Politics of Belonging, Economic Competition and the Sustainability of Xenophobic Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract: Postcolonial South Africa has been characterised by an Insider-Outsider conflict, as the former continues to censure the latter for the economic ills and other vices plaguing Africa's last colonial outpost. The sustainability of xenophobic violence is premised on the alleged propaganda of populism by the political class instead of channelling efforts towards resuscitating the economy. This paper contends that xenophobia is being sustained because of limited economic opportunities and denialism on the part of the state that xenophobia is non-existent in the country. Utilising Political Identity Theory and qualitative research methods through a desktop study, document analysis and historical analysis of available data from secondary sources, the study discovered that the inability of the state to better the lives of the masses was a major source of animosity. The study concludes by advising the government to secure its borders against illegal entry by irregular migrants and that the AU should become more proactive in mitigating the conflict pandemic in Africa, thus reducing illegal migration and fostering Pan-Africanism.

Keywords: Conflict, Denialism, Irregular Migrants, Xenophobia

Introduction

The twenty-first century perceives immigrants as threats to national stability and criminals, especially male youths across migrant communities. Contestations on the status of an insider or an outsider is at the centre of global discourses in a highly volatile and fickle world that is fraught with a surge in the number of violence be it on religious, cultural and ethnic differences between and among states in the international system (Yuval-Davis, 2011; Mijić & Parzer, 2024). The politics of belonging is now topmost on the political agenda of many countries. Hall (2013) notes that politics of belonging examines the existing enigma between protection and meeting: with concerns stemming from subterranean national reliance on migration and diversity, that corresponds with a resolute political opposition to identify more flexible and blended forms of belonging in a vastly mobile, irregular and interconnected world. Nyamnjoh (2005) and Cowen & Gilbert (2024) both contend that in Africa and other continents, belonging seems to be a deciding factor, as scholars are drawn into finding discoveries that query the right to belong to a particular country on grounds of citizenship and nationality. The colonial masters employed military tactics to deal with primordial African societies, as a result, violence was the order of the day, and this ugly trend became a norm in many African states. This violent legacy supports the violence thesis as Africa is enmeshed in a plethora of violence manifesting in different forms.

Zenker (2020) adds to the debate with the submission that belonging has been politicised as it handles notions of sense of belonging, confined to particular understanding, manifesting in the quagmire where individuals locate themselves socially, historical identities, and important governments at differing junctures. Universal history verifies the numerous techniques that seek to uphold belonging with legal restraints and how legal groupings have become occupied and converted into identity symbols, thereby disclosing the politics of belonging as a regulative project par excellence. With the trends and trajectories of globalization in recent times, identity politics has become keenly contested, with groups clamouring for recognition. Situations of this sort often trigger the sustainability of politics of belonging and boundary maintenance without limits.

Scholars have contended that colonialism militarised African societies, and this, in turn, built and bequeathed a personality of violence on the African continent. Over time, Africans imbibed this violent nature, culminating in the making of violence a customary way of life by imbibing it into the polity. This situation substantiates the mushrooming of the cycle and cobwebs of violence across the African continent. In recent times, the recurrence of xenophobic violence seems to be associated with African history, although this is not new in inter-Africa relations. Its vicious nature has become worrisome for many African states as their peace, security and development projects are under severe threats. The different regions of Africa are being embroiled in nationalist and populist projects, with African foreign nationals being prime targets. There exists extensive research and body of knowledge on violent forms of xenophobia on the African continent. But only a small fraction of research has beamed the searchlight on subtle and conciliatory forms of xenophobia in democracies like Botswana (Zeleza, 2008; Akinola, 2018; Gapa, 2024).

Apartheid Structured Socio-Economic Conditions

The first set of inhabitants in South Africa were the KhoeSān, who made South Africa their place of abode between the 8th and 14th centuries. Other civilisations, like the Boers, British, other black Africans of various and Indian labourers made their respective journeys in the mid-1860s (Cowden et al., 2020). The detection of solid minerals in commercial quantities in Kimberly and Transvaal in the 1900s turned out to be an economic game-changer for South Africa (Parfitt, 2024). There was progressive economic growth between 1946 and 1968 as South Africa recorded about a 5 % increase yearly. Concurrently, the high growth rate was applauded by the South African Reserve Bank because Japan had the same statistics as South Africa then. Researchers ascribed South Africa's economic prosperity to huge financial investments made by white entrepreneurs and good economic policies and decisions implemented by the then apartheid regime. However, the turbulent political situation served as an intimidation to the growth of the South African economy. However, rapid changes in industrialisation, urbanisation and technology propelled South Africa's economic growth (Moll, 1991).

Modise and Mtshiselwa (2013), and Jwilisi and Onwuegbuchulam (2025), both traced the socio-economic conditions of blacks during the apartheid era to the Natives Land Act of 1913 which was devised as a ploy to ensure the economic retardation of the blacks, thus placing this segment of the populace into abject poverty; a quagmire that as defied solutions till now. The subsequent dispossession of black-owned land by the whites placed blacks at a disadvantaged position, stripping them of their source of income and silencing their prospects in the economy. The dispossession of land and other biased actions taken by the apartheid regime were offshoots of colonial and apartheid policies and seem to be the root cause of animosity as the offended asked for adequate compensation because many ejected people were caught unawares by colonial hegemony. The state instituted a land redistribution agenda through a land reform programme with the sole aim of reducing poverty. Evidence-based research points out that amongst the Whites, Blacks, Indians and Coloured, Black South Africans happen to be the poorest in the polity. In 2012, the population of poor blacks was approximately 61.4%, in comparison to whites, which stood at 4.35%. This further buttresses the widening gap of inequality. Strategically, the post-apartheid administration sought to better the lives of the marginalised blacks by inventing programmes to reduce pervasive poverty and inequality in the country. Among these were: The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, the White Paper on South African Land Policy and the Green Paper on Land Reform. But these interventions have not been able to reduce the burden of colonial oppression. Juta (2023) and Viveck (2024) affirm the existence of some structural negative socio-economic residue from the colonial past. Issues range from the disempowerment of the blacks who encounter challenges in accessing financial resources, scarce economic prospects, low educational standards and political apathy. Besides, there was the operation of intentional racial exclusion and the inability of post-apartheid administrations to resolve localised racism between locals and African foreign nationals in the country.

From Apartheid to a Nondiscriminatory Constitutional Democracy

Pietersen (2023), and Vora and Vora (2004), assert that the conclusion of the National Party (NP) to legitimise the African National Congress (ANC) and the celebrated freedom of Nelson Mandela after staying being kept in solitary captivity for 27 by the repressive regime were two remarkable events signalling the fall of apartheid in South Africa. The ANC stalwarts who were in exile also had their pariah status invalidated; by implication, they had the volition to return from exile without any form of oppression executed against them. This move was highly applauded, with both whites and blacks embracing peace. The top shots of the ANC and the NP held several meetings in a bid to formulate a temporary constitution, thus providing the impetus for a smooth handover of power from white and hegemonial minority rule to black majority democratic government. This was specified in the ending clause of the Constitution:

> The Adoption of this Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions of strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of

humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge. These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for Ubuntu (the African philosophy of humanism) but not for victimization. In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past. (Krog, 1998: vi)

A restructured South Africa now operated by attaining constitutional democracy; however, its vicious past continued and was carried over into the democratic dispensation (Camara, 2024). The new democratic setup was confronted with the challenge of establishing an unbiased, equal and balanced polity. The Mandela administration struggled to erase the evils of apartheid, which was usually accompanied by animosity and criticism, mainly from the impecunious black population. The ANC and the apartheid government had a series of meetings between 1990 and the first democratic elections in 1994 to establish the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995. The main objective of this commission was to look into cases of highhandedness and other crimes against humanity committed during the reign of terror by the apartheid rulers. The TRC in South Africa relied on similar systems of previous panels, but various discussions were held nationally, and the request for reconciliation on a nationwide basis distinguished it from other commissions. Subsequently, the establishment of the commission was built on the provisions allocated to it in the constitution and often tagged as the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*, No. 3 of 1995. The commission was saddled with the responsibility of thoroughly scrutinising gross human rights abuses perpetrated from the period of the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 until the year 1994. The commission was also made up of 17 commissioners who were carefully chosen, with Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu and Dr Alex Boraine placed in positions of chairman and vice-chairman, respectively, as documented in the December 1995 Government Gazette (Mamdani, 2002; Balcomb, 2025). For proper effectiveness, the TRC was divided into three committees, namely, The Human Rights Violations Committee, which probed human rights highhandedness that occurred between 1960 and 1994, The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, which was given particular directives to restore the dignity of denigrated victims and arrange proposals to assist and facilitate their collective rehabilitation. The Amnesty Committee gathered several applications from people who pleaded for amnesty according to the stipulations provided for in the Act of Parliament (Grunebaum, 2017).

South Africa experienced a deluge of nation-building challenges because of the huge gaps in inequality, complications in unifying many rural areas that were isolated by colonial rule, and the tolerated indiscriminate killings and misappropriation of the state's finances (Baloyi, 2018). Under president Mbeki, the government continued with the legacy of the Mandela's government of national unity and reconciliation. Thabo Mbeki emphasised that better socio-economic and living conditions were necessary preconditions to the success of the reconciliatory plans (Gevisser, 2009). The administration was confronted with inherited problems that had to be resolved urgently to appease South Africans by assuring them that apartheid was non-existent again. Additionally, South Africa had to quickly inaugurate democratic institutions that would satisfactorily reduce the barrage of inequality, poverty, rising levels of crime, unemployment, and the HIV pandemic and provide habitable accommodation and fair healthcare and education (Mosala *et al.,* 2017).

A lot of intricacies are involved in nation-building if the desired result is eventually attained. Gagiano (1990:32) conceives nation-building as 'the integration of communally diverse and/or territorially discreet units into the institutional framework of a single state and the concomitant transfer of a sense of common political identity and loyalty to the symbolic community defined by the founding ideology of such a state. The new democratic structure in South Africa had to contend with the enormous assignment of integrating the white, coloured, Indian and black communities due to the prevailing racial and ethnic divide and the marginalised situation of blacks in South Africa (Hampton, 2014; Pirtle, 2021). The pains of colonialism, which included years of denigration, derision and repression by the apartheid system of governance, could not be undone under 5 years, the stipulated tenure for the president. In order to accomplish long-term goals like economic development, provision and unrestricted access to basic social amenities and infrastructure, the right strategies had to be in place. (Gumede, 2017).

Theoretical Framework and Research Methods

Political Identity Theory

Identity politics has to do with strings of political actions which include multiculturalism, feminism, homosexuality, existing religious intolerance and violent ethnic conflicts (Cressida, 2009). In the West, it has gained more traction and identity politics is critical to this discourse. To get an in-depth comprehension of identity politics, identity as a notion cannot be discarded. By implication, it is agreed upon that people, groups and entities have numerous identities

(Hutchinson and Smith, 1996). Some contributory reasons that frequently affect political actions are founded on identity. In some instances, scholars decided to beam the searchlight on material grounds (Sanchez, 2006), while others dealt with socio-cultural, linguistic, technological and religious issues (Sawyer, 2006). Various schools of thought have challenged the pertinence of identity politics in society. Identity politics has different connotations; some have labelled it as the politics of recognition (Brunt, 1989) and others have tagged it politics of differences (Young, 1990) having the likelihood for mutual recognition of a person and the other; taking into consideration variations in terms of culture, social status and ideology (Honneth, 1995). A fraction averred that identity politics exists in a political sphere that triggers the rise of change agents who are vehemently against a supremacist regime (Sanchez, 2006). However, a major disapproval is that it births a negative potency that exacerbates divisions and exclusions along social and economic lines (Brown, 1995). The politics of identity also examine the current state of relations between locals and African foreign nationals in present-day South Africa, a situation that has led to protracted conflicts. This is pertinent to South Africa as locals organise and propagate anti-immigrant discourses against African foreign nationals and some of Asian ancestry because of the competition for employment opportunities, majorly at the informal level.

Qualitative Research Methods

This study is a desktop one relying on qualitative research methods. To gather the important and relevant information required to meet the study's goals, the research relied on secondary data and pre-existing information sources. This comprised information from reports and scientific journals, among other sources. The study included a thorough document analysis and historical examination of numerous reports on violence and xenophobia from South Africa and other nations dealing with comparable issues. Among these reports were those from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), the Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP), and others. The study was restricted to and examined government and law enforcement agency reports to comprehend the extent of crime and the different tactics being employed, which helped the researchers reach a comprehensive conclusion. To improve the research and draw viewpoints on the subject, the selection data was collected from a number of sources, including SCOPUS, Google, Google Scholar, university repositories, and Research Gate. With an emphasis on the policy framework and the intention of government institutions to address this phenomenon through law enforcement and implementation, a thorough document analysis was carried out by the research objective, which was to investigate the causes of competition for limited economic resources and the sustainability of xenophobia in South Africa.

Undoing the Ills of Apartheid in the Post-Colonial Era

Many blacks have been restricted to informal settlements in several cities scattered around South Africa because of many decades of living in abject poverty and the uneven inequality gap. The state alleged response of the state to address the retardation caused by colonial rule was not encouraging-culminating into exasperation and dissatisfaction, consequently, making it a major factor that triggers anti-migrant crisis in the country (Goodwin, 2025). Colonial rule ensured the maintenance, subjugation and oppression of blacks in political and economic terms, as the white minority rulers tightened their fists on the productive sectors of the economy (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2025). Legislations of various types were introduced to obliterate blacks. They include the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953), the Group Areas Act (1950), the Bantu Education Act (1953), the Asiatic Land Tenure Act (1946), the Illegal Squatting Act (1951), the Native Building Workers' Act (1951) and others. This action further strengthened the white supremacy ideology, relegating the blacks to the minnows (Welsh, 2010).

The educational sector suffered a great setback during the apartheid era. Thompson (2000) contends that the Missionaries were in charge of educating the black children, but the huge number of black students hampered the availability of funding for students. The administration of black education was executed by the apartheid government through the creation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Research shows vividly that education was operated on racial terms, leaving the blacks at the receiving end while the whites enjoyed the privilege of better and qualitative education. The syllabus implemented in black schools differed from that in white schools; the black educational curriculum was designed to restrict their ambitions, ensuring they would not come to light (Tomlin, 2016; Mtombeni, Shoba, & Kwanhi, 2025). The 1976 demonstration embarked on by the youths was triggered by the deplorable state and bias in the educational sector as black schools didn't get adequate financial resources from the apartheid government. Steve Biko led the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) during the celebrated Soweto unrest, daring Bantu Education and a complete decolonisation of the educational curriculum in South Africa (Mamdani, 2011; Ndlovu, 2017).

The post-apartheid government commenced the land and housing programme to ensure the end of apartheid legacy and widespread impoverishment of the black populace with the seizure of black-owned assets and making white areas inaccessible to blacks. This clearly explains how settlements and citizenship were administered under apartheid rule.

The townships inhabited by Africans, hostels for migrant workers, those that were sent away from border cities and those who stayed in the rural areas. These events gave the ANC in the post-1994 era the boldness to compensate blacks for the years of marginalisation (Lalloo, 1998:36).

The rise of the Unites States of America to unipolar status on the international scene seemed to be of benefit to South Africa, as she embraced market economics and liberal democracy. Resultantly, it mitigated the impact of government administration and economic systems emanating from elsewhere (Hobson, 2015). The ANC was greatly motivated by the USA's philosophy as she had to bridge the gaps of inequality imposed by the colonial structure. The ANC's approval of the 1995 Freedom Charter, which was intentional, was formulated in order to nationalise the critical sectors of the South African economy in consonance with trends in the global economy. The ANC carefully set up an economic model that had a mixture of both capitalist and communist features. This permitted the state to interfere on some occasions and also a free market economic system in others. The ANC discarded its communist ideals, which was a bit divisive, as it geared up for queries later in the future (Nattrass, 1994; Tshishonga and de Vries, 2011). A wide range of literature has been written on the plans of economic revival built by the state to mitigate the incidence of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. Lewis (2001:4) affirmed that the RDP was a huge success because the welfare of the masses was met. The elderly, physically challenged, vulnerable and foster parents, among others. Peberdy (2001:26) opined that the Growth Employment and Reconstruction strategy (GEAR) was the brainchild of the state, which gave indigenes easy access to economic and other resources to reduce inequalities and differences in the country. Maree (2007:5) affirms that the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was established with the intent of lessening unskilled or semi-skilled labour by increasing the economic growth rate to 6% annually. Kretzschmar (2014:6) outlines the six pillars on which the National Development Plan (NDP) rests: committed citizenry, building proficiencies, skilled state, developing economy, accountable leadership and harmony.

The establishment of the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the creation of a long-term National Development Plan (NDP) were significantly aided by the 2007 ANC party congress in Polokwane. A move from a free market to a livelier one was promoted by the ANC, the South African Communist Party, COSATU, and other ANC associates. The necessity of promoting a developmental state with indigenous or regional approaches and the capacity of the state to settle issues related to unemployment, poverty, and underdevelopment was one of the 2007 conference's priority resolutions (ANC, 2008). The NPC gave the NDP a specific target to meet by 2030. Land reform is the key to ending poverty, reducing inequality, increasing employment from 13 million in 2010 to 24 million using proper fiscal and economic tools with the coordination and policy execution, raising per capita income from R50,000 in 2010 to R120,000, and creating one million jobs in the agricultural sector (NPC, 2011).

The Influx of Immigrants Into South Africa

Migration into South Africa cannot be divorced from the history of migrant workers into South Africa. The mining and agricultural sectors attracted lots of migrants from the neighbouring countries (Sibanda, 2008; Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014). South African entrepreneurs progressively engaged non-South African job seekers to fill the deficit in the supply of local labour (Chirwa, 1998). Seeing the demise of apartheid, regardless of the existence of a constitutional democracy, racism is still visible in the South African state after two decades of freedom (Burger *et al.,* 2017). The government only harmonised all obtainable policy documents into a lone parliamentary act in 1991. Crush *et al.* (1991) emphasised that the mining and agricultural subdivisions of the South African economy promoted the migrant labour system, recruiting labour from neighbouring countries. Upon winning the general elections in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) was interested in reviving the ailing economy rather than issues of immigration (Segatti, 2011). Allegedly, the masses seemed not to be happy because they've not enjoyed the dividends of democracy, leaving them disgruntled (Akinola 2014; Behr, 2015).

The post-apartheid constitution has been applauded and commended for encouraging inter-group relations, but it has not been able to contain the problems generated by the migrant influx, rising number of refugees and a dearth in the supply of human labour. In 2002 and 2004, the state amended the immigration policies and made provisions for highly skilled migrants to be catered for. The amendments made in the 2007 and 2011 immigration acts failed to actualise strategies that could assist in getting jobs for skilled workers (Nkomo, 2014), it just served as a means of reinforcing the exit route for illegal immigrants; these yardsticks were not relevant to all immigrants, who were highly skilled workers and are highly sought after in South Africa. One may contend that the handling of immigration matters in the post-apartheid dispensation aligned with what transpired in the apartheid era. The extant literature submits that the apartheid government employed skilled immigrants from Africa and other places (Segatti 2011).

South Africa has a robust asylum structure that is run according to the world's best practices, in that asylum-seekers are permitted to work and live and are not restrained from setting up private business ventures after processing their

asylum permits through the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). Amit (2015) posits that the department occasionally delays the processing of asylum-seekers' applications, and many of them are unfavourable. As a result, they frequently choose to stay in the country while officials question alleged denied asylum-seekers to identify them and then repatriate them to their home countries. Due to inoperative bank accounts and a lack of identification due to application processing delays, many immigrants are forced to work in the unorganized sector (Solomon and Kosaka, 2014). Crush (2001) and Peberdy (2001) stated that unfavourable preconceptions about migrant populations, bolstered by societal mistrust, were the norm in post-apartheid nationalism that was expressed through nation-building initiatives in South Africa (Steenkamp, 2009). Many people believe that bias against immigrants was intended to strengthen social ties among South Africa's multiracial population.

Aggression against immigrants is considered an inherited legacy of the apartheid government (Harris, 2002). Nevertheless, this viewpoint has some face validity, given the prevalence of violence and unfavourable opinions about immigrants (Dodson, 2010). Although nation-building projects are absent, prejudiced sentiments and violence against immigrants have not been taken into consideration, although these traditions are also present in Western countries. The relationship between violent behaviour and hostile stereotypes is still unclear in South Africa and many other countries; it is partly immune to outside influences (Piper and Charman,2016).

However, the population of European immigrants travelling to South Africa has grossly reduced in the post-apartheid era, while the number of SADC region nationals, African foreign nationals and migrants from other places. The majority of the skilled and semi-skilled labourers who have relocated to South Africa from sister states are from Zimbabwe. The state was forced to implement a policy to control the migration of migrant labour due to the inflow of migrants. The Green Paper on International Migration released by the Department of Home Affairs and made available to the public in June 2016 acknowledged that while itinerant labour was still desperately required in South Africa, the government must take action to limit the number of migrants coming into the nation. South Africa is cautious in maintaining her sovereignty, safeguarding her population, and maintaining national security as she capitalizes on the benefits of globalization (DHA 2016:24). The state's response on humanitarian grounds, camaraderie as the South African government was lenient by inventing special permits for Zimbabwean and Lesotho nationals to become legal residents in the country. This is meticulously explained in the White Paper on International Migration South Africa published in 2017.

The South African white paper on international migration (2017) gives a clear-cut summary of the country's immigration and refugee situation. The 1999 White Paper on International Migration served as the foundation for South Africa's international migration policy, which was partially implemented by the Refugees Act of 1998 (Act No. 130 of 1998) and partially by the Immigration Act of 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002). In order to fill in obvious legal gaps, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has more recently modified the Immigration and Refugees Act and used strategies and regulations.

Belonging: A Tool of Discrimination in Contemporary South Africa?

Belonging has become a topical issue both in Africa and the globe. This brings up issues of nationality and citizenship that cannot be ignored. Locals' behaviour and attitudes about their fellow citizens will be reflected in how they interact with and treat foreigners and immigrants living in their nation. The 1994 Rwandan genocide was the result of the citizenship crisis (Mamdani, 2001; Baisley 2014), while Ivoirete's isolation and conflicting claims drove the violence in Ivory Coast (Akindes, 2004). All of these imply that in many African states, the concept of belonging is being violently redefined with the advent of liberal democracy and global consumer capitalism (Nyamnjoh 2005). Because each citizen maintains their legal position, this leads to social stratification; some people believe they have fewer rights as citizens than others. At the moment, identity politics and more regulated forms of citizenship tend to concentrate mainly on cultural recognition, political representation, opportunities, and economic rights, which strengthens animosity between insiders and outsiders (Nnoli,1998; Nyamnjoh, 2005).

South Africa happens to be Africa's number one economy due to its advanced level of industrialisation. However, a skewed wealth distribution. The South African constitution often permits individuals to own and manage private property, leaving those who were economically disadvantaged under colonialism and apartheid an instance of acceptance of a liberal economic and political framework. Due to the persistence of apartheid-era disparities in the current system, impoverished citizens are at risk of having their rights violated in a constitutional democracy. Instead of resolving the socio-economic and political issues, the political class have repeatedly blamed non-South Africans for limited job opportunities. It is meaningless for economically disempowered South Africans to strive for jobs with foreigners in a flourishing economy. Other Africans are viewed as refugees, absconding from their home countries due to unfavourable and despicable situations (Peberdy, 2001).

Such events breed hostility and despair, which open the door for hatred toward migrants and attacks on other minorities in the nation. This is the case in modern-day South Africa, where Asian minorities and African citizens are being victimized and used as scapegoats (Nyamnjoh 2005). The same is true in many locations as xenophobia continues to rise around the world; despite their reliable and affordable labour (Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000; Jureidini, 2003), immigrants are viewed as the undesirable stock (Brochmann, 1999). The use of violence against Africans from elsewhere evokes feelings of kinship. This explains why, depending on the situation, violence against non-South Africans might take the form of either xenophobia or Afrophobia. The practice of marginality politics, which elevates locals above other African foreigners, has been greatly aided by this resurgence of nationalism. Additionally, this implies citizenship in the sense of rights and obligations associated with being a part of a certain nation-state within predetermined boundaries (Roche, 1992). Lister (1997:7) submits that citizenship involves both political obligations and entitlements. While the latter takes into account the opinions and goals of the broader society, the former is individual-centered. The author went on to describe the citizenship's status and customs. Citizenship may mean having certain rights just by being a citizen, as well as obligations that come with those rights, such as voting, paying taxes, and abiding by the constitution.

Violence: A Means of Instituting South African Nationalism?

Khonert (2009) discusses the tidal wave of nationalism in Africa and across other parts of the globe, differentiating it from the dominant national independence movement of the 1960s. The distinction between the two types of nationalism is that the latter is characterised by xenophobia and isolation, which are political strategies used to garner votes by brainwashing the electorates, who are gaslighted to believe that foreigners are to blame for the economic problems their nations face. The rise in wealth disparity and the fallout from globalisation fuelled the emergence of this new nationalism. Nationalism and nation-states operate differently now than they did in the past. The foundation of new nationalism is grassroots populism, whose beliefs differ from those of the political gatekeepers, making it unique in its social obscurity and sudden, unexplained triggers.

Presently, Africa is entangled in a different type of nationalism, most likely as a result of identity problems bolstered by economic hardships and self-loathing. Black-on-Black violence, or Afrophobic violence, has been on the rise in Africa (Prah, 2001; Nyamnjoh, 2006). According to literature, xenophobia is a reaction to competition for limited economic resources and opportunities, as a result of Africa's marginalisation in a world that is increasingly globalized due to elements such as the United States of America's and other Western countries' ongoing dominance (Ajulu, 2010). Some authors believe that xenophobic attacks against African migrants are the result of nationalism on a peripheral magnitude and deliberate political class motivations to attribute economic problems in their countries to the presence of foreigners (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Oloruntoba, 2018). Despite their territorial boundaries and ethnic divisions, Africans may be seen as a single people. Political pragmatism, which rejects the reality of socioeconomic and political crises, supports the politics of difference. Because South Africans perceived themselves as unique and different, the years of apartheid isolated the country from Africa in particular and the world in general. In South Africa after apartheid, violence has been used to differentiate between residents and visitors (Habib, 2010; Tella, 2016).

Beetar's (2019) article on necropolitics in South Africa stated that xenophobia is an inexorable part of any nation-building endeavour. The violence in 2008 and 2015 might be linked to deeply rooted political and social practices that foster intolerance and animosity, which are characteristics of South African identity. Historically, violence has been linked to situations or events and resolutions that characterize denialism and exceptionalism as necropolitical since locals have the right to live and migrants deserve to be sent to places of real and figurative death. The use of violence to build nationalism in South Africa stems from ideological differences between communities and the ruling and political elite. Nationalism is deeply connected to belonging, and those who are termed outsiders receive their share of violence.

The State's Reaction

The government of South Africa seemed not to have acted swiftly in the light of xenophobic attacks, particularly the black-on-black violence that became pronounced in the course of the 2008 scenario, by labelling it anti-social and criminal conduct. Many government officials accused criminals of xenophobic violence in 2008, despite the state's repeated denials of its severity and extent (Pillay, 2008; Matsinhe, 2011). President Mbeki opined that the South African people's mental health was unaffected by the evil of xenophobia (Mbeki, 2008). The former Intelligence Minister was cited by Bekker et al. (2008:29), who responded as follows:

> *We cannot ignore… that there were reportedly meetings held in hostels, that this prairie fire of hate seemed to have moved fast as if planned, and there were printed pamphlets.*

Arguably, President Thabo Mbeki spread the gospel of denialism by insisting that the attacks were not in any way by-products of xenophobic sentiments but rather had criminal motivations (Bekker et al., 2008; Everatt, 2011; Tella, 2016). In the course of the bereavement and farewell service for the 62 victims of the 2008 xenophobic crisis, Mbeki was quoted as saying:

> *Everything I know about my people tells me that these heirs to the teachings of Tiyo Soga, J.G. Xaba and Pixley Seme, the masses who have consistently responded positively to the Pan-African messages of the oldest liberation movement on our continent, the African National Congress, are not xenophobic. These masses are neither antipathetic towards, nor do they hate foreigners. And this, I must also say, no one in our society has any right to encourage or incite xenophobia by trying to explain naked criminal activity by cloaking it in the garb of xenophobia. I know that there are some in our country who will charge that what I have said constitutes a denial of our reality. (Everatt, 2011, p. 9)*

Mukwena (2012) posits that foreigners were the victims of xenophobic attacks in May 2008 because the police lacked the necessary equipment to handle the situation and community leaders refused to defend African migrants from attacks. Only 70 of the criminals arrested during the chaos were charged with violating the public peace and using violence, but none of them were held accountable for the serious crimes they had committed, as posited by Kamwimbi et al. (2010). The author goes on to say that the government did not take insistent steps to quell the tensions that were building before the 2008 assaults, even though the Scalabrini Centre in Cape Town was gathering information and sending out early warning signs about xenophobia.

"Denialism is a pervasive force that occasionally conflates xenophobia and racism," asserts Beetar (2019:2). Since xenophobia is rarely documented (Crush et al., 2013), the political elite has failed to recognize its existence, which is reminiscent of the xenophobic incidents that occurred in 2008 and 2015. Emidio Macia's degrading treatment in February 2013, when he was dragged along the street in a degrading manner and put in fetters by the police to their operative vehicle, was criticized for demonstrating the government's incapacity to deal with the overbearing behaviour of the police. The AU and UN committees that emphasised xenophobia as "misplaced in the extreme" (Crush et al., 2013) were disregarded because xenophobia is rarely discussed in policing circles and is even denied by SAPS officers (Steinberg, 2012). Denialism has evolved into a tool of justification due to the continuing. Flockermann et al.. (2010) and Everatt (2011) have discussed how the debates over whether xenophobia is Afrophobia or Negrophobia have changed over time, or whether it should be reclassified as a form of (xeno)racism. A more thorough examination of behavioural attitudes in South Africa from 2006 to 2013 is provided by Crush et al.. (2013). Their research suggests that there are significant and ongoing shifts in attitudes on foreigners, which might be interpreted as xenophobia because they have a detrimental effect on migrants' day-to-day life. Since South Africa has ratified numerous conventions on migrants and refugees and passed the Refugee Act in 1988, Steinberg (2012) acknowledges the government's good intentions regarding the migrant issues. The constitution distinguishes between two groups of people: citizens and other individuals, even though South Africa belongs to all of its residents. This division suggests that not all citizens of the nation receive the same treatment. According to Neocosmos (2010), some people have rights that others do not, therefore, this separation and the larger denialism discourse that serves to support a persistent state of uniqueness or irregularity need to be examined.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The politics of belonging, economic competition, and sustainability of xenophobic violence in South Africa can be explained from many dimensions. However, the politicisation of the narrative has shifted the focus from economic revival to censuring foreigner presence for the many ills plaguing Africa's last colonial outpost. The inability of the state to fulfil the promises of the Freedom Charter, the RDP, GEAR and the NPD policies, and the widening gap of inequality and pervasive poverty protracts and fuels the flame of xenophobic violence.

This study makes the following recommendations to douse the flame of xenophobia in South Africa. The South African government should develop immigration laws that protect African foreign nationals and those of Asian descent in the country to mitigate xenophobia violence. If the state makes this a reality, perpetrators will exercise some restraint in executing attacks. Literature indicates that the country has porous land borders, which contributes to the crime pandemic sweeping across South Africa. The government should not hesitate in fortifying her borders with the latest sophistications in technology. Furthermore, the white minority still control critical sectors of the South African economy, a situation that has further widened the inequality gap. To address this imbalance, decolonization should not be rhetorical but actualised so that blacks can control their economy. This, in turn, will phase out competition for scarce economic opportunities and despondency between the insiders and outsiders. The state should not be in denial of the existence of xenophobia. Rather, orientation and enlightenment programmes geared towards social cohesion

and Pan-Africanism should be concentrated upon. The protracted denigration of immigrants should be discouraged, and they should be accorded respect as fellow human beings. The African Union should also play positive and meaningful roles in resolving intractable conflicts on the continent instead of ceding or abdicating its responsibilities to the United Nations. If the AU becomes more proactive, then the incidence of conflicts will reduce drastically, thus reducing migration and encouraging nationals to remain in their respective countries of citizenship.

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