



Xenophobia, Reprisals and Prevention Strategies in Nigeria and South Africa: The R2P Dimension

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the political leadership responses and policies against xenophobic violence and the ramifications of reprisals bordering the Republic of South Africa and Nigeria as global cases among others. Indeed, migrants have significant socio-cultural, civic-political, and economic contributions in origin and destination countries and communities, including being important agents of change in a range of sectors. The expectations that come with greater possibilities which migration brings seems an endangered species given the contrast of resistance to 'change' and its fallouts seen in xenophobic violence in South Africa and other similar contexts. This study within the evidence of xenophobic violence escalations based on reoccurrences, argues that past and current anti-xenophobia prevention strategies in terms of responses and policies coming from the political leadership dimension has slipped into stereotype mode seen in the lens of 'intensity', reprisal and invariably stakeholders' collective failure. Thus, this paper suggests among others, an external alternative as the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) concept to add synergy to the sagging internal anti-xenophobic violence strategies evidenced in reoccurrences, intensity and escalation to regional reprisal levels

Keywords: xenophobia, violence, leadership, responsibility to protect (R2P)

Introduction

This paper interrogates the political leadership responses and policies against xenophobic violence and the ramifications of reprisals bordering the Republic of South Africa and Nigeria as a case study among others. Indeed, migrants have significant socio-cultural, civic-political, and economic contributions in origin and destination countries and communities, including being important agents of change in a range of sectors (WMR, 2020). The expectations that

come with greater possibilities which migration brings seems an endangered species given the contrast of resistance to 'change' and its fallouts seen in xenophobic violence in South Africa and other similar contexts. This study within the evidence of xenophobic violence escalations based on reoccurrences and frequencies (Ogunnoikin & Adeyemi, 2019), (Odiaka, 2017), (Misago et al.2015), argue that past and current anti-xenophobia prevention strategies in terms of responses and policies coming from the political leadership dimension has slipped into stereotype mode seen in the

lens of ‘intensity’, reprisal and invariably stakeholders’ collective failure.

The subject of migration remains one of the building blocks within the frames of development and globalization. Migrants are instrumental for the development of both sending and receiving countries (IOM, 2013). Thus, the extent of ‘trickle down’ effects is wide and requires constant contextual deconstruction. Put aptly, migration is synonymous to change in many ramifications and societies understanding its leverage embrace it, while other societies in contrast are caught in the web of mistrust, fear, myths and prejudice, seen many times in profile and unprofiled ‘clampdown’ against foreigners, and in extreme cases violence.

This strengthens Charles Darwin’s argument that: “it is not the strongest of species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change”. In this regard, many growing economies attracts foreigners of all sheds and South Africa as a reference of free, democratic and developing country and long considered a hub of employment given its diamond and gold industries since the (pre) apartheid period is a migrant destination (ACCORD, 2011). One of the backlashes and fallouts of this type of wealth creation i.e., migration, is xenophobia and its affiliates within the basket of (hate) crimes, discrimination, racism, identity politics and profiling mindset.

Crush and Ramachandran (2014) capture the ambiance of this threat thus: “violent xenophobia has become a regular feature of South Africa”. “Everyday animosity frequently spills over into violence against individual

migrants and refugees and their economic enterprise”. It can be implied that for each xenophobic violent event there has been reactions and counter reactions from state and non-state actors within the migration governance and management architecture in local, national, regional and global context. Thus, this paper examines past and current anti-xenophobia strategies within the trajectory of political leadership engagements, within the case study of Nigeria and South Africa responses and policies as seen within the context of ‘reprisals and mass violence, seen as threats within the whole gamut of migration shifting from being an ‘asset’ to a ‘liability’.

Context: Xenophobia Violence and Reprisals

Steenkamp observes that as in the West, resentment of migrants and xenophobic action in the global South is not a new phenomenon. The expulsion of 800,000 Ghanaians from Nigeria in the 1980s, for example, was a clear early example of a people and government who had become increasingly inhospitable towards migrants from another African country. However, intolerance does appear to have become more widespread and intense as South-South migration has increased.

Crush and Ramachandran, (2009) note that the contemporary resurgence of intolerance and xenophobia presents a formidable challenge to policymakers and states. They argue further that there can be no doubt that xenophobia destabilizes and seriously undermines the potentially beneficial relationship between international migration and human development. Adding that, it acts as one of the major obstacles to maximizing

the economic and social benefits of international migration, affecting both migrant and host populations adversely in many different ways. This concern was further deepened by the global covid-19 pandemic of year 2020 as citizens, migrants and 'others' within nation states as South Africa etc. faced lockdowns and its fallouts along this trajectory.

The covid-19 singular global crisis corroborated their assertion that it escalated levels of xenophobia towards migrants and refugees. Directly contribute to the vulnerability and exploitation of these groups leading to marked inequalities in the long-term between migrant and non-migrant populations. In a broader sense, xenophobia undermines principles of human equality, social justice, and social cohesion. Recent international forums on migration and development have consistently highlighted the need to tackle xenophobia and the related political, economic, and social exclusion of migrants, immigrants, and refugees.

It is in this context, that the sub-regional reprisal dimension of xenophobic violence relating to South Africa requires deeper introspection in reprisal lens and in 'thick descriptive narratives in crossdisciplinarity settings.

Remotely, on 2nd September 2019 the violent attacks on foreigners began after poster notices around Johannesburg suburb of Kempton Park (CNN, 2019). The 2019 xenophobia related attacks on foreign migrants in South Africa with the help of mainstream and social media reveal higher losses than previous reprisals on South African related concerns and business investments abroad, i.e.,

Nigeria, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar. Ogunnoiki and Adeyemi (2019) corroborate that apart from telecommunication firm MTN, there are over 100 South African companies in Nigeria, this was in contrast to 4 companies prior to 1999. The South African Shoprite chain stores in Lagos Nigeria was looted and vandalized for the first time in reprisal attacks. Angry demonstrations on the streets of Nigeria's largest city Lagos, the Nigerian capital Abuja and a few other cities across the country have forced South African-owned grocer Shoprite and telecommunications giant MTN to suspend operations last week. Protesters marched to their premises, sometimes threatening to retaliate (www.cnn.com).

Nobody captured this tension better than Adams Oshiomhole, the past national chairman of Nigeria's ruling All Progressives Congress. Oshiomhole asked Nigeria's federal government to nationalise some South African-owned businesses, including MTN, and called for a boycott of South African goods and services to send "a very strong message to South African authorities and the South African people." He asked that the landing rights of South African Airways be revoked until these problems are addressed. "Nigeria needs to show that we are not chicken to be molested," he added (afp.newsagency.com)

Zambia boycotted a sports event against South Africa in Lusaka and Madagascar who replaced Zambia pulled out over similar concerns of migrant foreigners' attack in South Africa. Likewise, in the Democratic Republic of Congo the South African consulate in

reprisal alongside South African owned businesses was attacked. The complexity inherent with this blowback of xenophobia comes from the political leadership responses and policies required to mitigate xenophobia related violence at both ends of the migration interface. Contradictions in responses and anti-xenophobia strategies failure are apparent. President Cyril Ramaphosa seeming rhetoric statements during political campaigns for the South Africa presidency and after the September 2019 xenophobic violence gives insights:

“Everybody just arrives in our townships and rural areas and sets up businesses without licenses and permits, we are going to bring this to an end” ... (08 May 2019, Hairsine, cited in Ogunnoiki and Adeyemi). “Government will not allow sporadic lawlessness and violence to disrupt the safety and livelihood of millions of South Africans and the majority of foreigners in our country who are law abiding and have right to conduct their lives and businesses in peace” (03 September 2019, CNN).

Core Argument

This paper makes a preference for a core argument/thesis as it toes the path of qualitative research germane and given the peculiar nature of the phenomenon with maybe a ‘phobia’ for stereotypes as seen in aspects of mixed method research common in the field of Public Administration and other related areas. The core arguments are thus:

- i. The xenophobic violence prevention strategies evidenced by sporadic, spontaneous reprisals and reoccurring incidences seems to be on the paths of stereotypes.

- ii. It further posits that, all ‘fingers’ point to the political leadership rather than followership (group violence) at the apex of the peace building pyramid comprising state and non-state actors.
- iii. The xenophobic violence reoccurrences and reprisals in the Nigeria and South Africa cases suggest the limitations in the political leadership statements and policy actions and responses and the need to pursue the ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P) concept to add value to the prevention policies.

Discussion

Available literature on the subject of migration, its governance and the phenomenon of xenophobia and collective violence are diverse given its vast nature and hence requires compartmentalization to address the specifics of protecting migrants’ rights and ensuring their well-being (WMR, 2020:363) for the ‘greater good’. Certain existing literatures on xenophobic related violence in South Africa suggest it has come to stay. It portrays it as a culture that could be lived with, nurtured and hope it will turn on the good side as time wears out. This follows Hadland’s argument 2008 cited in Hanekom and Webstar, 2009 that xenophobia has been on the rise in South Africa since the end of apartheid. This rise in violence resonates a perception that the state has not done enough in terms of accountability, responsibility and responsiveness.

Misago (2016) corroborates this argument further that the intervention against xenophobia fail because they are not evidence-based and are not informed by a clear understanding of the drivers of the violence against untested theories of change as focus mostly is on 'public attitudes. However, the reprisals dimension across other African countries attributed to xenophobic violence requires deepening thoughts and understanding within the trajectory of political leadership and victims as part of the peacebuilding policy architecture.

The literature on the construct of restorative and retributive justice conveying a basket of reparation, healing and memorialization suggest victims of xenophobic violence as the missing link. This is aside, the foreseeable literature component will require some synergy with state collapse theory, colonialism and identity politics (Mamdani, 2001), new wars (Kaldor, 2012 and the responsibility to protect (R2P) theory (Stark, 2011) intercalated with the migration discourse.

Kemp et al (cited in UNUP,2011) argues that states have a responsibility to protect all people at risk from atrocities living on their territories – be they citizens or non-citizens, indigenous people, majorities or minorities. But sometimes states may be too weak to do so. Or they may act in a way that endangers part of the population. This provides the basis for the responsibility to protect (R2P) model as applied in this paper.

Kemp further notes after so many atrocities in the past, the international community has vowed not to look away in the

future as he states: “thanks to a decision taken at the 2005 World Summit on the responsibility to protect (R2P), gone are the days when states could tell others not to interfere in their “internal affairs”. Now, according to the 2005 outcome document, if states abrogate their responsibility to protect, others must act to prevent atrocities, either by providing assistance and building capacity or through a timely and decisive response. This invariably pushes forward the argument that political leader’s capacity to criminalize past individual and group violence within the ambit of xenophobic violence, genocide, hate crimes and other affiliates requires an urgent paradigm shift because their global fallouts seen in ‘reprisals’ now far-reaching ramifications.

Other multidisciplinary options may arise in future research as government administrations turn to the academia for research-based options, coupled with stakeholders and shareholders as the organized private sectors and civil society organizations remain a critical part here.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Notably, this is not just an attempt at narrating xenophobic violence experiences but to attain a construct from them about healing, memorialization and to a greater extent restorative and retributive justice. This paper argues that most time political leaders who undertake this process of healing, memorialization, restorative and retributive justice on behalf of victims fall short of expectations. Their public statements and policy actions have not done enough as state actors carry the ‘knife and yam’ most times and excluding the inputs of non-state actors. This

is evidenced by reoccurrences of incidences with deeper dimension of reprisals at migrants' countries of origin as seen in the Nigeria and South Africa case and their ramifications for political stability, economic and social development.

Falling back to earlier stated argument by Hadland (2008) cited in Hanekom and Webstar, 2009 that, xenophobia has been on the rise in South Africa since the end of apartheid and which resonates a perception that the state has not done enough in terms of responsiveness and responsibility, this paper adds voice to the growing search for sustainable healing for 'victims' from the fallouts of xenophobic violence as it borders regular and irregular migrants in any place.

Likewise, reprisal outburst and its dynamics suggest the expansive nature of xenophobia and its affiliates 'beyond borders along with the socio-economic, political and diplomatic ramifications. All these again stop the 'buck at the table' of political leaders in terms of accountability for mass violence and atrocities under their watch. Thus, it has become an imperative for newer anti-

xenophobia violence strategies to emerge and strengthen existing ones from state actors with inputs from non-state actors.

Firstly, a review of existing xenophobic violence strategies is required as directed by the political leadership and all stakeholders and shareholders. This attempt at feedback should go beyond conventional methods, i.e. Mainstream media complemented by new media (social media) within predetermined frameworks for purpose of validity and reliability.

Secondly, the responsibility to protect (R2P) model should be applied in local context to nation-states and domesticated into the legal frames of the constitution of states and have mechanisms for compliance.

Thirdly, state actors must display capacity to use 'maximum force' when it matters most against perpetrators of mass xenophobic violence and fallouts of reprisal across African states and beyond. Following the path of Niccolò Machiavelli theoretical thoughts to leaders may sometimes be necessary, as he states that; "it is better to be feared than to be loved".

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