

AN EXPLORATION OF THE BILATERAL TRADE RELATION BETWEEN NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA IN THE WAKE OF POLITICS OF XENOPHOBIA

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Abstract

This study explored the complex dynamics of bilateral trade relations between Nigeria and South Africa within the context of recurring xenophobic tensions. While both countries represent Africa's largest economies with significant mutual trade interests, their relationship has been periodically strained by outbreaks of xenophobic violence in South Africa, often targeting Nigerian nationals. This research investigates the extent to which such socio-political tensions influence bilateral trade flows, diplomatic engagements, and policy responses between the two nations. Using a political economy approach that combines trade data analysis, policy review, the study revealed that while trade volume remains relatively resilient, the atmosphere of mistrust and public sentiment has led to calls for trade boycotts, disrupted business operations, and weakened regional cooperation frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The paper concludes with recommendations for depoliticizing trade relations, strengthening diplomatic channels, and adopting proactive measures to address xenophobia as a barrier to sustainable intra-African trade.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations, Sustainable Trade, Xenophobia, Trade Flows, AFCFTA

Introduction

The phenomena of xenophobia did not start in South Africa, countries like Australia, North America, Europe, United Kingdom, Japan, Nigeria, Ghana and others have had long histories of xenophobia (Mayfield, 2010). Violence against 'the others' plays a prominent part not only in South African history, but the history of the world. In Rome for example, xenophobic tendencies were manifested towards the Russians and Hungarians who were not citizens but from neighboring countries (Saideman and Ayres, 2008:155-160). Australia though a multicultural society, xenophobia sentiments were manifested towards immigrants. Foreign nationals were seen at all times as criminals or asylum seekers. The situation was worsened by the fact that the government and opposition parties took

advantage of these immigrants by indulging in looting of refugees (Buchanan, 2003:7). France, which was once a white and catholic country, anti-immigrant sentiments were directed or developed following the presence of the Muslims in particular and other races. Xenophobia in France became widespread to the extent that French citizens were blaming the increased unemployment and insecurity on the foreign nationals (Roemer et al 2007; 237-247). The end of result was the tightening up of security (immigration laws) by the French government as the foreign nationals were called criminals. The French and the British for fear of contamination of their culture by foreign nationals coming from other continents such as Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, established a more stringent immigration laws, which were passed restricting the

number of foreign nationals coming to those continents (Campbell, 2003:77).

In the United State of America (USA), xenophobic problems are manifested in form of anti-Hispanic hate crimes (Stacey et al., 2011:284-294). Research has it that xenophobia in USA from a historical perspective started as far back in the 19th century. In 1885, it was reported that white Americans rioted against Chinese residents. Again in 1890, another incident of xenophobic attacks on the Chinese was reported where white farm workers assaulted towards Mexicans, Italians, and Asians, shows that they are not welcomed in USA. Xenophobic assaults against Mexicans became rife in 1914. During this period in America, only foreign nationals from Germany, England, French speaking countries, Canadians and Jews, were welcomed to USA (Fetzer, 2000:31-33). Mikulich (2009:4) The United State has been known throughout its history as a nation of immigrants (Smith & Edmonston, 1997). At the same time, the U.S has a long history of xenophobia. Xenophobia can also be seen in India targeting mostly foreign nationals from Bangladesh who were accused by the Indians for the country's predicament, such as increased unemployment, terrorism and environmental degradation, just as seen in the case of South Africa. The numbers of Bangladesh foreign nationals in India were most often than not, portrayed as a national threat to the country by government officials. One peculiar thing about xenophobia in India was that xenophobic assaults against Bangladeshi vary according to religious backgrounds (Crush and Ramachandran, 2010: 214-217, Human rights watch, 1998:18-20 and 123-217).

Coming to Africa, Nigeria and Ghana have had records of hatred for foreign

immigrants, which ended up with xenophobia (Campbell, 2003:74). Xenophobia in Ghana became rife in 1969 to the extent that the Ghanaian government had to evict and expelled a total number of 1.5 million foreign nationals particularly Nigerians. Research has it that in 1983, Nigerian government evicted 1.5million foreigners from Nigeria who were Ghanaians in particular (Campbell, 2003:74). The xenophobic inclination in both countries was spurred by economic difficulties confronting them. Nationals of both countries (Ghana and Nigeria in 1969 &1983, respectively) accused each other of their predicament (Soyombo, 2008:94-95)

Looking at Botswana, citizens tend to take prompt xenophobic ideas from South Africa; they refer to foreign nationals (excluding South Africans) in Botswana as "Makwerekwere". Such derogatory word is also used in South Africa, to refer to people who speak strange languages coming from economically devastated countries in search for greener pastures. Xenophobic attitudes towards foreign nationals in both countries slightly differ in that in Botswana, the Indians are hated for being treacherous. The Indians despite their huge economic investments in Botswana, they are still targeted (Campbell, 2003:101).

The past violence witnessed in South Africa resulted in the death of many foreign nationals, threatens not only the lives and livelihoods of refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other locally defined "outsiders" including domestic migrants' ethnic minorities, but also the health, education, tourism and economic sector of the "Rainbow Nation". Xenophobia in essence is seen as a global phenomenon that is orchestrated by various factors, mainly associated with

social and economic conditions both locally, nationally, and internationally.

Methodology

The research method in this study is qualitative, using a documentary research design. The qualitative approach is suitable because it facilitates analysis of existing literature and policy documents, providing an in-depth understanding of the xenophobic pandemic and its implications for Nigeria's and South African economic system.

Data for the study was gathered only from secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports of international organisations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Africa Union (AU), World Bank, conference papers and other relevant scholarly publications. They offer detailed insights on economic dangers of xenophobia, on governance structures, institutional approaches, and global cooperation.

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse collected data by systematically grouping information into prominent themes encompassing global governance, economic resilience, international cooperation, collective security, and sectoral reform in Nigeria and South Africa. The generated themes align with existing literature review themes and the study objectives. Through this analytical technique, it is possible to identify the patterns, relations and emerging issues that are central to the study's goals. The study results are analysed through the lens of Political economy approach that explain how interactions between national and international actors have unfolded in Nigeria's relations with South Africa in the wake of politics of xenophobia.

Bilateralism between Nigeria and South Africa

Bilateral relations between Nigeria and South Africa date back to 1960's, when South Africa was still ruled by an apartheid regime. The post-independence Nigeria and the apartheid regime in Pretoria relations were sour and confrontational, while it was friendly between Nigeria and the liberation movements in South Africa, especially with the African National congress (ANC). It was due to the fact that, Nigeria adopts Africa as the centerpiece of its foreign policy and committed itself to the total liberation of African continent from colonialism and racism. Nigeria showed untiring opposition to colonialism on the African continent and the racism that existed in South Africa before 1994. The beginning of a new era started in the final days of apartheid in South Africa when President De Klerk visited Nigeria in April 1992 to discuss bilateral issues, mostly trade relations.

The two countries have the largest economies in Africa, South Africa taking the lead because of her more capitalized economy with advantage in infrastructure, science and technology, while Nigeria is the second largest owing to her population and the blessing in oil as well as human resources (Marwa, 2010). The state of Nigeria has suffered many years of squandering at the hands of erstwhile military leaders and politicians (Idowu, 2008) which has been a major setback in the body politics of Nigeria. The expectations around the world that Nigeria will play a role in reviving Africa after its independence on 1st October 1960 had diminished to a great extent at the time South Africa re-entered the comity of nations as a democracy in 1994. The only memorable thing left was remembrance of

Nigeria's role in the liberation of Africa from colonialism and the special support she gave to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa (Aremu, 2013). This diminishing influence of Nigeria could be blamed on her economy, which failed largely because of the successive military regimes in the country.

In 1994, South Africa exported U.S \$8.1 million worth of products to Nigeria, while it imported U.S \$3.1 million worth of commodities from that country (Omojola, 2006). In 1999, the South Africa and Nigeria government signed bilateral agreements on trade and investment. These agreements amongst other things aimed to increase the amount of trade and investment between South Africa and Nigeria (Sifingo, 2003). The volume of trade between South Africa and Nigeria increased in 1999 with the signing of the bilateral trade agreement. In October 1999, a South Africa–Nigeria Bi-National commission (BNC) was established by the South Africa and Nigeria government to strengthen bilateral political, economic, and trade relations between both countries. The commission is also seen as a platform for both countries to jointly impact positively, together with other African countries on regional peace and security, socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and the prevention of crime and corruption. Between 1999 and 2002, there was about 540% increase in the volume of South Africa's export to Nigeria (Onuoha, 2008).

The period between 1999, there were only four South African companies operating in Nigeria (Ezeoha and Uche, 2005). With the establishment of South Africa and Nigeria bi-national commission and the signing of bilateral agreements, there are over 100 South African companies doing business in Nigeria (Sifinan, 2003). In

2001, MTN was awarded a license by the Nigeria government to operate a cell phone network in the country. In which, MTN paid U.S \$285 million as license fee, MTN has spent about U.S \$1 billion on setting up its operations in Nigeria (Lutchman, et al. 2004). Presently, the telecommunication company has become the largest cellular network company in Nigeria with over 10 million subscribers (Tenekin, 2007). According to Jonah Onuoha, as at mid-April 2003, an estimated 55 South African companies were doing business in Nigeria, and the largest investor was MTN. The presence of many South Africa investors in Nigeria has boosted the economies of both countries which was made possible as a result of encouraging bilateral trade relations that existed between the two nations.

As Lutchman and Daniel (2004) noted, in 2003 two-way trade flows between South Africa and Nigeria and this amounted to R5.3billion. The South Africa and Nigeria chamber of commerce arose out of the bi-national commission. Some of the largest South African companies that have investments in Nigeria are members of the chamber, such as MTN, Standard Bank, First Rand Massmart, Sun International, etc. The main goal of this chamber of commerce is to identify investment opportunities in Nigeria for South African corporations. According to Jacob Zuma, a former vice president of South Africa under Thambo Mbeki and a recently removed president, he observed that in 1999 when he visited Nigeria that "in as much as many will agree that such bilateral trade will be an unequal one because Nigeria is predominantly a consuming nation, Nigeria still exports not just commodities but also human resources". As such the relationship between both countries should not be under emphasized. Further evidence has

proved that in many bilateral agreements and the establishments of Nigeria –South Africa bi-national commission have helped in the consolidation and strengthening of political, economic and trade relations among Africa union (AU) members, especially among the two countries.

By 2005, South Africa was exporting goods worth R3.4 billion to Nigeria and importing R4.2billion worth of commodities from Nigeria (Tenikin, 2007). South African exports to Nigeria includes machinery, electrical equipment, appliances, wood, paper, prepared foodstuffs, beverages, plastics, rubber, chemicals etc, meanwhile, 97% of Nigeria exports to South Africa is oil (Pahad, 2007). With these, it can argue that there was an unequal trade because South Africa can be seen as the most dominant partner in terms of trade relations.

The improvement of relations between the two countries was to depend largely on bi-national commission which was a strategic coordination of economic bilateralism between the two countries. The commission was formally established in October 1999, co-chaired by the vice president and deputy president of Nigeria and South Africa respectively (Banjo, 2010). According to Adebajo (2007), the bi-national commission has major objectives which he highlighted as being to provide a framework for joint efforts to bring Africa into mainstream of global political, social, and economic development; provide the basis for the government and private sectors of both countries to consult with each other to promote bilateral trade and industry, improve bilateral relations in the fields of technology, education, health, culture, youth, and sports, use both countries human and natural resources to maximize socio-economic integration in Africa.

Nigeria and South Africa held six bi-national commission (BNC) meetings, alternating them between the two countries. For example, meetings held in October 1999, April 2000, march 2001 and 2002, December 2003 and September 2004. The BNC intended to address some issues that have negatively affected the relationship between Tshwane-Abuja including Nigerian diplomats complaining about negative South Africa press reports and xenophobia, stereotypes depicting Nigerians as drug traffickers and criminals. Nigerian diplomats contend that local South Africans, Chinese, Asians, Europeans, and Arabs are also engaged in the illegal business of drug dealing but they are not tarred with it. In spite of the framework of BNC and numerous bilateral agreements Nigeria has signed with South Africa, the two countries have not been able to maintain a cordial diplomatic relation.

The Big Brother Role of Nigeria in Africa

According to Ajaebilli (2010), Nigeria has played an unmatched role in restoring peace to conflict ridden African countries such as Congo, Sudan, Liberia and freedom to Angola, Mozambique, helped in abolishing minority racists regimes in Zimbabwe, and South Africa, to which she always committed huge human and material resources because Africa has remained the centre piece of Nigeria foreign policy since independence. Nigeria has however, continued to endure the mockery of several African states notwithstanding her big brother role in Africa. For instance, some neighbouring Francophone countries embarrass Nigeria and show outright hostility by subjecting Nigerians living in their midst to various forms of torture and other humiliations (Ajaebili, 2011). Nigerians in South Africa

face a similar fate generally termed as xenophobia (Umezurike and Isike, 2012). This poor perception of Nigerians in the international community could be blamed on the unscrupulous political leadership and economic breakdown which the country has experienced for several years owing to the opportunities squandered by the successive military regimes in the country.

Nigeria was a frontline state in support of liberation movements in South Africa because of her commitment to what she considered a just struggle for the region. For this end Nigeria established the big brother project of the southern African relief fund (SARF) (see Aremu, 2013). This was specially funded with deductions from the salary of every Nigerian worker, in respective of rank; both in the public private sector as well as donations from ordinary Nigerians in all walks of life, including students (see Aremu, 2013). This fund was made available to the liberation movements in Southern Africa. Nigeria further provided scholarships for students from South Africa. Nigeria artists also contributed in this struggle. For instance, Nigerian musicians waxed albums in support of the anti-apartheid struggle. A memorable one in this respect was Sonny Okosun's timeless piece, 'fire in Soweto'. At the international level, Nigeria provided leadership at the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union). For example, Nigeria chaired the UN Special Committee against Apartheid (UNSCAA) for most of its existence (see Aremu, 2013).

Nigeria and South Africa are Africa's major regional power in economics and politics. Nigeria has become South Africa's biggest trade partner; Aremu (2013) reported that South Africa had an estimated GDP of \$368 billion in 2011 as

Africa's biggest economy while Nigeria, Africa's second biggest by GDP being \$232 billion. In the past decades, over 100 South Africa companies, with the support of the department of trade and industry have penetrated the Nigerian market in different economic sectors. Several South Africa companies now operate in Nigeria, these include; MTN, Eskimo Nigeria, South Africa airways, Stanbic Merchant Bank Nigeria Ltd, Grinaker- LTA construction Ltd, Protea hotels, Critical Rescue International, Global outdoor services, Oracle airtime sales and digital satellite television. Only a handful of Nigerian companies have set up business in South Africa these include union bank, Philips consulting, news media financial standard and this day newspaper (Adebajo 2007, Zeleza 2009, and Aremu 2013).

Evidence showed that largely due to lack of economic and political leadership, the foreign policy of Nigeria became stranded and confused at the time South Africa was freed from apartheid. South Africa on the other hand after democratization in 1994, engaged in total trade with the rest of the continent which heavily skewed in her favour, her leaders popularized the African renaissance which she is using as an umbrella to expand her business treks in the continent. But South Africa has allowed xenophobia to damage her human rights standings and international respectability. Unfortunately, this highly damaged hostility is directed towards African foreigners in South Africa, most especially Nigerians.

Contextualizing Xenophobia

Xenophobia is the dislike or fear of that which is unknown or different from one. It comes from Greek word (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 different. 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.

The bilateral diplomatic relations between South Africa and Nigeria have been for years characterized by co-operation and competition for continental dominance. South Africa has been the leading economy on the continent, followed by Nigeria and Egypt. However, things took a drastic turn in April 2014 when Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) put it ahead of South Africa as the continent's economic power house. Nigeria's remarkable economic boom, resulting in an output more than 40% larger than that of South Africa, calls for an effort to assess and forecast possible effects on bilateral relations between South Africa and Nigeria. It was said, that the economic boom was witnessed due to presence of South Africa companies in Nigeria.

Nigeria is indeed the Africa of human resources became Africa's largest exporter of oil and South Africa in the wake of its industrialization became Africa's largest consumer of oil. South Africa faces domestic challenges in the form of high levels of unemployment, especially among the youths, poverty, and inequality. Nigeria's greatest domestic challenges are Boko Haram and its large educated population that requires an expansion of

private investment to create more jobs for it.

Despite the obvious supremacy battle between Nigeria and South Africa within the continent and the global arena, the two countries have continued to maintain overt friendly relations. However, the upsurge of xenophobic attacks by South Africans on their African brothers and sisters which Nigerian citizens in South Africa are the major victims had obviously created a scenario where there exists a diplomatic row not palatable for a brotherly relationship between the two countries. Though prior to 1994 immigrants from elsewhere faced discrimination and even violence in South African foreigners especially Africans. The restoration of black majority rule in 1994 in South Africa rather than bringing to a halt this ugly trend, there was an obvious increase in the incidence of xenophobia in South Africa. The increase in xenophobia after the restoration of black majority rule in South Africa was clearly depicted in a 2004 study published by the SOA migration project (SAMP) which stated thus:

The African national congress (ANC) government in its attempt to overcome the divides of the past and build new forms of social cohesion embarked on an aggressive and inclusive nation -building project. One unanticipated by products of this project has been a growth in intolerance towards outsiders. Violence against foreign citizen and African refugees has become increasingly common and communities are divided by hostility and suspicion (SAMP, 2004:12).

Factorizing the Reasons for Xenophobia

There are lots of opinions and reasons for the various xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The first school of thought views the xenophobic attacks as a consequence

of increased crimes and criminality being perpetuated by foreigners in South Africa, the second school on the contrary attributed the causes to the envy South Africans' have on their enterprising brothers from other countries on their soil and equally the inability of black South Africans to shake off the psychology of the dehumanizing torture they undergo during the apartheid regime. The main reason given by South Africans especially the locals who are the perpetrators of this violence rests on crime and criminality and several other weak reasons.

According to Curien (2009:23), while institutional failures could be seen as the root causes of the growing frustrations among South Africans, the locals thought otherwise. In his words "local residents claim that foreigners took job opportunities away from local South Africans and they accept lower wages, foreigners do not participate in the struggle for better wages and working conditions. Other locals claim that foreigners are criminals, and they should not have access services and police protections. Foreigners are also blamed of their businesses that take away customers from local resident, engage in drugs and the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS". According to Bayo (2017:8); "the accusation are preposterous. How could one steal a woman when relationship between two adults is supposed to be consensual; it also does not make sense that foreigners have been depriving South Africans of job. If South African employers find those from abroad better qualified than South African counterparts, why blame foreigners?" Bayo proceeded to trace the root cause of the aggression, according to him; South Africa has a long history of subjugation of the indigenous black population.

The state sponsored apartheid regime was designed to keep the blacks at the lower rung of the social order. Apart from being viciously restrained from achieving parity with the white in their homeland, the blacks could not also achieve social amenity like education. Their inability to receive education during apartheid has ensured that the generation of the black has not acquired the skills necessary to successfully compete in the post-apartheid, the white minority still controls the rainbow nations while the black majority remains in townships to watch the dream of a post-apartheid Eldorado. Frustration has turned into hatred towards other Africans who they now accuse of taking jobs meant for them (Bayo, 2017:9).

According to Adewale K. (2017:17-18), there are several precipitating factors that have encouraged the perpetration of xenophobic violence in South Africa. First is the generally feeling of insecurity on the part of South Africans that foreigners are taking over the jobs that should ordinarily be reserved for them. Hence, the only logical way for them to show their grievances and antagonism is to launch attacks on such foreigners with the thinking that they will be protecting and jealously guarding what is solely theirs. Secondly, law enforcement agents in South Africa, most especially police appear to be slow in responding to distress call by victims, whenever they are in danger. It is for this reason that many observers believe that police officers often take side to the advantage of South Africans. This should not be. Law enforcement agents are expected to perform their duties without any bias, fear or favors. Third is the dwindling economic fortune of South Africa over the years under the ruling African national congress. The main effect of that dimension is that many South Africa dire need of employment as the

economic situation bites harder. Fourth is the poor knowledge of history by the aggressive youth. It is not a funny thing when younger generation have no or very poor knowledge of the past. They seem not to appreciate the vital role played by Nigeria and other African countries in the struggle for the liberation of South African countries from the shackles of apartheid.

According to Tshabalala (2015), views xenophobia at the heart of South Africa's complex problems as the term which has to do with hatred for foreigners is usually viewed differently in South Africa as the term "foreigner" usually referred to African and Asia non-nationals as other foreigners especially those from Americans and Europe are lumped up with "tourist" or even better referred to as expatriates. In his word, many South Africans looked at the attacks on enterprising African immigrants from Somalia, the democratic republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Malawi often running shops, stalls and other businesses in the informal economy and resolved that the current attacks on foreigners are mere Afrophobia, then xenophobic. Many ask "why is it that a Somali man can run a shop in a township, get raided and beaten up, while a white immigrant continues to run a restaurant full of patrons?" He concluded by stating the reasons for the attacks on black foreigners in South Africa was the consequence of a hangover from the past fueled by the present. He reasoned that was an insidious tool used to induce self-hate and tribalize people of the same race and long after the scourge of apartheid, the prejudice of the past is being refueled in the present. The position of the two schools lend a lot of credence to the happenings in South Africa especially recognizing the fact that dismantling of apartheid saw to the influx of citizens of

other African countries into South Africa leading to the increase in the wave of crime, the security services that the government use as an instruments to protect lives and properties to be allowed to do their constitutional duties rather the people taking laws into their hands.

The center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy still being Africa, with the new spare violence, destructions of properties and killings of Nigerians by South Africa has a lot of implications on the brotherly and robust relationship between Nigeria and South Africa. The new wave of xenophobic attacks in post-apartheid South Africa started in 1998 and was purely directed towards the citizens of other African countries residing and doing business in South Africa.

Xenophobic attacks further discourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Oando a Nigerian oil conglomerate has been listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange and Dangote group had invested about \$378 million in South African cement industry if these investments are threatening by xenophobic attacks, investors from Nigeria may go elsewhere which will affect employment opportunities and the economy of South Africa. According to the former information minister, Lai Muhammad, the two countries have decided to adopt cultural diplomacy as an effective tool that will put an end to xenophobia and strengthen the understanding between Nigeria-South Africa as well as repair bilateralism between the two countries.

The Impact of Xenophobic Attacks on Nigeria-South Africa Relations

In 2022, trade between the two countries stood at \$2.1billion. By 2025 it had increased to \$3.6billion. Amidst these seemingly normal relations, however,

exists rivalry between Nigeria and South Africa as to which is the giant of Africa economically, politically and socially. This rivalry with its attendant competitive and envious spirit could not but graduate to hatred particularly on the part of South African citizens towards Nigerians in South Africa. This hatred has metamorphosed to the phenomenon of xenophobia which has led to loss of lives and properties of Nigerians living in South Africa. A phenomenon that loomed in 1995 has festered up till today. Although xenophobia is not the official policy of the South African government, it is rather a phenomenon perpetrated by South African citizens for which the South African government has its share of blame. Yet, it has imposed considerable strain and stress on Nigerian-South African diplomatic, economic and social relations. Undermining the Continental Trade Goals Xenophobia contradicts the spirit of Pan-Africanism and the AfCFTA, which seeks to eliminate trade barriers and foster unity. Tensions between two of Africa's largest economies risk slowing regional economic integration and weakening collective bargaining power.

The recent xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa have led to a strain in the economic and political relationship that exists between the two countries. On Thursday, 23rd February, 2017 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).

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 seriously.

Conclusion

In conclusion, conflict and violence witnessed in South Africa against foreign nationals 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. This partition might persist if an urgent step is not taken to address the triggering factors that led to these attacks. Recurring conflicts affects bilateral trade between Nigeria-South Africa; this makes it imperative to create effective conflict management mechanism to respond to it. If the growing wave of xenophobic attacks is not checked, it may stunt the process of sustainable development of both countries. As xenophobia is largely attributed to relative deprivation, prevalence of poverty, it is recommended that; South African authority need to re-orient its citizens on how to tolerate their fellow Africans, South African political leaders should strive for good governance; by providing greater social justice, job opportunities, equality for the citizenry, and fight against corruption, etc. and by depoliticizing trade relations, strengthening diplomatic channels, and adopting proactive measures to address xenophobia as a barrier to sustainable intra-African trade.

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