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Rasheed Olaniyi

Nigerian Immigrants and Xenophobic Violence in South Africa

Abstract

The author argues that in many parts of Africa identity-politics and "nativist" narratives link migration to crime by making mobility a contentious political issue. This study exemplifies this by examining the experiences and adaptation of Nigerian migrants in South Africa and the confrontation with xenophobic violence this frequently involves. In South Africa, stereotypic reproduction represents the past in the present within the context of nation-building and contradictions of "African Renaissance." Despite the leading roles Nigeria and South Africa are playing in African politics and business, the xenophobia against African immigrants undermines the prospect of regional and continental development.

Introduction

This paper focuses on how the flood of Nigerian immigrants (legal and illegal) manifested xenophobic expressions and fuelled citizenship claims among South Africans. I argue that, in many parts of Africa, identity-politics and "nativist" narratives link migration to crime by making mobility a contentious political issue. Autochthony, xenophobia and ethno-nationalism have plagued migration historically and also under the current phase of globalization. Most of these identity politics and nativist narratives were preceded by the collapse of Pan-Africanism of integration following independence.

In many African countries, legislation was imposed restricting the employment and economic opportunities of immigrants. Examples of state sanctions against immigrants included: Ghana Nationality and Citizenship Act (1957); the Deportation Act, 1957 (Act 15) in Ghana; the Deportation Amendment Act, 1958

(Act 49); the Deportation (Amendment) Act, 1959 (Act. 65) in Ghana; Employment of Visitors Act (1968) and Immigration Act (1966) in Botswana; Immigration Act (1963) in Nigeria; Act of 1962 in Gabon; Immigration and Quota System in Sierra Leone; and the Passport and Immigration Act (1960) and Manpower Act of 1974 in Sudan. The enforcement of these laws ensured that Ghanaians were deported from Guinea; Nigerians were deported from Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Zaire; Dahomeans left Ivory Coast and Niger; and Togolese were deported from Ghana and Ivory Coast. In the 1980s, Ghanaians were deported from Nigeria. Most recently some Ghanaian migrants were massacred in The Gambia while Libya continued to deport African immigrants. African migration regimes represent a crucial coping strategy for political crisis and economic downturns and are key to understanding notions of boundaries and belonging, citizenship and autochthony ravaging the continent. In post-apartheid South Africa, xenophobia and hostility towards immigrants is racialised. Xenophobic violence is often perpetrated against black immigrants, especially Nigerians and Mozambicans. What models explain the migration of Nigerians to South Africa? What theories account for their being targets of xenophobic violence? What factors underpin resistance to increased migration flows? To what extent have state authorities, regional and continental organisations protected the free movement of persons and rights of residence?

Popular stereotypes corroborated by political authorities claimed that most Nigerians (legal and illegal) immigrants don't come to South Africa for political reasons as refugees or to work as professionals but to engage in illegal activities such as drug dealing, organised crime and prostitution.¹ In contrast to this stereotype and symbolic narratives, many Nigerian immigrants were targets by criminals and preyed on by ordinary citizens. Given the long history of apartheid where blacks were denied access to education and jobs, the legacy of this deprivation and competition in a slow economy influenced anti-foreigner sentiments against Nigerians. This paper examines migrants' experiences by looking at the role and impact of migration, and the

kinds of power relations which they bear in the construction of identities, citizenship, rights and entitlements. In this encounter, the paper explains the role of identity-politics in the struggle over social, political, economic and urban space between Nigerian immigrants and South Africans. The paper further addresses the adaptation of migrants to the place of destination and the effect of labour migration on criminality and deviance in South Africa.

Changing Migration Policy in South Africa

South Africa's democratic breakthrough in 1994 and the collapse of apartheid policy remain salient in the upsurge of migration to the country that has experienced migration flows since the mid-nineteenth century. South Africa gradually moved toward a position of political and economic dominance in the continent but one of the ironies of this development was the construction of African migrants as "outsiders." This illuminates how a society's memory of its past and history is integral to its self-production. Stereotypic reproduction recreates the images of the past and the new immigration regime, in South Africa, is governed by the Alien Control Act 1991 (amended in 1995 and 1996), which echoes the despicable apartheid legislation segregation, anti-Semitic, anti-African and grounded in an ideology of control and expulsion. South Africa's restrictive migration policy and its xenophobic aftermath underlie the challenges in overturning apartheid legacies and institutions. Xenophobia as a social action directed against black immigrants could be understood from the images of South Africa's apartheid past and attempt to replicate past practices. The Aliens Control Amendment Act, increased the scope for state repressive powers through which police acted brutally and illegally against the migrants. Despite periodic reforms, not much has changed since the 1913 Immigration Regulation Act through which government attracted white settlers while strictly limiting Africans to temporary legal entry under migrant labour system.² Migration of skilled whites was encouraged for their labour and to increase white population³The new immigration bill and the 1998 Refugee Act similarly seek to limit black population inflows drastically.

Klotz argues that the South African immigration policy derives from identity politics, most salient in two legislative areas: principles of citizenship, and distinction between immigrants and refugees. This underpins the rivalry between "insiders" and "outsiders." By adopting the theoretical perspective which emphasizes the social construction of threats, the post apartheid deracialization of political debate led to a reinterpretation of South Africa's identity in regional and world affairs.⁴ Xenophobic violence against African migrants once again demonstrates the demise of Pan-Africanism and black solidarity that ended with apartheid. To Klotz, South Africans continued to presume their superiority to the rest of the continent, in economic and political terms. By criminalizing the immigrants, popular perceptions and official conduct aim at excluding the rest of the continent. Indeed, the legal rights of migrants did not prevent them from police harassment, imprisonment and/or deportation. Popular responses did not recognize migrant's legal status due to the social construction of threat and feelings of deprivation.

South Africa, where African immigrants belonged to a "foreign race" in their own continent, reinforced apartheid idioms of denying Africans of humanity, dignity of labour and citizenship. Popular preferences supported strict immigration policy which equally fuel legislative provisions. The migration policy, most importantly, by the demarcation of "illegal aliens" defines nationality, citizenship and identify who belongs to the community. "The apartheid system forestalled non-white immigration - both creating an inhospitable environment for Africans and by refusing to grant any legal basis for their movement other than as temporary mine workers".⁵ Klotz stresses that "when the anti-apartheid movement succeeded in gaining political power in 1994, the value of this prize had diminished as a result of globalization." The preamble in the constitution states:

We, the people of South Africa, recognize the injustice of our past; honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; respect those who have worked

to build and develop our country; and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

South Africa has the challenges of reconciling the emerging rainbow nation and nascent democracy with the protection of human rights of all those who live in the country. This notion of rainbow nation glosses over the contradiction of citizenship, race, identity and migration. The recent political discourse of the South African transition influenced profoundly by classic modernist meta-narratives -rationality, humanism, and a belief in the global emancipation of humankind - was undermined by the forces of globalization and unprecedented increases in migration. The South African state faced the challenges of domestic demand for jobs, housing, and protection from international competition. Anti-immigration xenophobia questions political identity. As South Africa extended public services and welfare to the once-excluded black majority, and reallocated shared scarce resources, the unfounded perceptions of the additional burden created by "outsiders" or migrants from the continent, contributed to violent attacks and xenophobia.⁶

African immigrants were not only a burden, but an obstacle to the Reconstruction and Development that could improve the living standards of the historically disadvantaged black population. The media disseminate information on the migrants as threats to the fledging democracy

Globalisation itself stimulates migration but undermines the capacity of states to provide both security and welfare to different categories of insiders and outsiders. South African reactions to immigration are symptomatic of global trends in Europe, Americas, Asia and Africa. The new emerging state of South Africa (re) defines its identity by (re) creating "outsiders." Xenophobic violence and sentiment target Africans, making it non-racial and non-ethnic but territorially defined national identity. Xenophobic violence denotes how South Africans define their identity in relation to global changes and migration. The range of

anti-immigrant sentiment and reactions is familiar; yet the South African experience presents a striking difference to that prevailing in most developed economies. The greater number of immigrants who experienced xenophobic violence was African despite the presence of Asians and Europeans. It was widely conceived that African migration to South Africa could spell economic disaster and undermine cultural self-assurance and stability in the post-apartheid era.

Why Nigerians?

Before the 1990s migration boom, xenophobic attacks against Nigeria migrants were minimal. Most migrants were highly skilled professionals whose labour was demanded in the industrial sector. The suspicion and arrests of Nigerians for drug-trafficking and related offences did not generate xenophobic attacks. But in the 1990s, Nigerians had become "dangerous" outsiders.

To gain a more complete picture, we have to take into account the historical context of the hydra-headed xenophobic violence against Nigerians globally in the last two decades. This could be explained by five broad factors: the "Nigerian scam," illegal migration, globalization and culture of consumerism which reinforced the fifth factor: identity politics. First is the image and perception of criminality that endured from the time Nigeria was under military rule. From the early 1990s, the global scale of "419" financial and business fraud involving confidence tricks involving impersonation and forgery soared. "419" otherwise known as "advance fee-fraud" is named after the Nigerian criminal code enacted to prosecute such cases.⁷ The parlous state of the economy, especially the devaluation of the naira and deregulation policies stimulated the activities of the "419ers" who duped local and international businesses and personalities. There were reports of financial scams involving Nigerians from Thailand, Canada, France, Belgium, Scandinavia, Austria, the United Kingdom, South Africa, China, Saudi Arabia and United States. Estimates of the annual income earned by the Nigerian "419ers" ranged from \$250 million to over \$1 billion. Irrespective of social status, the international

community perceived most Nigerians as fraudulent and corrupt and was suspicious of their business dealings.⁸

Some Nigerians in the diaspora have been linked to the menace of human trafficking, sex and drug trades in Europe and Saudi Arabia. The activities of these Nigerians created an image problem for other Nigerians in the diaspora. Almost everywhere, Nigerians are stigmatized as criminals, con-men and morally bankrupt people. The soaring number of Nigerians in detention and serving prison terms abroad accentuated the volume of consular problems handled by the Nigerian Missions. There were plans by the Federal government of Nigeria to repatriate convicts and sex-workers in order to secure for Nigeria a positive and respectable international image. Above all, the brutalization of Nigerians abroad, further raises questions on how the government treats her citizens at home. Despite the alarming record of discrimination against Nigerians abroad, the Nigerian state is yet to evolve a specific framework for protection of Nigerians and most foreign missions are grossly underfunded. The Nigerian state hardly takes redress to protect the interest of her citizens at stake, especially in cases that involve Nigerians and donor/creditor countries.

Second, the nature of migration of many Nigerians put them at the risk of jail, deportation, death and xenophobic attacks. Nigerians seeking visas to other countries are often humiliated and maltreated by embassies located in their own country. Foreign embassies operating in Nigeria treated visa applicants as economic refugees even when they apply for study, visit, conference or business. The dehumanization of Nigerians at the embassies is often taken for granted by the Nigerian authorities despite media reports sensitizing the government on such violations. Many Nigerians migrated abroad without valid papers and pre-requisite qualifications for the categories of labour needed in the industrial economies.

Third, globalisation encourages pervasive economic competition, racism and increasing identity reconstruction. On the other hand, there are Nigerian professionals and skilled workers prospering in the industrial economies and sending remittances for

domestic and community developments at home. The overseas remittance from Nigerians in the diaspora in 2006 was higher than the GDP of 29 of the 53 countries in Africa. By June 2007, Nigerians in the diaspora remitted \$8 billion⁹

Fourth, successful Nigerians in the diaspora are associated with flaunting their wealth, conspicuous consumerist culture, randy parties and capitalist ethos. Nigerians, home and abroad are known to celebrate their successes and accomplishments without restraint. The success and competitiveness of Nigerians and display of wealth often attract envy and disdain of the host communities.

Labour Migration at the Margins

Being Africa's leading industrial economy, South Africa is the most attractive destination for migrants from the rest of the continent. From Nigeria in West Africa to countries in the SADC region, South Africa continued to exert a pull on migrants as a response to post-apartheid regime, neo-liberal democracy and globalization. This fact points to the deepening socio-economic crisis that has undermined Africa's development since the mid-1980s. South Africa beckoned to Nigerians in search of opportunities that eluded them at home, most especially under the political transition of the 1990s that was characterized by militarism, gross violation of human rights, corruption, unemployment and economic crises.

Nigeria under the military, specifically from 1994, was a pariah state. Traditional migration patterns to Commonwealth countries were curtailed as the latter cut diplomatic ties with Nigeria over the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa, the Ogoni-Niger Delta Environmental Activist. The end of apartheid in 1994 and renewal of diplomatic ties between Nigeria and South Africa stimulated a new migration flow. Nigerian artisans, young entrepreneurs, professors and professionals sought refuge in South Africa away from political and economic tyranny of militarism.

Beyond the economic attraction, the historic role that Nigeria played in the pan-Africanist movement against apartheid in South Africa, facilitated migration among Nigerians who had the euphoric notion that the country they once supported and whose liberation

they partly financed could be *El Dorado* for them. As the most powerful country in Africa, Nigeria's national interest was directed by the struggle against colonialism and white minority rule in Southern Africa while promoting the ideas of Negritude. Between 1960 and 1994, the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy was epitomized by struggle against apartheid and racial segregation in South Africa. Nigeria adopted a policy of non-compromise with the apartheid government in South Africa. Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's Prime Minister, abolished the employment of white South Africans in the Nigerian Public Service. In 1961, Nigeria sponsored the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations due to racism and subjugation of the blacks.

By 1966, the Ironsi government declared Portuguese and white South Africans prohibited immigrants. Nigeria banned sporting relations with South Africa and gave scholarships to 200 South Africans to study in Nigerian Universities. The National Committee against Apartheid was established and Nigerian workers contributed one Nigerian pound deducted from their salaries to facilitate the liberation struggle. Nigerians were barred from visiting South Africa for commercial or any other purpose. In 1976, the passports of six Nigerian Reformed Church Members who planned to attend an ecumenical meeting in Capetown were reported to have been seized.¹⁰ Some Nigerians who sneaked to South Africa for commercial purposes were warned against the violation government policy of isolating South Africa. Under the British, in 1959, \$800,000 out of Nigeria's total \$461,800,000 in exports went to South Africa. During the same year, \$2,800,000 out of \$502,500,000 in imports came from South Africa.¹¹ There are possibilities that some Nigerians risked migration to and settled in South Africa during the 1960s. It is also an historical fact that Nigeria's Chief Emeka Anyaoku, who served as the Commonwealth Secretary-General from 1990-2000, played a key role in the negotiations that produced agreements ending apartheid and ensuring the enthronement of the first multi-racial elections in South Africa. On April, 22 2008, Chief Anyaoku was honoured with the Order of the Supreme Companions, O.R. Tambo Gold by former

President Thabo Mbeki.

On the other hand, during the 1990s, South Africa supported pro-democracy groups and civil society initiatives in Nigeria. During the military rule of late General Sanni Abacha, about 56 progressive movements in South Africa collaborated with local Nigerian movements in agitating for sanctions against Nigeria. This collaboration led to the formation of the South Africa Nigeria Democratic Support Group.¹² Since September 2002, South Africa, through IDASA has supported civil society organizations and the Nigerian electoral body (INEC) to strengthen democracy and facilitate processes to reduce electoral violence. One of the IDASA programmes in Nigeria includes Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in the Niger Delta (STAND).

Migration flows soared, following the demise of apartheid regime. It was perceived that the notion of African brotherhood would be replicated in the post-apartheid era. The socio-economic pressure at home exerted pressure on the Nigerian migrants in search of their destiny and aspirations in South Africa.

On the other hand, the flow of goods and capital from South Africa into the Nigerian economy has not been restricted in any form. Since the mid-1990s, South African capital soared in various sectors of the Nigerian economy from agriculture, manufacturing to communication. Nigeria and South Africa are export partners. South Africa's export to Nigeria soared between 1999 and 2005 from \$520 million to \$2.9 billion while exports from Nigeria to South Africa rose from \$1.2 billion to \$5.6 billion. Nigeria's export to South Africa are primary products, largely oil, small scale rubber and palm oil. South Africa exports industrial products such as packaging materials, plastics and other consumables.

Following the economic reforms Nigeria embarked upon in the post-military era, Nigeria became South Africa's investment destination and emerging market. South Africa's investment seems to have dominated the key sectors of the Nigeria economy. The MTN is one of the largest telecommunication companies in Nigeria, controlling more than 50 per cent of the market. Stanbic International

Bank is equally strong in the banking sector. South Africa's KPMG is the consulting firm for the Tinapa/Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State, Nigeria's largest tourism project. Johnnic Communications, a South African media giant invested in publishing in Nigeria. South Africa's DSTV/Multichoice has captured the satellite-TV Subscription in Nigeria. Entech Consult and Stellenbosch are involved in the feasibility study for the rehabilitation of Bar Beach while Umgeni Water is engaged in Port Harcourt.

Former President Thabo Mbeki won trade concessions from former President Olusegun Obasanjo which includes immunity against future nationalization and eradication of double taxation. South African companies were exempted from paying taxes on repatriated profits from Nigeria. Another South African company, Eskom, collects debts and runs the Power Holding Corporation of Nigeria. Ariva operates the national lottery and Shoprite and is one of the biggest grocery chains in Lagos. The Palms Shopping Centre, based in Lagos is the largest mall in Sub-Saharan Africa managed by South African companies: Game, Shoprite, Numetro, and Nandos.¹³ In order to facilitate a balance of trade relations between the two countries, South Africa and Nigeria planned to implement an African agenda to: enhance the continent's development; appoint a dedicated foreign economic representative for Nigeria; set a new strategy for the engagement of the South African economy with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Nigeria with developed and developing partners over the years; outline parameters and modalities; evolve fresh joint venture partnerships to develop oil technologies, power and energy; and cooperation in peace matters. In October 1999, South Africa launched the bi-national commission with Nigeria and in March 2001, the Nigeria/South Africa Chamber of Commerce was launched in Abuja.

Despite the prospects of rising volume of trade between the two countries, it is difficult for Nigerians in the townships to gain tremendous commercial opportunities due to hostility towards African migrants and Nigerians in South Africa. This poses a great

challenge to intra-African trade and the integration of the African economies for bustling trade, labour migration, and business relations. However, opportunities abound for the Nigerian elite level of international business and finance in South Africa.

In the post-apartheid era, the South African government has actively supported the overseas investment of her citizens in a manner that suggest economic imperialism or hegemony in continental Africa. Nyamjoh avers that in Africa, the glorification of multinational capital has devastating consequences, in a situation where devalued labour is far in excess of cautious capital.¹⁴ Migration induced by globalization heightened the insecurities and anxieties of the locals and migrants only to produce obsession with citizenship and belonging. In effect, there emerges the construction of boundaries through xenophobia and intolerances; and insider/outsider dichotomy in the process of nation-building.

Migrants as Human Garbage: State and Popular Xenophobia

Xenophobia is one of the main sources of struggles over power and resources exploited by the government in South Africa to deflect attention. Xenophobia unfolds in the country that had experienced the vicious implications of institutionalized racism. One of the paradoxes of post-apartheid South Africa is the challenges of citizenship, integration and intolerance for immigrants from the African continent. As the state tightens immigration policies, the locals develop xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants. The increase in the wave of migration spurred renewed nationality policies defining parameters of inclusion and exclusion of the new South Africa. State xenophobia heightened popular hostility towards the migrants. As noted by Dr. (Col) Rocky Williams, elements of an emerging South African national identity and world view are to be located not merely in the expressed policies of its democratically elected government but in the informal spaces, in obscure cultural nooks and crannies, and in the myths that South Africans constructed about themselves in the past and are currently creating.¹⁵

Williams asserts that, "South African modernity has grown from and conceded valuable space to pluralism and has accommodated within its architecture multicultural and linguistic diversity, regional and local autonomy, and diverse cultural recognition. Although South Africa cannot lay claim to a national identity that has existed for centuries, it is clearly in the process of constituting itself as a political nation."¹⁶ The linkages between South Africa's national interests which encompass the security of the state and its citizens, the promotion of the social and economic well-being of its citizenry, creates South-African-ness and downplays the relevance of migrants in the emerging political nation. This despite the fact that the South African national interest as enshrined in the constitution determines to assist peoples who suffer from famine, political repression, natural disasters, and the scourge of violent conflict. Equally salient is the fact that the South African economy has historically relied on labour migration from Mozambique for the development its mines.

As Nyamjoh explains, in post-apartheid South Africa where the black nationals are yet to attain desired citizenship, the competition with migrants for the lowest-level jobs is keen. Most South African nationals are yet to be fully integrated into the post-apartheid economy or derive benefits from the black empowerment schemes. The tendency, as in Libya, is for migrants to be exploited and treated as "slave labour" or labour zombies. Menial jobs become racialised within the matrix of identity politics, economic entitlement and political representation. In South Africa, like other migration receiving countries, African immigrants are not only scapegoated but considered "unwanted" competitors in the informal/formal sectors. The apartheid logic and idioms remain salient in the relations between South African and African migrants. First, they are described as *makwerekwere* (alien) in order to deny them dignity, citizenship and a name of their choice.¹⁷ "*Makwerekwere*" a derogatory term denoting unintelligible sound of a foreign language.¹⁸ *Makwerekwere* further denote an agglomeration of unwanted immigrants in an attempt to assert certain forms of influx control designed to prevent South Africa from becoming

overcrowded. The virulent prejudice creates boundaries that keep away the "barbarians at the fringes of opportunity, power and privilege".¹⁹ These alienating terms are markers in the construction of a national identity which distinguishes citizens from outsiders.

The spasm of xenophobia experienced in May 2008 in South Africa illuminated how poor South Africans took out their rage on the poor foreigners living in their midst. The unrelenting mayhem and brutal killings shows how South Africa constructed other Africans as "barbarians." Xenophobic violence that was before an occasional malady in Johannesburg became contagious. A South African vanguard of the xenophobic attack was quoted saying: "we want all these foreigners to go back to their own lands. We waited for our government to do something about these people. But they did nothing and so now we are doing it ourselves, and we will not be stopped." Shops owned by immigrants were periodically looted and many immigrants were burnt alive. The rage against immigrants coincided with the 50th anniversary Celebration of Africa Liberation Day that ought to have been dedicated to the cause of total liberation of Africa from all ramifications of imperialism and injustice. This setback symbolizes the image of African disunity and how Pan-Africanism degenerated into chauvinism. The aspiration of the South African state under Thabo Mbeki on regional integration did not influence public attitudes towards African immigrants. The labeling of migrants as criminals gained currency in the media, academic circles and state agencies. As noted by Battistella and Asis, "The term 'illegal' serves to criminalize migrants when in fact, infractions committed against migration laws are of administrative, not criminal, nature."²⁰

Xenophobia is racialised in South Africa with African migrants, the main target of stereotypes, crime, extortions and attacks. From the media and government perspectives, xenophobia was an outcome of keen competition for the shared scarce resources such as jobs, education, health services and so on. Fearing competition with migrant workers who had no bargaining power, South Africans considered them as those who undermine wages

and social welfare and commit crimes. The frustrations of the post-apartheid era drew invidious comparisons between the lot of unemployed South Africans and that of better educated Nigerians and Zimbabweans. Xenophobia was the social effect of these difficulties and feelings of deprivation and socio-economic inequity exacerbated by the influx of African immigrants. Zimbabweans, Nigerians, Somalis and Mozambicans estimated as the largest immigrant groups in South Africa and considered the most successful shopkeepers in the townships are targets of attacks. One of the complaints was that immigrants were too subtle to exploit in the labour market: "White people hire foreigners because they work hard and they do it for less money. A South African demands his rights and will go on strike. Foreigners are afraid."²¹

South Africans considered themselves at a disadvantage in the labour market. In sharp contrast to these claims, immigrants in South Africa contributed to the rapid transformation of the country as the new hub of African continental trade. Many of the African professional in South Africa created jobs that employed the indigenes. According to a Nigerian businesswoman, Moki Makura, who relocated from London to South Africa, "I employ 12 South Africans and that is only my contribution alone. There are many other foreign businesspeople and graduates who came here to offer rare skills and seek investment opportunities because the climate is good. Not all immigrants are asylum seekers."²² Again, due to work permit processes and immigration bureaucracy, many South African firms refused to employ skilled foreigners. Nigerians along with other immigrants are playing roles in top South African football clubs. Frantz Fanon has suggested that, "the colonized man will first manifest ...aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people...the colonized man is an envious man."²³

The unemployment rate in South Africa is approximately 36 per cent in the early 2000s and an estimated 5 million people were out of work. However, no concrete evidence links migration with unemployment. The fast-growing ICT sector has 70,500 vacancies, reaching 113, 900 by 2009; the education sector faced a shortage

of about 35,000 teachers by 2008; while more than 5,000 expatriate engineers are required in the energy sector.²⁴ Indigenous street vendors carried out xenophobic violence against foreign hawkers in the informal sector. Klotz observes that, "what apartheid defined as the 'black' threat, South Africans now generally apply to the continent as a whole, the *amakwerekwere*. 'Africa' remains a place outside its territorial boundaries, an area rife with crime and political instability. West Africans, and Nigerians in particular, become the stereotypical criminals, followed by Mozambicans and Zimbabweans."²⁵ South Africans lumped all the African immigrants together and associated them with a monstrous criminality. African immigrants are linked with crimes of the drug trade, car-theft syndicates and covert weapons. Xenophobia articulated a national identity for South Africans.

Most black immigrants felt excluded and unwanted in their everyday life at both formal and informal interaction with South Africans or government agencies.²⁶ In this way, securing jobs for black immigrants in South Africa was often difficult, no matter their level of education. In 1994, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi was quoted referring to Nigerian immigrants as criminals and drug traffickers. This was corroborated by Captain Bondesio Giacomo of the South African Police Service's Aliens Investigations Unit that:

As far as I'm concerned, they (Nigerians) don't come to South Africa for political reasons or to work... as many as 90 per cent of the Nigerians who applied for section 41 permits - which grant temporary residence to political asylum applicants - were drug dealers.²⁷

The criminal notion of immigrants made police ill-treatment of migrants comparable to the apartheid era. African migrants receive the worst treatment from the police which suggest that the policing institution is still trapped in apartheid ideology. As in the heyday of apartheid, police could stop non-violent, orderly and business-minded people to ask for permits once they are suspected to be foreigners. These discriminatory practices by government officials

reinforce the notion of racial differences and xenophobia against immigrants by South African citizens. For example, Mr. Royce Rabakani of the Hillbrow Police Station, Central Johannesburg led a team of policemen to the Marrison Hotel where cell phones and other properties of Nigerians were confiscated due to their inability to produce receipts. In this event, the Nigerian passport belonging to Mr. Anyanwu was mutilated and burnt. According to the Nigerian Consulate in South Africa, between 1997 and 2001, fifty three Nigerians lost their lives to xenophobic violence.²⁸

There appears to be a consensus among rival parties for strict measures against migration. From the mid-1990s, a majority of South Africans has agitated for a complete ban on migration.²⁹ Like the right wing politicians in Europe, some South African politicians not only opposed migration but their public pronouncements stimulated outrage against migrants from the continent. This suggests that being South African is driven by exclusivist and national-chaüvinist sense. For example, the Democratic Alliance (DA) leader, Hellen Zille, claimed that drug problem in South Africa dominated by foreigners caused xenophobic attacks. According to her, "One of them is the extent of drug trade and, in many cases it is not South African citizens who set up drug houses."³⁰ Equally, DA Member of Parliament, Diane Kohler-Barbard, informed the Parliament that the foreigners became victims of xenophobic violence because they were "eating our food" and "flooding our hospitals." Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of Inkhata Freedom Party and the Minister of Home Affairs, persistently advocated anti-foreign sentiments. He suggested that the migrants threatened the resources of the government's new economic programme - Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) - a socio-economic policy framework for building an equitable and non-racial future of South Africa. Buthelezi promised to, "kick aliens out and keep the jobs at home for South Africans."³¹ These outbursts of state officials and politicians, including the call for the deportation of aliens to address economic problems, undermines the rights of migrants granted in the constitution to earn a living, and access health-care, education and housing.

Parliamentary debates among disparaging and virulently opposing parties often reached consensus against immigration. In what appears to be state sanctioned xenophobia, the 1999 White Paper on International Migration envisages that the policing (identification and expulsion) of undocumented migrants should be devolved to the local or community level.³² South Africans were expected to serve as watchdogs and whistle blowers against the "undesirable" African migrants. Even though the devolution of policing is yet to be passed into law, xenophobic attacks on immigrants have intensified.

The perception of a "deluge of aliens" straining the state resources as expressed by the media and government agencies seems baseless.³³ Alexander demonstrates that the notion of discrete "cultures", by which apartheid was justified, is a reactionary notion which cuts off people from one another, undermines a sense of national unity and deepens the prejudices and stereotypes of the colonial and apartheid past.³⁴ The rampaging xenophobia makes it difficult for South Africans to effectively connect with fellow Africans.

The notion of African immigrants constituting a burden conceals the yawning gap between the rich and the poor and the phenomenal decay of infrastructure. It also glosses over the rapacious tendencies of the new political elite and the monumental failure of the economic models, social welfare schemes and redistribution. State partiality in post-colonial Africa induced anti-immigrant sentiments. The affirmative action and black economic empowerment programmes of the ANC were a ruse by the ruling class to enrich a few black elites, thus legitimizing the system of capitalism.³⁵ The black economic programmes benefitted only the black elites at the expense of the black poor. This point is further illustrated by Akokpari that, "Historically, the post-colonial African state has neither been able to distribute the meager political and economic resources of the state fairly among its diverse competing constituencies, nor promote fair competition for these resources. This failure has heightened tensions in society..."³⁶ Xenophobic violence also marked the reversal of apartheid policies that isolated

black South Africans' wholesale interaction with their peoples of the continent.

But following the departure of white professionals to Europe and America, many business concerns were in dire need of foreign skilled workers and professionals. There are also reports that South African workers developed hostility towards migrants who were ready to accept jobs at lower rates and denying South Africans of making a living.

Due to prejudice, South Africans often lump illegal immigrants and refugees together with asylum seekers and legal migrants. In 2001, it was estimated that 200,000 illegal immigrants and 60,000 refugees lived in South Africa. Many migrants have been arrested for various criminal activities but not all migrants are responsible for crime in general. The overwhelming majority of prisoners are South Africans rather than illegal immigrants.³⁷ In contrast to the government and media rhetoric of "Africa flooding South Africa," the 2005 World Migration Report shows that Africa's international migrants within the continent are unevenly distributed with South Africa taking the least. According to the Report, "In 2000, 42 per cent were living in West Africa, 28 per cent in East Africa, 12 per cent in northern Africa, and 9 per cent in central and southern Africa."³⁸ South African Police sources often claim that the increasing activities of organized criminal groups aided the sophistication of indigenous groups and the use of more lethal weapons. It is estimated that there are at least 500 organized criminal syndicates groups operating in South Africa, many with African and international links.³⁹ The South African Police Service (SAPS)

conducted Organized Crime Threat Analysis summarized in the following chart:

Organized Crime Syndicates in South Africa

| S/N | Organized Crime Wave | 1994 | 1995 | 1997 |
|-----|---|------|------|------|
| | Number of organized crime syndicates active in South Africa | 278 | 481 | 192 |
| | Operating internationally | 29 | 187 | 32 |
| | Restricted to the African continent | 71 | 125 | 150 |
| | Specializing in drug trafficking | - | - | 96 |
| | Specializing in vehicles related crimes | - | - | 83 |
| | Specializing in commercial crimes | - | - | 60 |
| | Number of primary suspects | 1296 | 2178 | 1903 |
| | Additional target groups | - | - | - |
| | Additional target groups identified | - | - | 500 |
| | Number of primary suspects in target groups | - | - | 1184 |
| | Number of target groups operating internationally | - | - | 16 |

Source: Peter Gastrow, "Main Trends in the Development of South Africa's Organized Crime," in *African Security Review*, Vol. 8, No. 6 (1999). <http://www.iss.co.za/ASR/8NO6/MainTrends.html> retrieved on 25 April, 2009.

Among the identified international organized criminal groups are Nigerians, Russians, Chinese, Moroccans and Italians operating in South Africa. Nigerians, according to police sources dominated the illicit trade in cocaine in South Africa from the late 1980s. The Nigerian syndicates have expanded from Johannesburg to other South African cities. They established links with Nigerians and other networks in South America, from where they import the bulk of cocaine, and in countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Japan and Switzerland.⁴⁰ Police at Johannesburg International Airport confiscated 30,716 kilograms of cocaine powder in 1994 and 218,070 in 1998.⁴¹ Between January to May 1999, police of the narcotics unit in Johannesburg confiscated 339 kilograms of cocaine. These syndicates were identified as the key exporters of Southern African cannabis to Europe. Another criminal phenomenon associated with Nigerians is '419' letter scams and the kidnapping or killing of victims.

Several Nigerians are into legitimate businesses that help in shaping the South Africa's economy. Nigerians cannot be isolated as the only criminals in South Africa. Nigerian entrepreneurs and staff of international organizations are victims of armed robbery attacks in South Africa. They experience discriminatory services in the airlines and suffer humiliation at South African ports. Despite the existence of organized criminal networks among other European, Asian and African migrants, Nigerians seem to bear the stigma of criminality and xenophobic attacks.

According to SAMP, officially, more than 5,000 Nigerians live in South Africa while unofficial sources estimated 50,000. Other sources claim that between 45,000 and 100,000 Nigerians live in South Africa out of over 5 million migrants.⁴² Most Nigerians in South Africa are undocumented migrants, living in limbo, between asylum seeker and refugee status. Nigerians migrated to South Africa primarily for economic reasons. Many migrants were sponsored by family members with the long term agenda of alleviating poverty ravaging at home. Nigerians were subjected to police harassment even when their papers were in order. Those who arrived as refugees were barred from approaching their consulate, thereby making them more vulnerable for arrests and harassments. Due to systemic corruption in the South Africa's Home Affairs, it took seven to ten years before applications could be processed. Abeeda Bhamjee of the Witwatersrand Law Clinic explained that "It's supposed to cost nothing, but you have to pay anything from R200 and have to go to the offices four times a year. The officials don't want to make decision because then you kill the cash cow."⁴³

The social identity of those who claimed to be Nigerians in South Africa is quite fluid. About 60 per cent of those who claimed to be Nigerians in South Africa were nationals of other West African countries. Nigerians concentrate along the streets of Yeoville, Hillbrow and Orange Grove. The Nigeria in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) South Africa was formed in October, 2005 on the initiative of former President Olusegun Obasanjo. NIDO has chapters in Gauteng, Durban and Cape Town.⁴⁴

The role of the media has contributed to the negative stereotyping of African migrants fuelling xenophobic sentiments and violent attacks. Many media reports quoted government and police sources on how immigrants drained government resources: "The government has to spend about R397,000 on each illegal alien which translates into about R1,98 Billion being spent on maintaining illegals last year... This year alone it cost more than R210million - a tenth of the entire amount budgeted for the (Reconstruction and Development Programme) - just to house, educate and police and give medical care to only one sector of the problem (African immigrants)."⁴⁵

However, there is lack of concrete evidence and reliable information on the budgetary impact and service delivery implications of cross-border migration. The budgetary impact became more problematic since there is lack of reliable data on immigrants to know what it cost to host them. Many of the migrants who were not refugees or asylum seekers may not have been qualified for such services. The South African media peddled the negative image of African immigrants by describing them as barbarians whose "flood of misery," and barbarism contributed to urban decay. It was asserted that the presence of Africans made Johannesburg inner city degenerated into a typical sub-Saharan African city.

Nigerians are screened, scrutinized and intimidated at the point of entry at Oliver Tambo Airport, due to suspicion of their criminal tendencies or dubious business. Some are trailed to their hotel rooms to dispossess them of the personal belongings. Prominent Nigerians visiting South Africa have not been spared of such attacks and xenophobic violence. Professor Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate; wife of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Mrs. Oluremi Obasanjo and a former Presidential Aspirant, Alhaji Bamanga Tukur were victims of xenophobic intimidation in South Africa. Nigerian diplomats and officials have also been humiliated.

On May 1st 1999, unknown gunmen fired gunshots into the official residence of the former Nigerian High Commissioner, Alhaji Shehu Malami. In another scenario during the same period, the

Nigeria's Consul-General, Mr. Charles Onwuagbu, was attacked in his official residence in Johannesburg. As if these were not enough, on May 8th, 1999 the 12 year old son of Nigeria's High Commissioner was kidnapped on his way to school. From 1997 to 2001, about 53 Nigerians were killed in South Africa during pockets of xenophobic attacks. In 2001, it was estimated that 13 Nigerians were murdered compared to 4 in 1997; 12 in 1998; 9 in 1999 and 15 in 2000. In 2002, about 56 Nigerians languished in South African prisons: 43 of them were convicted and sentenced for drug and fraud related offences; 11 for theft, robbery and carjacking; 2 for rape while 50 were awaiting trial in various courts in South Africa. Between December 2001 and May 2002, about 63 Nigerians were deported from South Africa for living in the country illegally. In the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, some Nigerians were attacked in Churches or on their way to places of worship. They were dragged out of buses, brutalized and some beaten to death. In most of these attacks, South African security agencies were not enthusiastic about controlling the mob, thereby forcing the government to invite the army to quell the riot. Nigerians in South African prisons have not been spared either. In 2004, Durban Westville prison warders were alleged to have assisted South African inmates at the prison in obtaining weapons for an attack on Nigerian prisoners. During the encounter, a Nigerian inmate, Benjamin Ekene Igbokwe, was murdered while four others sustained injuries. The attack was spurred by media reports that linked the death of the South African musician, Brenda Fassie, to the alleged poisoned drugs she purchased from a Nigerian dealer.

In order to curb the migration from Nigeria, the South African government imposed discriminatory visa fees on Nigerian visa applicants. Such fees were not applicable to other applicants beyond Nigerians. South African airlines like those of the British and French provide discriminatory services to Nigerians. Most recently, in December 2008, the meeting of the implementation committee of the Nigeria-South Africa Bi-national Commission explored the possibilities of a visa-free regime to aid business exchange and redress discriminations against Nigerians.

Conclusion

Anti-immigrant sentiment is widespread in South Africa, arising from the perception that immigrants constitute a menace that denies citizens the fruits of liberation. The irony is of a South African history characterized by the state caught between the contradiction of identity politics, the failure of black empowerment programmes, nation-building and African regional economic integration. There is a renewal of politicized indigeneity in Africa. The valorization of nativity was aggravated by unprecedented rising costs of living, inflation, soaring gasoline prices and lack of social delivery that made lives unbearable for most black South Africans.

South Africa is not an exception among the industrialized economies facing an uncertain future and repelling immigrants. The so-called Native question that was dominant in apartheid South Africa was replaced by the immigrant question in the racial discourses and power relations, and in place of the native Africans, the enemy became the immigrants, usually a Nigerian or Zimbabwean entrepreneurs. The incontrovertible evidence in this discussion illuminates that the forces of globalization and nation-building accentuate insecurity and xenophobia for the African (Nigerian) migrants in South Africa while prompting the expansion and protection of capital on the continent.

Xenophobic attacks and experiences of alienation deny Nigerians proper integration into the social fabric of South Africa. Perceptions and experiences of official harassment undermine their business ventures and entrepreneurial initiatives. It undermines the African struggle for recovery and effective economic integration. Given that Nigeria and South Africa are regional economic powers in ECOWAS and SADC respectively, xenophobic violence could undermine not only the economic integration but also pan-African initiatives such as NEPAD and the AU championed by the two countries. Labour migration within the continent could help address the challenges of brain drain that Africa faces. It could reduce the economic imbalance and aid development with less dependency on erstwhile colonialists.

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