Xenophobia And Nigeria – South Africa Relations

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ABSTRACT: The renewed, pervasive and reoccurring nature of xenophobia in South Africa impinges on the ethos of African Renaissance thereby making the African project an object of caricature. Unemployment and poverty among most South Africans at the bottom of the economic ladder have provoked fear towards better educated and experienced migrants. This paper examines this core issues of racial intolerance; dislike for foreigners particularly Nigerians in South Africa, and its implications on the relationship that exist between these two countries, emphasis on political, trade and economic engagement. It also interrogates the effect of Xenophobia in the foreign policy of Nigeria. This study is anchored on the realistic conflict theory, and also adopted secondary sources of data such as journal articles, newspaper and policy briefs to discuss aspects of Nigeria-South Africa relations. This paper notes that the South Africa – Nigeria relationship will suffer serious setbacks due to xenophobic attacks, and equally recommends that South African citizens should be educated on the effects of xenophobic attacks on the economic development of the country and a re-evaluation of Nigeria foreign policy to pursue strict national interest while tending to domestic challenges.

KEY WORDS: Xenophobia, Relations, foreign policy, racial intolerance, economic development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Xenophobia is the dislike or fear of that which is unknown or different from one. It comes from the Greek words (xenos), meaning "stranger" or "foreigner" and (Phobos), which means "fear." (Petkou, 2005). The term is typically used to describe a fear or dislike of foreigners significantly different from oneself, usually in the context of visibly difference. Xenophobia has been occurring much earlier in South Africa than apartheid, because it appears to be an attitude not a political System. The fear of strangers has always been present, but after the political end of apartheid in 1994 this attitude spread out all over the country (Brenner & Rolke, 2014). According to Akinola (2014), South Africa xenophobia is not a new phenomenon; instead, it is the extension of other forms of violence and intolerance. Since South Africa's independence in 1994, xenophobia has grown along side with the rising number of foreigners coming into the country. Nigeria and South Africa can be identified as the largest economy in the African region. Per their achievements, these countries can be viewed as forerunners of continental development and regional diplomatic links in West Africa and Southern Africa respectively. Nigeria and South Africa had made concerted efforts to position the region as a critical global actor in international political and economic relations. It could be argued that this situation was further perpetuated by political illiteracy on the part of South Africans with regard to African politics, including the decisive role played by other African nations in the liberation of South Africa (Shishonga, 2015). Most South Africans' hatred for non-nationals is based on an assumed link between the presence of foreigners and the threats to their property and physical security. Nationally, 48% of South Africans feel that foreigners are a criminal threat (Crush & Williams, 2003).

In Johannesburg, the country's crime capital, Legget (2003) reports that 63% of inner-city Johannesburg residents mentioned foreigners as the group committing most of the crime in their area. Similarly, among 70% of Johannesburg residents who thought crime had increased in recent years, identified immigrants as the primary reason. According to Landau & Jacobsen (2004), one cannot deny that non-nationals contribute to South Africa's serious security problems, empirical data suggest that the threat ratio of foreigners is relatively small compared to that of South Africans. National police statistics published in 1998, for example, shows that non-nationals contributed more than 2% of the numbers of arrests (Harris, 2001).

Indeed, the issue of xenophobic attacks should not be seen as something new in African countries. Countries like Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Ghana have in the past experienced the effects of xenophobic attacks (Gwaradzimba & Shumba, 2010). Similarly, (Osiki, 2015) asserts that with the brewing tension between the two economic giants of Africa, it is only a matter of time before an economic relationship between them would be affected. Nigeria is a major supplier of oil and gas to South Africa, while the country ships-in automobile, wine and paperboard to Nigeria among other products. This demonstrates that the opportunities binding these two countries are quite promising. Nigeria and South Africa must move now to nip the situation, while it can still be managed. Nigeria as the big brother must take the lead. This paper interrogate the outburst of xenophobia in South Africa in relation to Nigeria foreign policy of Afro centrism, with special focus on the spate of both latent and manifest violence against immigrant especially African immigrants.

II. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF XENOPHOBIA

A 2001 review by Wicker, explained xenophobia as one among several possible forms of reaction generated by anomic situation in the societies of modern states (as cited in Sichone, 2008:257). According to South Africa Human Right Commission (SAHRC), xenophobia can be defined as the "deep dislike of non-nationals by nationals of a recipient state" (Bekker & Carlton, 2010:127). Indeed its manifestation is abusive and violates the constitution. (Nyamnjoh, 2006) argues that xenophobia in South Africa is not generally directed at all people perceived to be foreign nationals, but it is Africanised as Afrophobia with black African foreigners being the exclusive target for xenophobic attacks and violence. This assertion is evident in the way and manner South Africa has treated other African nations, including Nigeria. While (Landau, 2005) captures xenophobia as any form of discriminatory attitudes towards non-nationals, (Musuva, 2014:382) notes that "xenophobia takes place within the context of crime, poverty, inequality and unemployment". Be it as it may, one basic factor we need to note, is the fact that in South Africa for instance, xenophobia variably manifests itself through tribalism and ethnic superiority, racism and sexism pathologies.

Table: Major Sites of Xenophobic Violence in Post-apartheid South Africa

URBAN AREA	DESCRIPTION	DATES
Alexandra township (Johannesburg)	'Buyelekaya' inspired attacks on Malawian, Mozambican and Zimbabwean migrants	1995
Alexandra township (Johannesburg)	Attacks on migrants resulted in over 60 deaths including locals; 342 shops looted, 213 premises burned down, about 100,000 people were temporarily displaced	May 2008
Olievenhoutbosch (Near Centurion in Gauteng)	Attacks on migrants at Choba informal settlement resulted in several deaths; looting and destruction of foreign-owned spaza shops, hair salons and taverns	December 2005
Olievenhoutbosch (Near Centurion in Gauteng)	Attacks on migrants resulted in several deaths; looting and destruction of shacks and property	2007
Durban	Armed group led by a community councillor led attacks on migrants; 100 Somali owned businesses were looted and over 400 Somalis were displaced	January 2009
De Doorns (Western Cape)	Attacks on Zimbabwean migrants at Stofland informal settlement resulted in looting and destruction of shacks; 3000 foreigners were driven from their shacks	November 2009

Tevera, (2013)

In this conceptualization; fear, prejudice and violence are common denominators. Therefore, xenophobic disposition is social/psychological anomies that negate the principles of accommodation and tolerance. It is aimed at fragmenting society into 'we' and 'them', creating a model of social division upon which all forms of contestations are premised. The aggregated psychological discontents are often ventilated as outburst of nationalistic expression; it is upon this premise that sympathy is drawn from the 'we' against 'them'.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The subject of xenophobia and its effect can be better understood using the Realist Conflict theory. This theory was propounded by Donald Campbell, but was expanded by other scholars during the 20th century. (Campbell, 1965) criticized psychologists like John Thibaut, Harold Kelley, and George Homans, who emphasized theories that place food, sex, and pain avoidance as central to all human processes.

Shrief, Harvey, White, Hood and Sherif (1961) suggests that competition for access to limited resources results in a conflict between groups. Okasana (2008) noted that prior to Campbell; social exchange theorists ignored the essence of social psychology and the importance of interchanges between groups. Contrary to other theories, the realist conflict theory takes into account the sources of conflict between groups, which include incompatible goals and competition over limited resources (Shrief et al., 1961). The theory is used to explain the conflict, negative prejudices, and discrimination that occur between groups of people who are in competition for the same resources. The realistic conflict theory states that "whenever there are two or more groups that are seeking the same limited resources, this will lead to conflict, negative stereotypes, beliefs and discrimination between the groups" (Okasana, 2008:46). The conflict can lead to increasing animosity toward the groups and can cause an on-going feud to develop. Conversely, conflict, negative stereotypes, beliefs and discrimination between groups can potentially be reduced in situations where two or more groups are seeking to obtain some super ordinate goals. Super ordinate goals are mutually-desirable goals that cannot be obtained without the participation of two or more groups. Because of its emphasis on group behaviours and conflict, the realistic conflict theory is also referred to as the realistic group conflict theory.

One of the earliest examples of realistic conflict theory is the Robber's Cave experiment conducted by social psychologist Muzafer Sherif in the 1960s. Based on a field experiment conducted at Robber's Cave State Park in Oklahoma using 22 adolescent males, Sherif (1966) noted that each of the twenty-two participants was 12 years old, they came from a two-parent home, and could be traced to a white middle-class background. None of the participants knew each other before the experiment. Sherif divided the males into two separate groups: the Eagles and the Rattlers. Neither of the groups was aware of the other's existence during the first stage of the experiment. During the first stage, the participants were involved in several activities with their group members such as hiking and swimming. These activities allowed participants to form attachments with their group and create their own group culture, norms, and expectations. Once the participants had become attached to their own groups, Sherif introduced the groups to each other and arranged for competitive games and other activities between the groups. For example, one of the competitive games required the Eagles and the Rattlers to play each other in a baseball game. The winning group received a trophy and individual medals for the group members, while the losing group received nothing. He began to notice that the groups were calling each other names and teasing each other. However, as the competitive games continued, the groups became increasingly hostile. For example, the Eagles set the Rattlers' flag on fire and the Rattlers destroyed the Eagles' cabin. Eventually, the groups became so hostile with one another that they had to be physically separated. Remember that the participants were 22 well-adjusted males. They were not criminals, nor did they have a history of aggressive or destructive behaviour. However, once conflict and competition were introduced, their behaviours became discriminatory and hostile. This theory captures the nature of xenophobia in Africa, and how its reoccurrence has made the African project an object of caricature. The Realist Conflict theory applies to the situation facing Nigeria and South Africa. Owing to the competition that exist over limited resources in South Africa, the nationals perceive non-nationals especially Nigeria, as the enemy. Nevertheless, both nations do not view their relationship from the mutual standpoint and is equally not interested in participating in super ordinate goals which cannot be achieved without the input of each state. South Africans are not hostile in nature, but the issue of xenophobia that is reoccurring amongst them, is traceable to the conflict that exists between them and foreigners. Little wonder they accuse foreigners of taking away their jobs.

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

It is evident that since independence in 1960, Africa has remained at the forefront of Nigeria's foreign policy. This nucleus of her foreign policy saw the country committing herself fanatically to decolonization of the African continent and eradication of racial discrimination and domination. According to Onouha (2008), the first opportunity for Nigeria to implement her foreign policy on anti-colonialism was provided by the

Sharpeville massacre of 21st March 1960. During the incident, the white South African police attacked South African blacks protesting against racial discrimination and domination. This incident which led to the death of 72 blacks with many wounded, marked the beginning of Nigeria's diplomatic confrontations with South Africa.

Nigeria contributed to the liberation struggle through the application of two major strategies, which include:

a. Resentment and condemnation of the apartheid policy;

b. The use and sponsorship of sanction against the racist government;

The Tafawa Balewa government (1960-1966) upon assumption of office in October 1, 1960 was faced with overwhelming pressure from both domestic and external sources to institute measures to check South Africa's apartheid policies. Consequently, Nigeria banned the importation of South African goods into the country and was instrumental to the political and economic sanctions passed against the racist regime. Furthermore, the ugly racial incidences in South Africa saw Nigeria spearheading the call for political and economic sanctions against the apartheid South Africa in the International Community, examples were the suspension of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961 and the imposition of trade embargo under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U). Nigeria was instrumental to the call for complete isolation of South Africa by the International Community (Ebegbulem, 2013). There was need to force South Africa out of its racist policies. Gambari (1980) captured the view of the Leader of the opposition party at the Federal House of Parliament, Chief Obafemi Awolowo; who condemned South Africa for the killings and called for a swift and effective action against South African interest in Nigeria. He maintained that Nigeria should force South Africa out of the Commonwealth because the Pretoria regime had displayed sadism and barbarism, which is rare in the annals of man. Onuoha (2008) noted the recognition and support accorded to the MPLA regime in Angola by Murtala Mohammed regime in 1975, which was another strategy to encircle the racist regime. It is on record that this recognition was extended immediately South Africa military invaded Angola to boost the fortunes of FNLA-UNITA alliance, and frustrate the MPLA. Successive governments in Nigeria continued to fight against the apartheid regime. Speaking at the OAU extraordinary summit in January 1976, at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, former Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed declared: "First, we call the attention of all to the diabolical role of apartheid. The main elements of that criminal doctrine are too well known to this Assembly to necessitate any detailed analysis. Suffice it to say that the whole rationale behind this doctrine, which the United Nations had aptly condemned as a crime against humanity, is the perpetual subjugation of the African man, in order to create a paradise on earth for the whites. When I contemplate on the evil of apartheid, my heart bleeds, and am sure the heart of every true-blooded African bleeds" (Garba, 1987:94). As a result of the pressure mounted by Nigeria and other nations of the world, Non-government Organizations and influential individuals, the racist regime of South Africa collapsed in 1991. Onuoha (2008:271) noted that by 1991, "the build up of the various diplomatic pressures and support of nationalist movements had worn out the racist regime of South Africa and eventually led to its collapse". With the obituary of apartheid in 1991, the need for a change in diplomatic strategies arose. Ebegbulem (2013) opined that at the dawn of democracy in South Africa, Nigerians, especially the professionals, were part of early migrants to South Africa. Part of the philosophy of those early migrants was to contribute to the much needed nation building in post apartheid South Africa.

IV. POST APARTHEID NIGERIA- SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS

With a democratic and majority rule in place in 1994, South Africa quickly switched over the Pariah Status in the International Community with Nigeria (Ebegbulem, 2013). However, the new democratic regime in Pretoria, the popular government of national unity (GNU) led by the antiapartheid icon, President Nelson Mandela, quickly established bilateral relations with Nigeria in 1994, though the latter was under the military leadership led by late General Sani Abacha. Banjo (2010) noted that the move was in recognition of Nigeria's role in the liberation of apartheid South Africa. Pretoria's assumption of moral authority to advise on democracy and the advancement of human rights was base on what South Africa had adopted as her pillars of foreign policy after 1994, but was misinterpreted by Nigeria's military junta as an attempt by Pretoria to set up competition between the two countries which Nigeria claimed she was not interested in (Banjo, 2010). Nigeria's side of the argument was in itself a distortion of the facts. For example, military involvement in politics was already out of fashion in the world. The relationship between the two countries was tense because of Abacha's desire to hang onto power, and gross abuse of human rights in Nigeria (Banjo, 2010). Provisions were quickly replaced by arbitrary decrees, which paved the way for the junta to embark on gross human rights abuses in disregard of the judiciary. The regime soon faced unprecedented opposition from human rights groups and crusaders for democracy because Abacha was seen by many as an insider of the Babangida's military junta, who could only extend Babangida's agenda in the Aso-rock (Abuja), Nigeria's sit of power.

With the hunter being hunted, Nigeria's foreign policy towards South Africa became apologetic. World opinion swelled up against Nigeria. Onuoha (2008) noted that Nigeria - South Africa confrontations

reached its zenith in 1995 when the then South African President, Nelson Mandela vigorously campaigned for the expulsion of Nigeria from Commonwealth during the Commonwealth Summit in Auckland. This was in protest of the execution of the "Ogoni Nine". According to Orji (2001), most western nations, alongside South Africa, imposed a number of sanctions against Nigeria, after she withdrew her High Commissioner from Nigeria in protest. One of which was a ban on issuance of visas to senior military officers and senior government officials and their families, particularly those who actively formulated and implemented or, benefited from the policies that impeded Nigeria's transition to democracy.

As Banjo and Omidiran (2000) noted that Abacha responded by refusing to let the Nigerian Super Eagles defend their African Cup of Nations gold medal (which the Nigerian team had won in 1994 in Tunisia) in South Africa in 1996. In Nigeria's calculation, the first indication that South Africa intended to use sports as a weapon was when South Africa withdrew the invitation of Nigeria's Super Eagles to the four-nation tournament organized by South Africa. The South African Football Association alleged that it was because of the hanging of the "Ogoni nine" that the invitation was withdrawn. The Nigerian sports authorities protested to FIFA asking for South Africa to be punished for mixing sport with politics. Nigeria based her argument on the ground that suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth because of the killing of the "Ogoni nine" was a political issue which should not have influenced sports decisions. The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) agreed but only warned South Africa, promising, however, to punish her if there were any future occurrence of mixture of sport and politics (Banjo & Omidiran, 2000).

Abacha's untimely death on June 8, 1998, turned events around between the two countries. With the emergence of democratic government in place in Nigeria, Nigeria - South Africa relations became less confrontational but friendly and cordial. On May 29, 1999, the military formally stepped aside and that gave birth to civilian rule.

NIGERIA – SOUTH AFRICA BILATERAL RELATIONS

The birth of civilian rule in Nigeria initiated a fresh start between both countries, with Nigeria considered as one of South Africa's important partners in advancing the vision of Africa's political and economic renewal. Onuoha (2008:272) noted that "with more than 75 universities, Nigeria contains a large population of Africa's centre for learning and research". He further observed that the expanding large consumer market and petrodollar have made Nigeria – South Africa bilateral relations inevitable. On the other hand, South Africa with about 45 million citizens is currently Africa's wealthiest economy. The country boasts of modern economic infrastructure, especially when compared with the rest of Africa. Covering less than 4% of the continent's landmass and accommodating less than 6% of its population, provides more than half of the electricity output of Africa and puts more tonnage through the ports; provides more air transport than the rest of southern and east combined. As at mid-April 2003, an estimated 55 South African Companies were doing business in Nigeria. The single largest investor is MTN. Its entrance into the Nigerian market came by way of the first telecommunication auction process in Africa in January 2001, when it awarded one of Nigeria's Global System Mobile Licence for a fee of US$28m (Onuoha, 2008). DSTV, as a major force in the television industry, accounts for 90% of the viewers that watch satellite TV in Nigeria between 2005 and 2009. This has seen DSTV growing into the sixth largest company listed on the Lagos Stock Exchange. Similarly, the Dangote Group of Companies with headquarters in Nigeria have investment portfolio of nearly $400 million in cement production in South Africa; and Nigeria's Oando Oil Company is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Oil represents over 95 percent of Nigeria's exports to South Africa (Nagar & Paterson, 2012).

It will be recalled that the former Heads of State of Nigeria and South Africa, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki worked relentlessly to lobby the rich nations of the world to focus greater attention on African problems. Ebegbulem (2013) observed that in the G-8 meeting of the world's richest states in 2000, both leaders argued strongly that the rich nations should forgive Africa's debt. Both had called for technology and resource transfer from the West to Africa, criticizing the gap between promise and delivery on the part of most western states. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), championed by Mbeki and Obasanjo equally proposed a simple bargain: the west provides debt relief, opens its markets, invests in Africa and supports peacekeeping missions in exchange for democratic accountability and financial probity by African leaders through a self-monitored peer review mechanism. The personality of General, Olusegun Obasanjo and his South African counterpart, Thabo Mbeki, was a major contributing factor to the emerging and cordial relationship between the two countries. Obasanjo and Mbeki perceived the urgent need for Africa's re-birth and they shared equal passion for the realization of such goal (Adebajo & Landsberg, 2003). Since 1999, South Africa has emerged among the top investors in many sectors of the Nigerian economy, their presence is visible in the Nigerian economy, especially in areas such as telecommunication, engineering, banking, retail, property development, construction and tourism, to mention a few. In terms of technology and infrastructure, South Africa has an edge over Nigeria while Nigeria has an advantage of large market potentials for investments over South Africa. This is why there are lots of South African companies with huge investments in Nigeria. In

August 2016, Nigeria was reported to have lost its position as Africa's biggest economy to South Africa, following the recalculation of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The IMF's World Economic Outlook for October, puts Nigeria's GDP at 415.08 billion dollars, from 493.83 billion dollars in 2015, while South Africa's GDP was put at 280.36 billion dollars, from 314.73 billion dollars in 2015, thereby making South Africa the second largest economy in Africa (Tony, 2016). Meanwhile, the Bi-National Commission (BNC), constituted the context for strategic partnerships to enhance bi-lateral relations and redeem Africa's economy. It is noteworthy that negotiations held in October 1999 and April 2000 on the avoidance of taxation on income and capital gains, reciprocal promotion and protection of investments, co-operation in the fields of mining, geology, exploration, and energy (Banjo, 2010).

Indeed, from 2000-2004 witnessed a more focused and active articulation of a strategic partnership between Nigeria and South Africa. The trust between Nigeria and South Africa nosedived in 2004, when a Johannesburg radio presenter humorously insulted the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who was in South Africa for Mbeki's inauguration, that he probably carried cocaine in his luggage (Games, 2013). As observed by Seteolu and Okuneye (2017), the relationship turned edgy in 2008 with the xenophobic attack on Nigerians that raised questions on the historic friendship between the countries. In recent years, Nigeria-South Africa diplomatic relations has deteriorated on many fronts, prompting the visit of President Goodluck Jonathan to South Africa where he addressed the latter's joint parliament. The Presidential visit was prompted by the yellow fever certificate saga that involved both countries. The South African government had on March 2, 2012 deported 125 Nigerians for possessing fake yellow fever vaccination cards. For many, the action was the height of ingratitude and the peak of alleged xenophobia tendencies of the South African government and its citizens domiciled in their country, which raised the temperature of relations between the two countries higher (Adekunle, 2012). Before they reached a truce, the Nigerian government retaliated by sending home the first batch of the country's travellers from the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos.

THE IMPACT OF XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS ON NIGERIA– SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS

The unsavoury fallouts from the recent xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa have lead to a strain in the economic and political relationship that exists between the two countries. On Thursday, 23rd February, 2017 irate Nigerian youths, under the platform of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) laid siege on offices of MTN in Abuja, while the Senate broached on possible reprisal, including preventing MTN, DSTV and Shoprite from doing business in the country. The Militants equally warned the South Africans that the only way their citizens in Nigeria could be safe, is if they halt hostilities against their compatriots in South Africa doing legitimate business. With the brewing tension between the two economic giants of Africa, it is only a matter of time before an estimated N1.5 trillion economic relationship between them would be affected. Nigeria is a major supplier of oil and gas to South Africa, while South Africa ships in automobile, wine and paperboard to Nigeria among other product (Akuki, 2012).

If Nigeria has any policy on South Africa, it is undoubtedly that of "No Compromise with Apartheid", as propounded in 1963 by Dr. Jaja Wachukwu, the then Minister of External Affairs. Apart from that, it can be said that Nigeria has a reactive policy which is more declaratory and less retaliatory. This has afforded the South African government, the luxury of speaking from both sides of its mouth in the face of xenophobic atrocities of its citizen against foreigners. The South African government is always prompt in explaining that xenophobia is not in any way South African in character and that all those involved in the act would be brought to book. Unfortunately, the world is yet to be told who were responsible for the first xenophobic attacks and how many of them have been tried (Olaode, 2017).

What is important here to underscore is the fact that the target of South Africa's xenophobia even included the citizens of Nigeria. The Nigerian government compelled the deduction of monies from salaries of civil and public servants for the purpose of the liberation movement in South Africa, which shows that Nigerians deserve a little respect and just treatment. The big question is this; is it that South Africans did not and do not know the truth? Or did the government of South Africa consciously adopt a short term memory? There are so many unanswered questions, but all these submission boils down to the fact that the onus of educating the masses lies on the government.

We cannot overemphasise the impact of xenophobic attacks. Recently, Nigerians living in South Africa came under attack by local vigilantes. Many suffered only the destruction of their homes and business while some who lost their lives were not so lucky. This report attracted the usual condemnation from Nigerian authorities. The National Assembly was particularly at the forefront of the demands for answers from the South African authorities. However as it is almost a norm in Nigeria, the intervention of the National Assembly was not without its own measure of drama. For days both chambers of the National Assembly could not agree on the composition of a team of the legislature to visit South Africa, while the House of Representative preferred to call the shots alone, the Senate reportedly pushed for the composition of a committee, which did not pull through. In a statement released by the Nigerian Guild of Editors, the South African Institute of International

Affairs was reported as having recorded that Nigeria spent $61 billion between 1960 and 1995 in the fight against apartheid. (Babalola, 2017). With this level of commitment on the side of Nigeria during the apartheid regime, the government must take xenophobic attacks on its citizens very serious, the drama witnessed between the Senate and the House of Representative speaks volume. It shows that we lack swift response to issues that concern Nigerians both within and outside the shores of Nigeria. It is no longer news that through protest, the masses remind the government of their responsibility, little wonder the South African government do not take us serious.

The Nigerian government has lost about 137 citizens in South Africa, between 2014 and 2016. The chairman, House Committee on Diaspora Matters, Rep Rita Orji, decried the Federal Government's attitude towards the protection of Nigerians outside the country, saying the government paid more attention to remittances from citizens abroad than their welfare. She accused the government of over protecting the businesses and interests of South Africa to the detriment of Nigeria. Orji recounted some of the gory murder of Nigeria in South Africa, Libya and other countries some of which she said her committee had investigated and given the report to the ministry of Foreign Affairs with no visible actions taken. The Nigerian Communication Commission is hell bent on reviewing upward the price of data and voice calls in Nigeria to the detriment of Nigerians. Even with the intervention of the National Assembly, they (NCC) are bent on protecting the interest of the foreigners. Responding, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Khadija Bukar Abba Ibrahim told the committee that though it is the responsibility of the ministry to protect the interest of Nigeria and Nigerians abroad, funds were not made available to the ministry until the 2017 budget proposal. According to her, it is estimated there are up to 15 million Nigerians abroad. It is therefore a herculean task for the ministry to provide protection and welfare assistance when no provision was made for that purpose in the budget. (Ndujihe et al, 2017).

RETHINKING NIGERIA FORIEGN POLICY OF AFROCENTRISM

Nigeria's commitment to the development and unity of Africa has been unprecedented. If the world is not loudly praising and applauding Nigeria despite her glowing and ground-breaking contributions to African peace, security and prosperity, it is not for lack of credible track record of achievements and capacity. It could be rather due to her hard luck of always having her many virtues written on water and its few vices carved on marble (Idehen, 2014). Most worrisome is the continuous humiliation of Nigeria especially from those whom she has made incredible contribution to South Africa is one of those countries that have refused to come to terms with the leadership role of Nigeria in Africa, perhaps, because of the unhealthy competition over regional hegemony (Idehen & Osaghae, 2015).

One undisputable reality is that in recent times, the Afrocentric posture of Nigeria has failed in its entirety to give the country and its people the modicum of respect and fear she deserves and used to be known for. This obviously is not unconnected with the serious systemic problem within the domestic arena, which has culminated into this palpable situation where we have become a nation which has moved from the sublime to the ridiculous in the way and manner the world relates with us. Our "Giant of Africa" status has crumbled in the eyes of many nations, owing to the fact that we are surrounded with lots of domestic challenges like, Corruption, Insecurity, Poverty, Hunger, Inflation etc. There is need for us to look inward and resuscitate the economy, instead of playing nice outside, while the giant in us have fallen apart.

V.   CONCLUSION

Nigeria-South Africa relation has been a potpourri of cooperation and conflict. Xenophobia, though a worldwide phenomenon continues to plague African countries with development, economic hardships and immigration issues. The alienation of foreign nationals especially black immigrant in South Africa had successfully created a thick line of partition between the "we" and the "them" in South Africa, undermining the ethos of black brotherhood rooted in Africa socialism and communalism. This partition might be with us for long unless urgent steps are taken to address the trigging factors that led to these attacks. Recurring conflicts affect bi-lateral relations; this makes it imperative to create effective conflict management mechanism to respond to it.

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