

Xenophobia: Healing a Festering Sore in Nigerian-South African Relations

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Abstract

Nigeria and South Africa are two leading countries in Africa. Located in different sub-regions on the continent, Nigeria in West Africa, South Africa in Southern Africa, they have been involved in each other's spheres of life since the days of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. In their relations however, there has been palpable rivalry and envy which centre majorly on the leadership of the continent. While at inter-governmental level the rivalry has been fairly healthy, shortly after the liberation of South Africa in 1994, however, the South African citizens began to express xenophobic feelings against African immigrants including Nigerians almost with rhythmical regularity, a trend that has been persistently straining the official relations between the two countries. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the causes of xenophobia in South Africa and how it can be curbed with a view to improving the often strained Nigerian-South African relations. The study using secondary data, discovered that xenophobic attacks in South Africa can be largely hinged on relative deprivation, extreme nationalism and poverty among others. The study therefore, recommended among others, social re-orientation, poverty alleviation; and good governance as the panacea to the festering challenge of xenophobia.

Keywords: Nigeria, South Africa, Apartheid, Xenophobia, Relative Deprivation

1. Introduction

Nigeria and South Africa are two countries on the continent of Africa that have gained global attention and reckoning for different reasons. While, for instance, Nigeria with an estimated population of 180 million, is globally regarded as the most populous black country in the globe, South Africa has gained recognition as the conscience of racial parity on the world stage, having passed through and survived the throes of apartheid for decades before its eventual liberation partly through global help and internal political struggle. Though located in different regions on the continent of Africa, Nigeria and South Africa, have been involved in each other's different spheres of life-social, political and economic. For instance, though in West Africa, Nigeria was one of the leading African countries that championed the struggle against apartheid when it prevailed in South Africa. Apart from moral, material and financial resources committed to the fight against apartheid, Nigeria indeed then, made fighting apartheid or racial discrimination one of its foreign policy objectives. Its distance to South Africa notwithstanding, its outstanding contributions to the liberation struggle earned it a seat among the frontline states in the South African sub-region, fighting the apartheid regime.

Ironically, at about the time South Africa won racial parity, Nigeria was in turn passing through the furnace of military repression which reached its apogee in the days of General Sanni Abacha, 1993-1998. During this era, apart from gross arbitrariness, the Abacha regime also witnessed large scale abuse of human rights; violation of the rule of law and tendency towards absolutism. This trend could not but attract the attention and intervention of South Africa, then led by President Nelson Mandela.

Just as Nigeria showed great concern towards combating apartheid, so also did South Africa towards fighting the military irritants in General Sanni Abacha and his cohort until the collapse of the regime. Immediately apartheid subsided in South Africa, the citizens of both countries started to show interest in each other's country as they began to seek and explore business opportunities that exist in both countries. In fact, it was the South African Mandela-led government's policy, to attract African immigrants to South Africa to help fill the manpower gap created by the apartheid. Thus, the web of interactions between the citizens of both countries continued to widen and deepen in scope. For instance, as at 2011, the estimated Nigerians living in South Africa totaled 24,000, while South Africans in Nigeria are also sizable in number exploiting business, religious and other socio-cultural opportunities. For instance, in 1999, the South African companies in Nigeria were only 4. By 2016 the number has phenomenally increased to 120 employing Nigerians and South Africans (*The Guardian*, 2017).

In 2008, trade between the two countries stood at \$2.1 billion. By 2012 it had increased to \$3.6 billion. Amidst these seemingly normal relations, however, exists rivalry between Nigeria and South Africa as to which is the giant of Africa economically, politically and socially. This rivalry with its attendant competitive and envious spirit could not but graduate to hatred particularly on the part of South African citizens towards Nigerians in South Africa. This hatred has metamorphosed to the phenomenon of xenophobia which has led to loss of lives and properties of Nigerians living in South Africa. A phenomenon that loomed in 1995, has festered up till today. Although xenophobia is not the official policy of the South African government, it is rather a phenomenon perpetrated by South African citizens for which the South African government has its share of blame. Yet, it has imposed considerable strain and stress on Nigerian-South African diplomatic, economic and social relations. It is against this backdrop that this article raised the following questions: what is xenophobia? What are the precipitating factors of xenophobia? What implications does it have for Nigerian-South African relations? how can the menace be permanently healed? The answers to these questions form the central objectives of this paper.

2. On Xenophobia

Xenophobia is one of the age-old challenges to human activities and existence. The concept has been traced to the Greek Words "xenos" which means stranger and "phobos" which means fear. In simple conception therefore, it has been defined as the irrational and intense fear that people have against anything that is strange or unfamiliar, more specifically against people from foreign nations or ethnic background (Mudailer cited in Adebisi & Agagu 2017:116). It is about expression of anger, fear and hatred towards foreign objects or people that are aliens in a country. At its extreme, it is not only limited to expression of anger towards foreign objects, and claims, but also entails physical elimination or attack on foreigners. Prominent xenophobia manifestation includes the anti-black activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States of America and the killing of over six million Jews by the Nazi government in Germany between 1941-1945 (p.116). This phenomenon of hate has also loomed large in South Africa which is the focus of this study. Its emergence in South Africa has been intricately linked to the era of apartheid in the country. Indeed, the seed of racial discrimination was sown by the apartheid system which prevailed in the country between 1948-1994. After democratization in 1994, contrary to expectations, the spate of the incidence of xenophobia increased. According to a study based on citizen survey across member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) published by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), South Africans expressed the harshest anti-foreigner sentiment, with 21% of South Africans in favour of a complete ban on entry by foreigners and 64% in favour of strict limitations on the numbers allowed (p.120).

This further became evident in this chronicle of xenophobic attacks in the country in recent times: in 1995, immigrants from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique living in Alexandra township were assaulted; a Mozambican and two Senegalese suffered similar attack in 1998; in 2000 seven foreigners were killed on the cape flats in xenophobic attack; in 2001, numerous Zimbabweans living in Zandspruit were killed in Olievenhouthbosch for allegedly murdering a local South African man, while another forty-seven Somali traders were killed in xenophobia attacks. In May 2005, sixty-two people lost their lives in xenophobic attacks. In 2015 and 2016, the country again recorded series of xenophobic attacks.

3. Xenophobia: The Precipitating Factors

3.1 Theoretical Underpinning

In order to remove the cancer of xenophobia in South Africa, it is very pertinent to delve into the root causes of the menace. As a form of socio-political action which has been accompanied by violence, xenophobia can be fittingly and partly explained from the Frustration-Aggression theoretical perspective. The Frustration – Aggression perspective was first propounded by the intellectual crew of John Dollard, Neal E. Miller *et al* in 1939 and further developed by Miller, Roger, Barker *et al* 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969. Other notable contributors to the theory include Robert Ted Gurr, Ivo K. and Rosalind, L. Feierabend and Betty Nesvold. Dollard *et al* proceed in their formulation by stating that, the occurrence of aggressive behaviour of which xenophobia is an example presupposes the existence of frustration. They argued further that, when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto or rented on an innocent target (Dollard, 1939). In his own contribution, Ted Gurr (cited in Fawole, 1994:13) proposed that, (a) the potential for collective violence is a function of the extent and intensity of shared discontents among members of a society; and (b) the potential for political violence is a function of the degree to which such shared discontents are blamed on the political system and its agents (p.13). He thus explicated further that, discontent, arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic instigating condition for participant to engage in any form of collective violence (p.13). Relative deprivation is defined as the perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and value capabilities (p.13). These value expectations he explained, represent the "goods and condition of life to which people believe they are rightly entitled while value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining, given the social means available to them (p.13). In other words, if by its own conception a group believes it is not getting social justice in a system, there is the likelihood that such a group will engage in one form of aggressive behaviour at any point in time.

In another contribution, Freierabend and Nesvold argued that, systematic frustration often leads to aggression. Put differently, it is argued that, if a political system breeds frustration or social injustice, it is at the risk of attracting violent antagonism to itself. To them, frustration arises mainly from the inability of the political system to satisfy or guarantee the attainment and maintenance of the social goals, aspirations and values of the people. When goal attainment falls far below expected attainment sense or goal, frustration sets in. The picture of the frustration becomes bigger when there is no likelihood that the system will in the foreseeable future create room for redress. (p.13). In such scenario, aggressive behaviour becomes inevitable (p.13).

The above theoretical postulations of course largely underpinned a good number of the xenophobic attacks that had occurred in South Africa. For instance, between 2000 and 2016, unemployment rate in South Africa averaged 25.37% reaching an all time high of 31.20 % in the first quarter of 2013. As at 2016, it stood at 26.6% (Trading Economics, 2017). Caused, of course, by the way and manner the economy of the country has been managed by the country's political leaders, however, tactfully, some South African political leaders have continually, publicly and vicariously held foreigners responsible for the absence of enough jobs for the South African youths. In other words, foreigners are perceived as the source of their relative deprivation and frustration and have therefore become objects of aggressive behaviour. A brief examination of the April 2015 xenophobic attacks will be sufficed here. The attacks which were largely directed at African immigrants from countries such as Nigeria, Mozambique, Somalia, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, were allegedly precipitated by Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini, when at a rally in the northern province of South Africa, KwaZulu – Natal, he publicly lamented that foreigners were making life difficult for South Africans, by gradually taking over the local economy. Obviously accusing foreigners of depriving South Africans of their well-deserved socio-economic opportunities, he then further charged: we are requesting those who came from outside to please go back to their countries (*This Day*, April 19, 2015:6). The king's position was reechoed when Edward Zuma the son of the South African President also said: we need to be aware that as a country we are sitting on a ticking time bomb of them (foreigners) taking over the country. The reason why I am saying this is because some of the foreigners are working for private security companies where they have been employed for cheap labour. These companies are running away from complying with South African labour laws (p.6). After this seeming sensitization of the South African youth to the existence of relative deprivation caused by foreigners, they soon resorted to attacking foreigners mostly Africans and their businesses.

Buttressing this further, during the February 18, 2017 xenophobic attacks on Nigerians, the South African High Commissioner to Nigeria, Lulu Muguni said that, the cause of attacks by citizens of his country on Nigerians and other nationals was based on the belief that their means of livelihood were under threat (*Daily Post*, February 26, 2017). He explained further: the root cause can be viewed more as social challenges that exist when some people find out that their businesses are being threatened. When we were growing up, we had businesses that were run by our own people, but now they feel that outsiders have taken over.

3.2 Factors Miscellaneous

While the Frustration–Aggression perspective has correctly thrown some light on the factors under-pinning xenophobia in South Africa, other factors outside this theoretical box have also been discovered. According to a report by the Human Sciences Research Council, (cited in Adebisi & Agagu 2017) apart from relative deprivation built around intense competition for jobs, commodities and housing, xenophobia has also been attributed to (a) Group processes, including psychological categorization processes that are nationalistic rather than super-ordinate (b) South African exceptionalism, or a feeling of superiority in relation to other Africans, and (c) Exclusive citizenship or a form of nationalism that excludes others. While Nigerians are caught in the web of all these general causes of South African violent resentment to foreigners, there are other specific reasons which have made Nigerians more vulnerable to xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

Prominent among these factors is the silent complaint by South African youngmen that South African girls prefer to follow or marry Nigerian men because of their wealth, instead of following or marrying not-so-rich South African young men. This trend has therefore kindled the feeling of hate towards Nigerian men, hence the attack on them, looting of their businesses and destruction of their property. Another factor is the complaint that Nigerian victims of xenophobic attacks are illegal immigrants who engage in criminal activities especially trade in illicit drugs, and employed by South African businessmen to evade tax. Generally speaking again, apart from the above factors, the existence of some deficit in the governance of South Africa by its leaders has also facilitated xenophobic attacks. For instance, the high rate of unemployment in the country and the inability of the government to create enough jobs have created room for the jobless youths to engage in crimes including xenophobic attack. Poverty rate in the country has equally been high. Between 2006 and 2011, extreme poverty stood at 20.2% and 45.5% for moderate poverty. This translates to 12.6 million people living in extreme poverty in 2006 and 10.2 million people in 2011; while 27 million were living in moderate poverty in 2006 and 23 million in 2011 (Brand South Africa).

Apart from this, although xenophobia is not institutionalized in South Africa, however some government acts of omission or commission often suggest tacit support for the perpetrators of xenophobic attacks. For instance, after the 2015 and 2017 attacks, the South African authorities embarked on the search for illegal immigrants working in South African owned businesses and threatening sanctions against the owners of the businesses that employed them. This action of course can be read by xenophobists as government's support and justification for their actions. According to Lulu (*Daily Post*, February 26, 2017) "some people believe that people who create problem come into the country illegally and they say South Africa must control the borders. However, as Lulu further rightly acknowledged, it is not every foreigner that comes into the country illegally (*Daily Post*, February 26, 2017). Also, the failure of the South African authorities to arrest, diligently prosecute and convict xenophobists over the years has equally encouraged the phenomenon to thrive. Above all, the persistent ploy of South African political leaders to blame the joblessness of their youth on relative deprivation by immigrants, instead of bad governance has equally fueled the phenomenon. When people apportion such blame to foreigners, the youth could not but feel encouraged to attack foreigners.

4. Nigerian-South African Relations: The Apartheid Years, Post-Apartheid Years, And The Xenophobic Contents And Responses

South Africa is a multi-racial country made up of the coloured, the whites, Indians who are in the minority and the Bantu or blacks who are in the majority. The country became an independent union, a self-governing British dominion, in 1910. In between the First and Second World Wars, South Africa internal politics was rived with violence. According to Laurence (1968:25) between the two wars, South Africa's violent brand of internal politics continued, punctuated by such events as the 1923 strike, when groups of whites went around shooting innocent Bantu for no obvious reason".

In this intervening period, the colonial style of racial segregation was subsiding. However by 1948 when the Afrikaner National Party which represented minority interests took power in controversial circumstance, racial segregation relapsed. Laurence again captured the scenario very well when he wrote that:

Briefly, the colonial-style segregation of the races, which had been showing signs of breaking down (more and more non-whites were attending universities in the cities) was entrenched by law. In a descending scale of privileges and rights, the whites were at the top, and far below were the coloured, the Indians, and the Bantu with the least rights of all. Non-white representation in parliament dwindled almost to vanishing point... By the time of the Sharpeville affair in 1960, apartheid, as the world knows it, was a thorough and legal aspect of every aspect of South African life; the Nationalists Afrikaners were even more firmly in the saddle; and non-white protests against the Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act and other discriminatory legislation had reached a peak (p.25).

4.1 The Apartheid years

It was at about the time Nigeria was preparing for her independence that the Sharpeville Affair occurred in South Africa in March 1960; thus Nigeria joined the world system in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. During this period, Nigeria indeed had, as part of its foreign policy objectives, Africa as the centre-piece of its foreign policy and also combating colonialism and racial discrimination. It was on this plank that Nigeria joined forces with the liberation movements in South Africa and the rest of the world to wrestle South Africa from the jaw of the apartheid regime. Indeed, during the struggle against apartheid, Nigeria offered wide range of support to the South African freedom fighters. One of the discriminatory policies instituted by the apartheid regime was the issuance of identity cards to the black South Africans which they were required to carry at all times. The cards imposed the extent and time of their movements outside their separated communities. In March 1960, thousands of blacks in Sharpeville, an industrial area in Johannesburg, put up a huge resistance to this policy. The resistance was met with violence by the South African police and thus culminated in the death of about 100 blacks while several other hundreds were wounded (Idang, 1973:122). The Nigeria government then could not but join the rest of Africa and the world in condemning the South African authority. On 31st March 1960, the Nigerian Governor – General, Sir James Robertson told the House of Representatives that:

My Government deplors the recent tragic bloodshed in South Africa, and when Nigeria achieves independence, my ministers will employ every method which may be open to them to bring such tragic events to an end. My ministers feel confident that with the influence which an independent Nigeria can exercise in Africa, they will be able to achieve important results (cited in Idang, 1973:122).

A motion raised on the same floor of the House of Representatives calling on “the Government to take appropriate steps to ban the importation of South African goods in this country” was passed without much debates (p.123). Taking a cue from the federal authority, the Northern Nigeria House of Assembly not only urged the Federal Government to combat apartheid, the premier of the region, Sir Ahamadu Bello also announced that white South Africans would no longer be employed in the services of the region (p.123). In 1961 Nigeria also fought for the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO). In the same year the South African Dutch Reformed Church was also expelled from Nigeria. Nigeria also on many occasions actively supported the campaigns against the sales of arms to South Africa; expulsion from international organizations such as International Olympic Committee, and imposition of economic sanctions. In its fight against apartheid South Africa and minority rule in the Southern African region, the Balewa Government granted aid to Southern African refugees and provided financial assistance to African Liberation Movements (Ogwu, 1986:63). Nigeria’s financial assistance to the special fund of the OAU Liberation Committee then progressively increased from £10,000 in 1963/64 to £84,000 in 1965/1966 (p.64).

The General Gowon military administration that succeeded the Balewa administration equally showed interest in combating apartheid in South Africa in spite of the political instability or the civil war that initially confronted the administration. For instance, the administration not only condemned apartheid in strong terms at every forum, it was also opposed to the British supply of arms to South Africa. The Nigerian antagonistic position towards apartheid South Africa equally gained popular support of the Nigerian foreign policy attentive public. The support of the general public was well exemplified in their willingness to contribute generously to the South African Relief Fund set up by Nigeria to alleviate the plight of South African refugees (p.65).

The Muritala/Obasanjo military administration years also witnessed a flurry of radical offensive activities against apartheid regime in South Africa and also massive succor to the freedom fighters within and outside South Africa. Such measures included: opening of the doors of the administration to refugees and exiles from South Africa; admission of displaced South African students into tertiary institutions in the country; and offering employment to qualified South African graduates. Others included: rigorous campaign against engaging South Africa in dialogue to end apartheid; vociferous calls for the isolation of the country in numerous international fora or platforms; mounting pressure on important sources of support for South Africa's prosperity especially the United States of America and Britain (p.65). On account of USA's support for apartheid regime, the bilateral relations between USA and Nigeria went sour to the extent that in 1976, General Obasanjo refused the US Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger an official visit to Nigeria. The Obasanjo administration also nationalized Barclay's Bank for engaging in business with South Africa and the British Petroleum (BP) in Nigeria for selling Nigeria's oil illegally to South Africa (p.66). The civilian administration of Shehu Shagari; (1979-1983); the military administration of General Mohammadu Buhari (1983-1985); and the military administration of Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) sustained Nigeria's firm antagonistic posture to South Africa until South Africa's democratization in 1994.

4.2 Post-Apartheid Years

Following the democratization of South Africa in 1994, Nelson Mandela, the arrow head of the struggle against apartheid, emerged the President of South Africa. Upon assumption of office, Nelson Mandela opened the doors of South Africa to African immigrants including Nigerians to join in building a new multiracial South Africa and in appreciation of African countries' contributions to the dismantling of apartheid's political and administrative edifices in the country. More concretely, the open door policy was embarked upon to facilitate the scarce skills into the country. This became imperative because, apartheid grossly stunted educational development among the South African blacks and by extension skilled manpower in the country. As at the time Nelson Mandela democratically took over the reins of power in South Africa, the General Sanni Abacha regime in Nigeria had been well-entrenched in Nigeria and was notorious globally for violating the rule of law and for abuse of fundamental human rights. For these, the regime drew worldwide condemnation including scathing criticism by the South African President, Nelson Mandela. This development instantly strained the relationship between the two countries to the extent that Nigeria refused to go to South Africa in 1996 to partake in the African Cup of Nations football competition even when Nigerian was the defending champion (Kolawole, 1998:190).

In pursuit of his criticism and as a demonstration of his aversion to human rights abuse by the Abacha regime, Nelson Mandela spear-headed the suspension of Nigeria from the commonwealth for two years, a similar fate that befell South Africa in apartheid years. Beyond this, Mandela also frowned upon the Royal Dutch shell's failure to discontinue a \$4 billion gas project in Nigeria inspite of the pariah status of Nigeria in the world system. Following Nigeria's democratization in 1999, Nigeria again emerged under the Obasanjo (1999-2007) administration and his redemptive and re-integrative foreign policy, as a frontline state in the promotion of African development, economic integration and other general African issues (Adebisi, 2010:13). Rather than engaging in unhealthy rivalry with South Africa... the administration took South Africa as a partner in progress as it can be seen in their joint commitment to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) and their joint condemnation of the US war against Iraq (p.13). In fact, the trio of Obasanjo of Nigeria, Mbeki of South Africa and Bouteflika of Algeria were instrumental to the NEPAD initiative and implementation (P.13). Apart from this, the trade relations between Nigeria and South Africa also showed remarkable improvement during the period. For example in 2002, Nigeria's export to South Africa hit \$369m as against \$165m in 2001. The South Africa's exports to Nigeria also rose from \$164.8m in 2001 to \$272.8 million in 2002 (*The Punch*, cited in Adebisi, 2010:13). Years after the Obasanjo administration's co-operative relations with South Africa, Nigeria – South African relations again relapsed to the game of competition. This for example manifested in their differences in the choice of the chair of the African Union Commission. While Nigeria supported the retention of Jean Ping for another term in office on the basis of being from Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) country, South Africa, needless to say, stood by its citizen, the minister of Home Affairs, Nkosazana Dlanini, who eventually won. The support the South African authority gave to President Laurent Gbagbo of Coted'ivoire when he was dithering to vacate office after losing election in 2011, to which Nigeria was opposed, equally strained the relations between the two countries. In 2012 also, relations between the two countries were strained when the South African government expelled 125 Nigerian travelers to South Africa for not carrying or possessing yellow fever vaccination cards or immunization certificates.

The Nigerian government in retaliation, also expelled 56 South Africans from Nigeria. In spite of these, both countries have been engaging each other in dialogue with a view to improving their bilateral relations.

4.3 Xenophobic Contents and responses

As indicated elsewhere in this study, xenophobia is very common in South Africa, although some Nigerians, especially a section of the members of the business community, have also been expressing concerns about the phenomenal growth of South Africa investments in Nigeria. These concerns have not, however, developed or degenerated into the kind of hatred or xenophobic feelings South African citizens have been expressing towards Nigeria's growing business, educational and social interests in South Africa. The phenomenon of xenophobia in democratic South Africa reared its head in 1995. Since then, it has become a festering sore in the Nigerian- South African relations as it keeps re-occurring every now and then. Available data revealed that the 1995 attacks were targeted at African immigrants in South Africa in general including Nigerians. Between 2015-2017, more than 116 Nigerians lost their lives. In the 2016 and February 2017 attacks, no Nigerian died, but Nigerians lost a lot of goods and properties. In the April 2015 attack, Nigerians lost properties worth N21million. According to Ikechukwu Anyene, the president, Nigerian Union in South Africa, at the heat of the February 18, 2017 attack "as we speak, five buildings with Nigerians businesses including a church have been looted and burned by South Africans. One of the buildings, a mechanic garage with 28 cars under repairs, with other vital documents, were burned during the attacks" These trends have of course drawn reactions from both the citizens and government of Nigeria. The Nigerian government's reaction particularly since 2008 stemmed from Nigeria's adoption of "citizen's diplomacy" in 2007 as very central to its foreign policy.

Before then, Nigerians have been given bad name and image in the world system as a result of the activities of some Nigerians who engaged in international organized crimes such as, illicit trading in drugs; children and women trafficking and prostitution, notably in Italy, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, Indonesia, and South Africa among others, due largely to the harsh economic conditions in Nigeria. Consequent upon the fact that this had given Nigeria bad image and opprobrium globally, the Nigerian government was always reluctant to plead for clemency on behalf of those citizens in the countries they have committed any of the offences. As this attitude has exposed innocent Nigerians to maltreatment in foreign land, the "citizen diplomacy" was considered by the administration of Musa Yar'Adua as very imperative. In a sense and in the Nigerian context, citizen diplomacy is conceived as "a mechanism to protect the 'image and integrity' of Nigeria and react against nations which are hostile and who label them as corrupt". (cited in Folarin). Explaining the concept further, the then minister for Foreign Affairs, Ojo Madueke (cited in Folarin) lucidly said: if you are nice to our citizens, we will be nice to you; if you are hostile to us, we will also be hostile to you".

It is in line with this diplomacy that the Nigerian State has not been playing dumb and deaf to the plight of Nigerians in South Africa in the face of incessant xenophobic foment. For instance, apart from condemning the attacks, the Nigerian government on each occasion also engaged the South African authority in dialogue with a view to protecting law abiding Nigerians living in South Africa. After the February 2017 attacks, the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the South African ambassador for the discussion of the attacks during which he apologized on behalf of his country. For instance, after the February 2017 attack, the Nigerian House of Representatives Ad-Hoc Committee on the attacks went to South Africa to dialogue with the South African parliament on how to ensure better protection of Nigerians in South Africa. Led by the Majority Leader, Femi Gbajabiamila, it also met with the former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki. The committee, was among others, saddled with the tasks of reminding South Africa of the consequences of xenophobic attacks against Nigerians and the likely repercussions and to make it explicitly clear to the South African Government that Nigeria will not abandon its citizens in South Africa to suffer in the hands of the perpetrators of xenophobic assaults (*The Nation*, Sunday, April 16, 2017:40). Amidst diplomatic efforts, the South African authority assured law abiding Nigerian citizens of their safety. At the Bi-National Commission meeting, South Africa promised to look into the payment of compensation to Nigerians who lost property worth about 84 million naira during the 2015 attacks. The Nigerian public equally joined in condemning the attacks by way of fierce criticism and public protests. In this criticism, they kept on reminding South Africa through the media, of the roles Nigeria had played in securing freedom for the country under apartheid regime. The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and some youth groups in fact called for extra diplomatic measures to deal with South Africa.

The students body also held public protest in Abuja at the premises of some South African companies in Nigeria particularly the MTN, a Tele-communication company, given them ultimatum of 48 hours to leave Nigeria, or speak to the government of their country or face retaliatory actions. In response, the company sued for peace and assured Nigerians of continued South Africa's respect and safety for Nigerians living in South Africa. Also in South Africa, a group of South African citizens protested against the actions of the tiny xenophobists and appreciated the contributions of immigrants particularly Nigerians to the development and economy of South Africa. From this account, there is no doubt that inspite of the fact that xenophobia is not in the main, the official policy of the South African government, it has generated a considerable strain on the relations between the two countries.

5. Xenophobia: The Imperativeness of Healing

The incessant xenophobic attacks in South Africa indeed has far reaching implications for the socio-economic development and relations of both Nigeria and South Africa which *ipso facto* calls for healing. First, there is no doubt that South Africa still needs professionals and skilled manpower to drive its economy. This, the country on its own, cannot obviously provide at the current threshold of her national development. According to the Nigerian Union, the overwhelming majority of Nigerians add value to the South African society via various important fields like the academics, medicine, legal, engineering, business, and artisans among others (*The Nation*, April 16, 2017:40). If not healed, xenophobia can scare these professionals away from South Africa and rob it of their valuable contributions and thereby slow down the pace of South African development.

Second, it is also capable of discouraging fellow Africans from gravitating to South Africa for the pursuit of higher education, a trend which has just been growing and which is capable of boosting South African economy and image. In other words the phenomenon may hinder students' mobility from other parts of Africa including Nigeria, to South Africa for higher education. In a field survey conducted among 100 parents in Ondo state, Nigeria, to know their opinion on whether they would like to sponsor their children for higher education in South Africa or not, 80% indicated that they would prefer to send their children elsewhere outside Nigeria instead of South Africa because of the growing challenge of xenophobic attack (Adebisi & Agagu, 2017:122). The import of this likely trend is that, the opportunity for exchange of ideas and social-cultural values which cross border pursuit of higher education may afford may slow down if xenophobic attacks should persist (p.122)

Third, festering xenophobic attacks can provoke retaliatory actions by Nigerian citizens against South African investments in Nigeria. If this should happen, it will certainly undermine the economic progress of both countries as jobs, assets and financial resources will be lost. This is more so that, most of the notable South African investments in Nigeria like the Protea Hotels, MTN, Stanbic Merchant Bank of Nigeria, and Multichoice among others, are joint stock companies owned by Nigerians and South Africans.

Aside from this, xenophobic attacks may also further discourage foreign direct investment in South Africa. This is because the image xenophobic attacks have generally created for South Africa is that of a state hostile to foreigners and investment unfriendly. Already, Oando, a Nigerian Oil conglomerate has been listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and Dangote group another Nigerian company had invested about \$378 million in South Africa's cement industry. If these investments and other small scale ones are threatened by incessant xenophobic attacks, investors from Nigeria may go elsewhere and which does not augur well for the speedy transformation and job opportunities the South African and African economies in general require.

Furthermore, festering xenophobic attacks can also undermine the objectives or goals of integration of Africa being pursued by the African Union (AU). Part of the goals of the AU are: promotion of sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies; promotion of cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples and coordination and harmonization of policies between existing and future Regional Economic Community for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the union (Adebisi 2007:83). Obviously, the atmosphere of insecurity xenophobic attack often provokes cannot help in promoting these lofty unifying or integration goals.

Finally, in the course of xenophobic attacks, properties are destroyed. As a way of assuaging the victims, the South African authority has given an indication of the possibility of paying compensation to victims. As indicated elsewhere in this article, in 2015, Nigerians in South Africa's estimation of the value of the goods and properties lost was put at 84 million naira which the South African government promised to look into.

If paid, this of course constitutes a drain on the South African resources. Whereas, in an atmosphere devoid of xenophobic attacks, such money should have been used for the progress or development of South Africa.

6. Conclusion

There is no gain saying that the wind of festering xenophobic attacks blowing in South Africa poses serious threat to social, economic, educational, and cultural relations between it and Nigeria and also with the rest of the world. If this growing wave of xenophobic attacks is not checked, it may stunt the process of sustainable development of both countries as the duo have a lot of opportunities to offer each other in an undisturbed symbiotic relations. As xenophobia is largely attributable to relative deprivation; extreme nationalism, prevalence of poverty it is recommended that: first, the South African authority should embark on massive re-orientation of its citizens on the need to be warm and open-minded in their relations with their fellow African brothers and sisters. The African philosophy of being one's brother's keeper and the virtue of interdependency should largely dominate the contents of such orientation programme. Second, South Africa, though still needs manpower now, should in the future, also institute an exchange programme under which some of its citizens will be made to serve or work in other African countries for a short period. This will not only project South Africa, but will also remove the stereotypes or prejudices they have about the rest of Africans. Third, the South African political leaders should also strive for good governance so as to facilitate greater social justice, job opportunities and equality for the citizenry. The citizens should also demand this from their leaders rather than holding foreigners liable for their predicament. Furthermore and as part of their demand for good governance, South Africans should sustain their noticeable current protest and fight against political corruption in the country so as to free more resources to the state to pursue job creation and poverty alleviation programmes. Fourth, the South African government should also intensify efforts to fight poverty in the country and improve its social security system with a view to alleviating poverty.

Beyond this, the South African authority should also create opportunities for South Africans and Nigerians to engage in economic partnerships, collaboration and networking. The existence of chambers of commerce between the two countries is a good development in forging stronger economic ties. To further this, more legal framework should be put in place to promote joint economic ventures between South Africans, Nigerians and other foreigners. Finally, it has been argued that some of the Nigerian victims of xenophobic attacks are illegal entrants to South Africa who deal in illicit drugs among other international organized crimes. However, while this may be true or not, the globally acknowledged fact is that, no government should allow its citizens to take law into their hands. The South African government should therefore take the following steps: one, it should sensitize its citizens to the need to abide by the rule of law by allowing their law enforcement agencies to handle cases of illegal immigrants engaging in crimes. Two, the fact that there are illegal Nigerian immigrants in South Africa suggests systemic failure or governance deficit on the part of the Nigerian and South African governments perpetrated by their immigration officials. If some Nigerians had illegally gained entry to South Africa in the presence of the South African immigration officials, then, there is the need for the South African government to overhaul its immigration operatives.

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