

# Xenophobic Attitudes against Immigrants and Cheap Political Talks: Sitting Time Bombs and Explosives in South Africa

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**Abstract:** *It is clearly known from the governments' perspective that foreign policies are an activity of the state. To that extent the government is said to be arepresentative of its citizen in international relations. Citizens are, therefore, to have a limited say on how their government decide to interact with whichever country and at whatever terms and applicable conditions of agreement in that relationship. That right accorded to government by its people gives the government an authority to enter into international relation on agreements which if people were given platform to talk they would have not agreed to such relations. This paper would like to argue that the interactions on foreign relations without citizens' inputs and knowledge are major causes of a discomforted relationship between locals and immigrants of foreign descendants. This paper is conceptual in nature and will use literature sources to argue that if government as an authority of foreign policy enters into foreign relations agreement and does not inform its own citizens accordingly a hostile relationship between the locals and immigrants is likely to continue unresolved. This paper conclude that in South Africa a clear political education and on African continent a sound government stand on immigration is required to put people on same level about immigrants' rights.*

**Keywords:** Xenophobia, Immigration, international relations, South Africa

## Introduction

Even after two decades of democracy, South Africa continues to be called a new democracy facing different problems. The tastes of democratic problems in South Africa started with a painful stage of trying to mend a more than four hundred years of broken trust among various racial groups that stayed separated with different benefits for years in the country. That was followed by redermacation of geographical boundaries that were ethnically and racially segregated. The problems were many and

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some included a high rate of unemployment, crime, poverty and inequality as well as restructuring the whole education system of the whole country from basic to tertiary levels. Above it all one may agree with Hendrickse (2009:1) that South Africa is a country in political transition and should be perceived, seen and understood as such in this era of transition. While the country claim to have done enough to date on other issues- the problem of political and economic instability of the neighbouring countries needed attention which they shelved and ignored. Hence the outbreak of the so called xenophobic attacks twice in one decade. The country did not take a serious note of this event when it happened previously in 2008 and 1990 respectively. The matter was addressed through cheap talks that South African should just learn to leave with others. Such cheap talks did not address the major concern of the cause for the event in the first place. When violent attacks erupted in 2008 and the government established an Inter-Ministerial Committee headed by the Minister of Police (Dunderdale, 2013:3) which ceased to exist actively after that period. The incident happened again in 2015 the government and responsible stakeholders continue with cheap talks that South Africans should learn to leave with others. The cheap talks without looking at the underlying cause are likely to cause an event to recur in future. This paper argues that ignoring the real causes of conflict between the locals and immigrants is likely to recur if such causes are not identified and dealt with. A major research question in this paper is: What are the real causes of rift between the locals and the immigrants in South Africa to the extent of causing losses of life? In addressing this research question the paper will focus on: Conceptualising xenophobia, Xenophobia and immigration in international context, handling migration in South Africa, Attitudes of South African against the immigrants, the biasness and truth of the South African xenophobic attitudes and the possible bombs and explosives in South Africa.

### **Defining Xenophobia in South Africa**

Xenophobia is a concept that is often put closer to racism, however, Bennet (2013) views it as a manifestation of what he calls ethnocentrism which refers to one's view of his group as a centre of everything and John (2002) adds that it involves negative attitudes towards other ethnicities or races. Xenophobia as a concept of course differs from racism in the sense that it denotes behaviour that is specifically based on the perception that the other person is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation (McKingley, Robinson and Somavia, 2001: 1-2; Adjaiand Lazaridis, 2014). Indeed xenophobia as a concept may have within its elements racism because colour and race would in most probability play a role in influencing xenophobic attitudes against individuals. Colour and the extent of pigmentation have been used in many instances to determine the supposed origin of individuals. In South Africa police have used expressions like one is too dark to be a South African. Often people were wrongfully arrested by authorities because they were seen to be too dark to be South African citizens.

Laher (2009: 1) and Meda (2014) define xenophobia as hatred and prejudice against outsiders or foreigners. This hatred is believed to be based on fear of the unknown. It is argued by Parliament of

South Africa (2008:5) that xenophobia is largely based on unfounded or unverified fears, and the inclination to stereotype foreigners as the cause of social and economic problems in host countries. In South Africa the concept application has been difficult to attest to because that which the media calls xenophobic attacks in South Africa only affected a specific group of people. Yet others argue that the South African attacks on specific foreign nationals cannot fit the definition of xenophobia because the victims of such attacks were Africans than other racial immigrants' groupings in the country. While people have painted South Africa as one the most xenophobic country in the globe, Sebola (2008) and Laher (2009) demonstrated that only immigrants of foreign descendants are affected by xenophobic attitudes and attacks in comparison to immigrants of other racial groups such as Europeans and Asians in the country. In South Africa most academics and prominent politicians have argued that the context is misplaced and we should rather talk of *Afro phobia* or *Negrophobia* than xenophobia. While Shadrack Guto and others argue for Afrophobia as such, other counter arguments have emerged that the Bangladeshis and the Pakistanis were attacked in the same fashion in South African townships. Thus, disputing the Afrophobia assertion.

### **Xenophobia and Immigration in International Contexts**

Xenophobia or rather its attitudes as espoused today in the media about South Africa is not a South African peculiar problem (Dunderdale, 2013:1) and is indeed a global scourge (Quinlan, 2013:1-2). Since the occurrence of this unfortunate incident in South Africa both the international and national media have been hitting hard on the image of South Africa as a xenophobic country. But in reality it is generally known that xenophobia is a global phenomenon and have not ceased to exist even in the most well-known democratic countries. It is just that in most countries it might not have reached the violent level and scale that South Africa had reached. Human Sciences Research Council (n.d:4) argues that South Africa is not the first in the world to be a host to xenophobic jealousies, prejudices and violence. Neither was the 2008 xenophobic violence the first in the country. The 1990 xenophobic violence in Cape Town which left twenty Somali's dead did not get much public coverage as future violence of the same cause.

Xenophobia cannot be justified as the globe is free for everyone to travel in through signed international conventions. But the problem is that those international conventions recognises the sovereignty of countries in managing immigrants in own land. While countries manages immigrants in own countries through international relations protocol which are in the hands of the Executives, the people at the grassroots level knows little of those bilateral government relations. The foreign relation agreements between countries do not necessarily mean a bilateral relation agreement with the people of host countries at the grassroots level. And yet those bilateral relations agreements between countries do not affect the executives as such- but instead affect the people at grassroots level who had little or no knowledge of how countries agreed to assist each other on particular issues. Those in authority also know that it is indeed the characteristics of an immigrant that determines his acceptance or rejection in

the host society (Francois and Magni-Berton, 2013). Xenophobia as argued in most literature is an undeniable social reality which must be understood on bases of sound information and objective perspectives of its source (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2006:2). On the other hand it is believed that foreign nationals staying in South Africa experience xenophobia in different ways (Meda, 2014). In this paper I argue that xenophobia is a global issue and it must be understood as a global problem that has to be addressed carefully beforehand because of its explosive potential in the face of government; in this instance I will look into cases of xenophobia in developed countries and Africa before focusing on South Africa.

### **Xenophobia and Europe**

The European Union claims to be a leading example in democracy, but that does not immune it from being the most prominent immigrants receiving region in the world (Jolly and Digusto, 2013), but the European citizens even politicians have demonstrated their concern about viewing immigrants as a potential threat than an opportunity to their economic growth. Although countries within the European Union such as Germany, Netherlands and Italy have policies for assimilating nationals of foreign descendants into their communities, but studies suggested that those countries have negative sentiments against immigrants in their countries. Italy according to Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgoret (2006) is described as hostile and xenophobic against immigrants. Germany has a history of anti-Semitism which is a specific hatred towards the Jews and that cannot specifically be termed xenophobic. But studies still reveals that a considerable proportion of Germans are more resentful towards the immigrants and Jews (Solomon and Kosaka, n.d; Shindondola, 2008:15-18; Krumpal, 2012) and demonstrating similar complaints such as crime, threat to culture, committing social fraud and taking jobs that belongs to the Germans. Ironically, the German issues are almost similar to South African's concern about immigrants in their country (Sebola, 2011) as reflected in many xenophobic studies conducted in the country. In France political parties built their support base on xenophobic stand in which the foreign nationals are seen a major cause of high unemployment rates, crime and social woes (Jolly and Digusto, 2013). Even the French President Nicholas Sarkozy argued that France has too many foreign immigrants who are not capable to integrate into the society. The President's call may not be an attitude but a fact in his circumstances. The fact is that such calls by heads of states risk the security of the foreign nationals in the host country. While countries around Europe such as Finland and Switzerland the scale of xenophobia is low, but the same cannot be said about neighbours such as Russia, however, the Russian government under Putin deals with that by enacting legislation to ban organizations that are seen to perpetuate xenophobia, racism and fascism ( Solomon and Kosaka, n.d:19).

### **Xenophobia and the Americans**

The United States of America and Canada are rated the most xenophobic countries by China, Cuba and North- Korea (Rayne, 2015:1). These accusations from the so called authoritarian nations are despite the fact that the United States of America receives a large number of immigrants from such countries and for

various reasons. Although the United States of America is well known as a nation of immigrants, it similarly has the highest incidences of xenophobia and intolerance of immigrants (Yashuko, 2009). Statistics shows that United States of America is composed of people of European origin (68%), Hispanic (14%), African American (13%), Asian American (4%) and Native American (1%). Although America has a history of xenophobia, it is believed to be good at adopting an assimilationist's philosophy on immigrants (Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgoret, 2006). Thus far America has been very good in the process of brain drain from African countries. As such America may not necessarily have typical immigrants like the ones that South Africa attracts. It should be noted that most of the immigrants that South Africa attracts are at the lower level of formal education and cannot contribute to skills shortage in the country other than being labelled as an addition to the existing high level of unemployment.

### **Handling Migration and Xenophobia in South Africa**

South Africa is a signatory of many international conventions on international migration. Matlou (2001:121) and Sebola (2011) assert that South Africa's immigration policies are the most user friendly in the continent in the sense that a foreign national is allowed to work and study while the application for asylum are still under consideration. The view however does not currently hold the practice in the currently reviewed immigration law of the country. South Africa's immigration policies have been argued to a particular extent as being abused by nationals of foreign descendants in application. The country is one of the 15 in the globe that contributes some of its financial budget to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Despite such numerous attempts by the country to improve its image on its neighbours, especially from the draconian apartheid immigration policies, the country was struck twice by xenophobic incidents which risked its image further on the globe and the neighbours.

South Africa's immigration act is highly considered as being friendly to immigrants, however, according to McConnell (2008:37) the act is "extremely limited and ambiguous" in two ways; firstly it focuses on attracting highly skilled immigrants and ignored the poor immigrants. Secondly; it commits itself to uprooting xenophobia without spelling out the strategy for doing that and instead tougher enforcement through community policing on undocumented immigrants seem to have increased the level of xenophobia than uprooting it. Gordon (2010) also noted the contradiction of the Act and refer to its intention of dealing with immigrants as a "double speak" than contradiction. Lubbe (2008) sees the new immigration Act 32 of 2002 as a source of problem because it encourages citizens and organisations to report any immigrants suspected of breaking the law. However, the provisions have been questioned before in the act as having the potential to influence xenophobic attitudes. The Chairman of the Parliament Portfolio Committee of Home Affairs defended the act as harmless and with good intentions (Lubbe, 2008). It should be understood that South Africa also has its operations to eliminate crime. And crime is an act that is against the law. Most of the critics on this act in literature have argued it on basis of

the coinage of the police operation such as “Operation Crackdown” which mostly target criminals at certain areas which are unfortunately dominated by immigrants who are mostly illegal. But indeed if to be illegal in a country is a crime; then there is no way such individuals in that area would not be arrested and deported. Lubbe (2008:4) argues that with the provisions of section 22 of the South African Refugee Act of 1998, the foreigners are likely to commit acts of crime simply because the host country is not taking proper care of them. In this instance there has always been counter arguments from both the locals and the immigrants claiming to be victims of crime. Researchers and academics in this instance have also recorded information as it is without digesting it intellectually.

South Africa is, however, one of those countries that believe that immigrants should be integrated into the local communities on arrival and not to be kept in refugee camps. Many Human Rights Commissions are concerned about Section 22 of the South African Refugee Act of 1998 about the Asylum Seeker Permit. The Act removes the right and study asylum for 180 days while the claim is still processed (Handmaker and Parsley, n.d). However, the South African policies are in line with its constitution which is regarded as the best in the world, its immigration policies are not hailed as such by the outsiders and Human Rights groups. It suffices to say that no immigration policies are made in the best interest of foreign nationals in any country. All immigration policies while considering hospitality for nationals of foreign descendants, they are also considered in the best interests of protecting the country concerned.

As a country South Africa is one the most immigrant receiving country in the region and mostly because of its fair economic and political stability in the region (Sebola, 2011; Adjaiand Lazaridis, 2013) and inconsiderable number of immigrants is likely to increase above the level of local acceptance. This immigrant receiving incident is likely to continue in future as long as the neighbouring countries are not improving politically and economically to keep their locals happy. South Africa, therefore, should get used to the reality that xenophobia needs attention because immigrants would not be reduced and will instead increase in the country. In the two violent incidences that took place in the country, South Africa seems to have done little to mitigate the causes and ensuring that such are avoided in future. Currently South Africa is host to a large number of immigrants from Congo, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Rwanda (Hendrickse, 2009:3-4) as compared to immigrants from other countries. There is also a further substantial number of immigrants from Ethiopia and Somalia and Nigeria whose statistics in the country might not yet be known. Immigrants of other racial group are not a priority in this discussion since they are rarely affected by the xenophobia discourse of South Africa.

Dunderdale (2013) argues that there has been very little action from the government since the first xenophobia strike in South Africa. All that the government did in the circumstances was to create a public broadcast based on similar cheap talks like “learn to leave together”. There is little that the government put to the public in terms of causes that have been identified and steps taken to address issues that caused the xenophobic attacks in the first place. It can be argued that the solution to the xenophobic

attitudes can not only be solved through public awareness of blame on locals and police enforcement agencies as if they were not there in the first and the second xenophobic strikes on innocent immigrants.

### **Perceived South African Attitudes on Immigrants**

Globally the attitude of South Africans against immigrants is rated as being very negative. Most literature have captured the attitudes of the South Africans as the worst in the globe against fellow African refugees (Naicker and Nair, 2000; Human Research Council, 2008:17-18; Chamanand Piper, 2012; Hussein and Kosaka, 2013) and others add to say that xenophobia has become a feature of a South African citizen (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014:1). These attitudes are perceived to be commonly practised by citizens, government officials, the police and private organisations that are contracted to manage the detention and deportation of illegal immigrants (Landau, Ramjathan- Keogh and Singh, n.d:4; Lubbe, 2008:5). In this perceived attitudes there is one point that is often missed; the question of focus of attitudes is known from one side only. While literature in South Africa's xenophobia focuses on the negative attitudes showed by the South African citizens, police and other related organisations on illegal immigrants, little is focussed on causes of such attitudes against immigrants. Therefore, the perceived attitude of the South Africans on immigrants is viewed from the perspective of the victims rather than the other actor. Little is said about the feeling of the South Africans about immigrants who live with them. Most studies mainly focus on perception of immigrants on South Africans and regard those perceptions as facts about who South Africans are.

Hussein and Kosaka (2013) in analysing the study conducted by South African Migration Project (SAMP) in 2001 concluded that South Africans indeed promote xenophobic discourse since they are of the opinion that the number of immigrants in the country need to be restricted. This opinion according to Chamanand Piper (2012) might not necessarily mean being xenophobic but may rather describe South Africans as being "defensive and protectionists". This is also in line with some findings that comparatively speaking South Africans are the most open citizens and welcoming to foreigners than in other countries. Considering the transitional period and the low socio-economic conditions the South Africans currently find themselves in, the high rate of crime and the rising costs of living such attitudes could come from any nation in the globe if the government handles their concerns with silence diplomacy. Human Sciences Research Council (2008:18) and Maharaj (2009:14) have noted that both the police and politicians have demonstrated their negative concern about how immigrants are involved in most of the crimes committed in the host country. It is, however, also notable that such contention was never supported by any proof of statistical evidence. Thus far the causes of negative attitudes towards immigrants by the South Africans are not clear and have been based on perceptive studies with no clear statistical evidence and correlated hypothesis testing. Even some convincing studies that were done to determine the cause and effects of xenophobia in South Africa have never seen practical application. For example a vast of academic studies and those conducted by many migration organisations in the country have looked at how a fight

for scarce resources (such as access to employment and health facilities and small business practices) between the locals and the immigrants has topped the list as a cause and effect of troubles in the xenophobic discourse. The government's reaction has always been that they must compete together rather than coming up with a solution to end the competition for scarce resources. Nkealah (2011) and Sebola (2008) argue that the battle for the scarce resources will continue to play a role as a major cause of xenophobic attitudes between the South Africans and immigrants. It can be argued that this major cause of xenophobic attitudes by the locals cannot be solved by cheap talks of mere staying together, there is a need for an action to improve the status quo which has been followed by other countries in the globe that experienced this kind of disaster before it. Literature has demonstrated that there are still more cases of xenophobic attitudes in developed countries such as France, Russia, Germany, Britain and other areas of the globe (Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgroet, 2006; Shidondola, 2008:15-18; Krumpal, 2012; Jolly and Digusto, 2013). It is highly recognised that xenophobic attitudes are a serious global problem and often because of lack of research conducted in other regions it becomes difficult to compare the exact similarities and differences both regionally and continentally. International human rights organisations and similar countries have played a game of blaming countries affected by xenophobia than providing alternative and workable solutions to assist the cause.

### **The Biasness and Perceived Truth of the South African Xenophobia**

A vast amount of literature in South Africa exists that suggests the causal factors and the extent of xenophobia in South Africa. Some have clearly argued that there are no known clear exact causes of xenophobia in South Africa. A vast amount of writings has little focus on the causal factors of this problem. Studies were indeed concerned about the perceived attitudes of the South Africans on foreign nationals and the perception of immigrants about the South Africans. That has ultimately put the discourse of xenophobia in South Africa at a relative scale of perception. All that researchers have compiled about this discourse is information that cannot be excluded from being bias and with little elements of the truth and genuine causal factors. The South African xenophobic story is a story of my word against yours; and that does not bring the solution on the table for the problem concerned. There are basically three or four areas of concern about the reliability of the xenophobia discourse in South Africa; namely who tells the story of this discourse, the South African government stand, 'we and them story' and effectiveness of human rights organisations and non-governmental organisations handling immigrations matters.

#### *Who tells the discourse of the South African xenophobia?*

Having perused from a variety of literature that tells the story of xenophobia in South Africa, it is highly improbable to accept its authenticity without suspecting any elements of biasness. My point is that it is not like the discourses are not academically researched or written. It is true that since the first xenophobic attacks as early as after the 1994 elections, this problem has provoked an opportunity for research in the



country. The Human Sciences Research Council has produced little volumes on this matter in 2008. Universities overseas and in South Africa registered xenophobic titles at the level of masters' degrees. Of the few dissertations on the topic that I fully perused are by NahlaValji, (2003, York University), A.K Tshidondolo (2008, University of Johannesburg), Tapiwa Gomo (2010, Malmö University, Sweden) Mariam Di Paola (2012, University of Witwatersrand) and Live Hagensen (2014, Stellenbosch University). I am not ruling out the probability of other studies being done on similar topic by South Africans. But the majority of registered master's degree in this discourse seems to have been told from the perspective of international researchers who I can presume may lack genuine causal factors and objective interpretation. Alexandra Davis, an NGO employee and a University of Cape Town Master of Philosophy degree registered in the same xenophobic title in South Africa clearly spelt out in her limitation of study that being 'a white female and a foreigner' that might affect the data she would obtain.

Very few studies seem to have been conducted in South Africa by the national citizens moreover they are also typical sympathetic studies mainly based on opinion of international students than South Africans. And the reason why most South African immigrants may not need to indulge in this discourse is not clearly known. But is probably a matter of concern. A vast number of scientific articles published in international and national journals exist on South African xenophobia, but little of those articles have been penned by South Africans themselves to tell their story on the discourse. Hussein Solomon and Jonathan Crush are the only ones that dominate the discourse of migration in South Africa. It can therefore be argued that the lens by which the xenophobia discourse is analysed and understood is through the lens of a victim and the alleged victimiser says a little or nothing about the matter. While no solid evidence exists that the information on xenophobic research in South Africa is biased no truthful evidence exists to suggest that the lens through which we are made to see it is accurate. International NGO's that often play a crucial role on humanitarian issues might not be as objective as they are supposed to be in adjudicating for African causes. Most of them come from developed countries with little economic problems and might fail to understand the real African problems as they ravel themselves. Blame on attitudes of South African than trying to find a cause for an attitude and its solution will do little to assist the problem to be addressed.

#### *The South African government's stand on xenophobia*

The South African government's stand on xenophobia and the immigrants is double-talk as argued in most literature on the subject. While the government is saying all that we all know such as condemnation of the acts of violence and promotion of the living together with immigrants; the talk is left while the walking is right. The government seems to know the causes of such as competition for scarce resources, police abuse of immigrant's conditions and the lack of capacity at boarder posts control and Home Affairs. These have been attested to by many scientific studies conducted by Sebola (2008); Sebola (2011); De Vos (2008:1-2); Dupunchel (2009); and Human Sciences Research Council (2008:1-57). The government

has done little, if any, to deal with issues identified as major contributors. This could be attributed to the governments' denialism of the xenophobic existence (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014:8-9). It is clearly argued that while human rights organisations and other concerned organisations have raised their concern about the double-talk immigration legislation which seem to promote rather than alleviating xenophobia the government remains adamant on retaining the act as it is without the probability of alteration. It may seem that the truth lies in the fact that only skilful immigrants are assured protection and equality for the country's benefit. The xenophobic discourse talked off in the country is considered no less than mere criminal activities by selected South African citizens in the country and cannot be generalised as a South African social problem. The South African governments' inactive stand on the issue is also influenced by other political realities on the ground. Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh and Singh (n.d) noted that the whites in South Africa hold a positive view and sympathise with immigrants in which South African black nation are seen as evil against their own brothers and sisters. On other side the Unions are in favour of removal of immigrants who are taking jobs from their local membership (Maharaj, 2009). And yet employers who are predominantly whites sympathise with immigrants not because of being capable of that emotion, but simply because they benefit from maximising profit by labour exploitation of the immigrants. Immigrants do not have unions and are not in a good position to negotiate their terms of employment. Other than that the integration of South Africans with immigrants practically excludes the integration with the whites. Whites in South Africa are accommodated in suburbs where they are not even capable of being in peace with middle class income Africans. On their farms they keep African employees at inhabitable farm houses distanced from their own. Therefore, literature cannot take an objective stand on what the white community is thinking on South African xenophobic discourse.

#### *The payback time theory*

A theory does exist which is held by many immigrants and many South Africans that South Africa owes its existence to its neighbouring countries (Lubbe, 2008; Sebola, 2008; Sebola, 2011; Naicker, 2000). From this theory it is argued that when South Africa wanted to fight for its own justified course of being against apartheid our liberation heroes went to stay in Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and Nigeria at the least. For that matter those countries have welcomed South African struggle heroes with open hands to an extent that their civilians have often died from the attacks that was launched by the apartheid government in those countries. Today South Africa finds itself in the same position that it has to give the favour back for immigrants from the continent that suffered the same fate as them before. And yet indeed now South Africa has many immigrants with the largest number of them coming from Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Sebola, 2008). Immigration is immigration and is not about Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The problem with regard to xenophobia and the payback time theory is very much complicated and scientific research may ignore even the most useful information in order to be politically correct with facts. Firstly the discourse of xenophobia ignores the pattern of the attacks which are coined as xenophobic that in it no Nigerian, Tanzanian, Botswana, Zambian or Lesotho or Swati or

foreign Indian is victim of these xenophobic attacks. And yet South Africa hosts quite a diversity of immigrants from different parts of the globe and is the most common immigrant receiving country in the region of Africa. Secondly, although the number of victims suffered differs, as reflected in academic sources and newspapers, only our most important brothers from Zimbabwe and Mozambique are listed the most as victims and with no mention of a cause of the event as such. They are followed by the Somali who are little known as the beneficiary of “payback time theory”, but with them is clearly spelled out that their shops are vandalised and looted. This only suggests one or two things that these activities might have been influenced by nothing other than crime than hate. The payback theory in South Africa is likely to be in trouble because the current people that are involved in these activities were either a month, a year old or were not even born when South Africa got independence or assistance from neighbours. Neither are the current victimised immigrants reliable authorities of what happened while the South Africans were in exile. Most of those exiled South Africans that benefitted from the foreign courtesy have either passed on or are in elite positions now and have forgotten that courtesy, hence we have a problem.

*“We and them story”*

The conflict between the South African nationals and fellow African immigrants is solely based on opinions of biased third parties. Very few of these third parties are basing their opinions on facts than blames and sympathies which fuel the conflict than resolving it. Centre for Development Enterprise (2006:2) argues that people should not ignore the circumstances under which the South African attitudes against immigrants result in hostile acts. South Africa has a tremendous history of accommodating immigrants (Lubbe, 2008:1-3). It has a long history of housing people from Africa and there were never acts of violence against each other before. These acts of violence against immigrants are recent and it emanates from the post-apartheid political settlements. When this violence against each other takes place the immigrants put blind eye on the cause and blame the locals for being unwelcoming and selfish. While on other hand the locals blame their government of making their country’s scarce resources a free commodity for everyone on board. The immigrants are telling their own story; while the locals are telling their own and therefore little development take place in the discourse. The South African media on other hand have been telling its commercial story from its own perspective. It is very clear that speakers of the xenophobia in South Africa are pulling the truth to their side, but what remains is that welcoming each other as an ordinary peaceful talk than looking at what are the exact causes of conflict cannot be an effective solution to the problem.

*The effectiveness of human rights organisations and Non-governmental organisations*

The role of human rights organisations and non-governmental organisations on conflict resolutions in developing countries is undoubtedly biased. When it comes to human rights issues both Human rights organisations and responsible NGO’s have played a political opposition role than a complementary role to the government mission. This is often clear because most Human rights organisations and NGO’s in

developing countries are funded from foreign countries with foreign missions in developing countries. The so-called human rights organisations and NGO's are likely to play a biased political role that fuel conflict in developing countries than humanitarian role that would bring about solution to the cause of the conflict. Human rights organisations and NGO's have to continue with the blame on behaviours of South African citizens than suggesting workable solutions for all.

### **Sitting Time bombs and Explosives?**

The intention to solve the xenophobic problems of South Africans against their African counterparts is clear (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015; Wilkinson, 2015:1; Cronin, 2015:1-2). The South African government accepted and apologised to the global community about the ugly manner in which their citizens inappropriately handled themselves on the global stage. But that was nothing better than talks that have been only talks. But no real issues were addressed except blames on the attitudes of South Africans and the expectation that they have to change their attitudes against their neighbours. And yet other arguments are that South Africans hardly know the African continent well (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2015:2). Little was done to mitigate the potential future xenophobic threats. The threats at lower level community started as early as 1994 that there were business and employment threats by people at grassroots level that compete with South Africans for those lower level opportunities. Competition for scarce resources always has the potential for conflict between indigenous and foreign immigrants or insiders and outsiders (Maharaj, 2009; Nkealah 2011; Banda and Mawadza, 2014). The local South African indicators for potential threat were not taken into consideration until it reached its peak in 2014. The potential xenophobic threats still exist in universities and such potential threat is not only for South Africa but can spread to other affected countries such as Botswana and Namibia which are affected by a high rate of immigrants from politically and economically unstable countries in Africa. The solution to this threat cannot be solved through blame of locals who do not accept people outside of their community but by looking at the root cause and mitigate on its threat. The academia of South Africa and other professional categories are not yet in the open about xenophobic challenges in employment, but there have been hazards all over the employment of people of foreign descendants in units where locals' skills are not necessarily in shortage. It is important to address the real cause before the professional categories follow suit.

On the other hand individuals of foreign descendants complain that they cannot be treated unfairly no matter where they are on the globe. They cannot afford to be searched by local police as they please simply because they don't look local whether legal or not legal in a host country. They want to enjoy the privilege of humanity like any other local citizen whether legal or not legal. This threat is very serious and can expose South African law enforcement officers into the trouble of police killing. Gordon (2010) argues that due to its potential future economic growth, immigrants would continue flocking into the country regardless of legal restrictions. South Africa is a favourable destination for immigrants and not only

because of its growing economy, but mostly because of its human rights protection enshrined in its constitution (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013).

Most studies already have demonstrated that individuals of foreign descendants in South Africa have cried foul play of being made to pay bribes by both officials of Safety and Security as well as of the Department of Home Affairs and that when they are not capable of paying bribes they end up in deportation trucks or jails (Human Science Research Council, 2008:11). The Police are expected to protect the vulnerable immigrants other than contributing in persecuting and arresting them unlawfully (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2015:3). Considering that the country's crime rate is high, in which criminals are involved in police killing, it would be worse if immigrants can take advantage of such cases and join criminals in police killing.

Ignoring political education and geo-political knowledge by the South Africans have potential for explosive xenophobic environment in future. South Africa has entered into various bi-lateral and multilateral relations of which its own people have no idea. Hence there are different reactions between the government and the local people on immigration issues. Although by virtue of its existence, the government represents the state in international relations, there exists a need for political education on the problems and significance of immigrants in host countries.

### Conclusion

This paper has argued that immigration matters are often an issue of the government and foreign countries with little role from the local people. The bi-lateral relations that countries enter into are often not in favour of the local people and hence the agreements made between countries are often tempered with by the reactions of the local people. South Africa recently appeared to be the most xenophobic country in the globe when local citizens are said to have attacked people of foreign descendants in their country. But most literature on the subject argues that such actions are not peculiar to South Africans and have been common even in the most developed countries in Europe. Although other countries are not practicing it in the manner that South Africans reacted, European countries have enacted legislation to ensure that foreign nationals are protected and promised harsh steps against local that will persecute or promote xenophobic tendencies.

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