Stein, 1980; Johari, 2014). Tourism would be difficult to undertake, and this will no doubt, cause prejudice. This definitely will negatively impact on political and economic relations. Xenophobic attacks are also against the ideals of Pan-Africanism and African nationalism, which the African Union stands for. It is un-African, retrogressive and should be discouraged among the African states without further delay.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it would be seen that South Africa's history is that of settlement and struggle. It would also be seen that over the years, Nigeria has maintained a cordial relationship with countries in the African continent and South Africa in particular. This was based on the premise that Africa exists as the centerpiece of its foreign policy. However, the cordial relationship is being marred by xenophobic violence in South Africa due to some cogent reasons like unemployment, frustration, envy and dearth of infrastructure. If the attacks persist, the paper submits that it portend a bleak future for collaborative engagement among African states and peoples.

Recommendations

In view of the threat posed by xenophobic attacks to harmonious relationship among the African states and peoples, the following recommendations are hereby made:

In the first place, African countries should look inward on how they can improve the quality of growth in their countries and create jobs for their citizens (Okonjo-Iweala, 2016), where the citizens of an African country cannot secure jobs, they try to relocate to Europe or a country like South Africa, where they feel their dreams can be realised. Eventually that decision can become a burden to the government and people of such a country. Essentially, Nigeria should see how it could develop her economy to facilitate growth and development. This can be achieved by encouraging foreign direct investment. Foreign direct investment can only be achieved if Nigeria is able to eliminate the issue of insurgency, kidnapping, Fulani herdsmen attacks, youth restiveness in the Niger Delta and other forms of violence in the country.

Secondly, the South African nationals should be re-oriented in order for them to see the need to continuously accommodate people from other countries of the world. Blacks from the African countries, who have been frequently attacked, will then be perceived as their brothers and sisters. Skill acquisition also exists as a panacea to unemployment in the African states. South African government should come up with skill acquisition programmes for the restive and unemployed youths in that country.

Lastly, the issue of illicit and hard drugs rampaging many African states; South Africa inclusive, should be vigorous and seriously addressed by the governments of the respective African states. Efforts should be made to see that drug peddling is reduced while drug abuse is also combated to make it possible for the youths to act rationally and reasonably without succumbing to the negative effects of narcotics. An effective way of achieving this is to stamp out corruption from public bureaucracy that will make relevant agencies of government to statutorily function in the interest of the nation.

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