Impact of Xenophobia Attacks in South Africa on Regional Integration Agenda

Wellington Garikai Bonga
Department of Banking & Finance, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe
Email: sirwellas @ gmail.com

Abstract— *The concept of regional integration has been long adopted in Africa. Regional integration is a feasible alternative to bring about the much required development in a combined work and result basis. While some activities have indicated a unified states, some like xenophobia derails integration progress. South Africa is a member of the African Union, which recognizes eight regional blocs to ensure an integrated Africa. South Africa belongs to the SADC regional bloc with sixteen nations to date. South Africa over the years have been ranked best on many development indicators, and many countries have been drawing lessons of development from the leading nation. The recurrence of issues of xenophobia are greatly impacting the nation to lead regional integration agenda. South Africa has experienced extensive xenophobic violence on various occasions. The role of xenophobia as a hindrance to Africa's integration has not been recognised and acknowledged. Tracing back from 1994, post-apartheid, violent attacks against migrants and refugees has been rising. Attacks caused loss of lives, injury, livelihood loss and irreparable property damage each time they occur. Action is required to end these prejudicial and intolerant practices. South Africa, just like other African countries should realize that it is weak in the international arena. Strength is brought about by integration. There should be no chance for isolation to enable progress in development. Disintegrative approaches to problem solving should be abandoned while emphasis is made on the importance and benefits of integrative or multilateralism approaches. Government has to completely eliminate the climate of impunity that makes foreigners appear to be unequal before the law.*

Keywords— *Africa, African Union, Afrophobia, Discrimination, Economic Development, Migrants, Protests, Regional Integration, SADC, South Africa, Violence, Xenophobia.*

JEL Codes: D23, D63, D64, D71, D74, D85, F13, F15, F16, F18, F22, F23, F36, F45, F51, F63, H56, I31, J61, N47, O19, O24.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Regional integration refers to the process by which countries agree to co-operate and work closely together to attain peace, stability and wealth. Speedy global integration has steered noteworthy economic expansion, outstandingly in industrialized nations, but also in developing nations with outward-oriented trade and economic policies (Ndukwe, 2004). From the dawn of the independence era, virtually all African countries have embraced regionalism (Dinka and Kennes, 2007). Integration comprises inscribed treaties that state the zones of cooperation and coordinating organizations. Developed nations to date are still insisting on regional integration so as to reap benefits associated. The ultimate objective of economic activity is an increase in welfare (Balassa, 1961). According to Omolo (2019) European Union considers the preferment of regional integration a vital pillar of its associations with the rest of the world, and as constituting an essential element in its distinctiveness as a new global actor.

There is economic integration and political integration. Economic integration is all about agreeing to remove trade barriers between countries. The coordination of monetary and fiscal policies belongs to economic integration concept. Advantages of economic integration fall into three categories: trade benefits, employment, and political cooperation. Political integration means agreeing on common policies in social policy and common political institutions. Political cooperation advance when resilient economic relations are in existence, as they offer encouragements for resolving conflicts peacefully, hence attainment of greater stability.

A vision that drove to the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 originated from the regionalism obligation which is part of far-reaching continental integration. Regional integration in Africa has led to the formation of eight regional blocs recognised by African Union (AU). OAU was transformed to become AU. African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have followed the "linear model" of integration with a stepwise integration of labour, goods, and capital markets, as well as ultimate fiscal and monetary integration (De Melo and Tsikata, 2014).

Regional integration has been projected to bring positive rewards to member states (Bonga, 2021). Regional integration inventiveness in Africa have a lengthy history, dating back to the establishment of the South African Customs Union (SACU) in 1910 as well as the East African Community (EAC) in 1919 (Geda and Kibret, 2002). Regionalism permits the possibility to escalate competitiveness and skills in regional markets before being tested by competition at global level. Many nations have formed regional and international trading blocs endeavoring to improve economic growth and maximize welfare of each member country (Bonga and Mahuni, 2018).

Nita (2018) supported the idea by indicating that regional integration has the potential of transforming the economies of SADC countries. African nations are commonly weak and vulnerable hence they should attain unity of purpose to ensure joint development as well as launching sovereignty and security from external intervention maneuvers by super powers in the international arena (Saya, 2017). Regional integration organisations have the capacity to aid achieving more effective participation of African states in the world trading system. If well implemented, the chances that new

58

trade rules are in the interest of the African countries will increase.

South Africa is a member of the AU and belongs to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), where the main objective is to move towards a common future. 16 members forming SADC are namely: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. South Africa is ranked top of the group because of its level of industrialization and development. By virtue of formal acceptance of the 1992 SADC treaty it translate that everything that occurs in South Africa or that South Africa does should be in line with the SADC principles or objectives (Magqina, 2017). South Africa accounts for over 60% of all intra- SADC trade, as well as 70% of the total SADC gross domestic product (Bell, 2017). There exist a huge gap with the other nations in terms of economic activity. The aim of SADC is to strengthen socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security cooperation of southern African states (Mahuni, Taru and Bonga, 2020).

A lot has been so far attained within SADC due to the integration steps already engaged. Some members eliminated and/or reduced their tariff barriers between the member countries as early as 2000, and to date more is being encouraged and implemented. Trade integration faces challenges derived from overlapping memberships, hence leaving some objectives unmet. Projects implementation and completion is also impacted by lack of capacity, skills and expertise to drive key business processes. Moreso, there is growing instability within the region in form of civil wars and xenophobia attacks. The concern of the study is on instability activities found and generated in South Africa that affects the SADC region and continent at large. Despite the South African government's launch of the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2019 to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, incidents of xenophobic violence and discrimination against non-nationals continue to be experienced. As global attention to South Africa's rising trend of xenophobia grows, the nation's status as the poster child of democracy and human rights is under threat (Ochieng, 2017).

To strengthen integration in Africa, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) has come into effect. Starting 2020, Chairmanship of the AU is with South Africa, giving it responsibility to lead integration. AfCFTA ultimate conclusion is to have a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons, and investments, paving the way for the establishment of an African Customs Union. Such objectives require high levels of peace and unity among nations. If South Africa is to lead the development of AfCFTA to its ultimate conclusion, it must do so on the back of comprehensive and proactive domestic programmes that tackle the root causes of xenophobia in South Africa (Lalbahadur, 2019).

II. Xenophobia in South Africa

Xenophobic attacks have increasingly escalated in South Africa, hence becoming a significant area of concern. Xenophobic violence generally refers to any acts of violence targeted at foreign nationals or "outsiders" because of their being foreign or strangers (Mlilo and Misago, 2019). Saya (2017) also indicated that this xenophobic tendence is based on prejudice and hatred directed towards foreign nationals specifically black Africans who are deemed by the native groups as tenacious coercions to their privileges like occupation security, housing, resource dissemination and other innumerable opportunities within the economic, political, socio-cultural and technological premises. When the attacks are targeting other African nationals, some have called it *afrophobia*. Afrophobia entails the stereotyping and hatred of foreigners from other parts of Africa and portraying them as criminals (Tarisayi and Manik, 2020). Xenophobia attacks in South Africa have shaken the relationships of member states (Mahuni, Taru and Bonga, 2020). Xenophobia threatens the lives and livelihoods of refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other locally defined 'outsiders' including domestic migrants and ethnic minorities (Misago, Freemantle and Landau; 2015). Bearing in mind that South Africa successfully arose from epochs of ethnic exclusion in the apartheid rule to that of democratic parity and recognition, poses a multiplicity of questions as to why xenophobia should occur (Choane, Shulika and Mthombeni; 2011).

After majority rule in 1994, contrary to expectations, the incidence of xenophobia increased (Neocosmos, 2010). Instability among nationals has also been born in the nation to form a bad culture. Bruce (2017) narrated that historical racial categories still dominate the public imagination, often obscuring the link between xenophobia and ethnic prejudice. There now exist civil unrest prevailing in the southern country. Victimisation of national minorities and the deaths of 25 South Africans during the 2008 xenophobic attacks was also recorded (Bruce, 2017). Exploration of the roots of the attacks has been researched extensively and progressively. In South Africa, xenophobic attacks are believed to have their roots in the continuous influx of foreign nationals into the country (Asakitikpi and Gadzikwa, 2015). South Africa has been a greener pasture for people from other African countries due to its job opportunities created by industrialization. Political and economic instability in other nations have pushed some people into South Africa, with some informally settling.

Efforts to end xenophobia has been highly emphasized by various human rights groups belonging to many countries. The organizations continue to work tirelessly, engaging various governments on issues of discrimination, hatred and unfair treatment of foreigners. The establishments try placing relevant authority to chore and ensure accountability of numerous activities by politicians. Human Rights Watch, one of the human rights organisations, document killings, serious injuries, forced displacement, discrimination, and barriers to justice and basic services. These statistics validate arguments to end xenophobia.

The statistics on the attacks remains shocking especially for the current generation where regional integration agenda is expected to have reached greater levels. During these attacks, in many instances very violent, foreigners with specific allusion to African inhabitants are killed or drastically injured along with South African populaces (Asakitikpi and Gadzikwa, 2015). Violent xenophobia has thus become a regular feature of South African life (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014). Table 1 below shows some of the statistics for xenophobic attacks in previous years.

TABLE 1: Statistics of Xenophobia Attacks

Year	Attacks	Deaths	Serious Injuries	Displacements
2011	154	99	100	1000
2012	238	120	154	7500
2013	250	88	170	1000

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Regional Office of South Africa (UNHCR ROSA)

Table 1 above shows the compiled statistics of xenophobic attacks that happened in South Africa. Compilation of the statistics is yet to be consolidated. Each year has its own stories emanating from the attacks, before 2011 and after 2013 to date. For example Xenowatch reported for 2018, 42 attacks, 12 deaths, 29 serious injuries and 1145 displacements.

The figures for deaths, injuries and displacements are too high to be ignored. According to a report by Xenowatch (xenophobia monitoring group), concerning 1994-2018 period, there were 529 xenophobic violence episodes that caused 309 deaths, 901 physical attacks, and above 100,000 persons displaced (Lalbahadur, 2019). Issues of xenophobia, though with different magnitudes, has been reported in all provinces of South Africa. Table 2 below shows how the attacks have been distributed for cases observed between 1994-2018 period.

TABLE 2: Distribution by Province of Xenophobia Attacks for Period 1994-2018

Province	Number of Incidents
Gauteng	212 (40.1%)
Western Cape	111 (21.0%)
KwaZulu Natal	67 (12.7%)
Limpopo	40 (7.6%)
Eastern Cape	33 (6.2%)
Mpumalanga	22 (4.2%)
North West	20 (3.8%)
Free State	19 (3.7%)
Northern Cape	5 (1.0%)
Total	**529 (100%)**

Source: Xenowatch, www.xenowatch.co.za

From Table 2 above, it is observed that high levels of repetitive attacks is found in Gauteng, Western Cape and Kwazulu Natal provinces. However, for other provinces, there exist the elements of xenophobia, making them also risky areas for foreigners including their businesses. It is also acknowledged that victims of xenophobia suffer physical, social and emotional trauma that needs to receive attention (Van der Westhuizen and Kleintjes, 2015). The conduciveness of the country decreases with each day passing. Non-South African inhabitants live in unceasing terror of being targeted exclusively for not being South African. Everyday animosity habitually spills over into ferocity against individual migrants and refugees and their businesses (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014).

III. TARGETED MIGRANTS

The pattern of xenophobic attacks in South Africa shows a pattern, though not very clear. It seems there exist some targets on whom to attack and with what level of damage to impose. Not all migrants are disliked in South Africa. Derision is earmarked for definite categories of migrants, however, this does not mean that some are totally safe from the attacks. Migrants from African countries with common ethnic and cultural characteristics to South Africans (such as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) are tolerated to a degree (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014). Attitudinal surveys clearly show that South Africans differentiate migrants by national origin (Crush *et al.*, 2017).

Businesses run by migrants and refugees in the informal sector are targeted most during attacks. South Africa today is one of the most inimical destinations in the ecosphere for African migrants. In support of the fact Claassen (2017) stated that after widespread violence in 2008 and 2015, South Africa is now clearly one of most hostile destinations in the world for African migrants. This increases macroeconomic uncertainty of the country and subsequently to decline in investment growth. People and businesses use information around them to form judgments about what might happen in the future, and the rise in uncertainty might be associated with increased concern about extreme events, skewed towards worries about bad or disastrous events (Bonga, 2019).

A set of migrants from other African nations are despised by many South Africans, with precise opprobrium reserved for Nigerians, Somalis and Zimbabweans (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014). In support, Tarisayi and Manik (2020) noted that the ferocious outbreaks in South Africa in current years have illuminated the element that there is a aiming of black foreign nationals, meaning, there is black-on-black violence signifying ethnic aspect to the xenophobia. The African immigrants find themselves as victims of circumstances because they go to South Africa to share the same resources, jobs, privileges and their day to day activities with the South Africans (Magqina, 2017). As with anyone, foreigner nationals living in South Africa should have unhindered access to the socio-economic and cultural facilities available in the communities in which they live (Cinini and Singh, 2019). South Africans deny immigrants that opportunity as they want all the African immigrants back to their countries (Magqina, 2017). Extreme xenophobia stimulates negative labels, which view low-grade migrants as "criminals" and "anti-social" components; add in very strong fear and anxiety elements over the existence of migrants and their alleged negative social and economic impacts on the citizenry; affirms the supremacy of South Africans and lowliness of migrant clusters; and shows in acts of violence and wanton rough treatment against migrants and refugees (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014).

IV. REGIONAL INTEGRATION ATTAINMENT

The regional integration agenda has set targets and dates for appropriate reforms to take place. Integration of the dissimilar nations on the continent Africa is a principal goal of the AU (Okem, Asuelime and Adekoye, 2015). It requires prevailing of peace among nations. Xenophobic attacks have had a political impact on SADC principles (Magqina, 2017). South African officials, at one moment were denying xenophobia citing criminal elements. This argument that assaults on migrants and refugees are merely criminal doings, not xenophobia, is now government orthodoxy (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014). Due to repetitive civil wars, political wars and xenophobic attacks, a challenge to the attainment of the objectives has continued to exert pressure on governments. Hatred between nationals has emerged. The perpetrators of violence have their own reasons but given the issues of human rights, there should be better ways to address the differences.

Summit after summit, the issues of xenophobic attacks are discussed, however, it seems the issue is failing to be resolved. Xenophobic attacks creates a bad environment for trade between nations. Foreign entrepreneurs are making great losses during attacks. Many attacks are preceded by community meetings from which migrants are excluded, therefore, have little ability or time to take evasive action (Crush *et al.*, 2017). Such shows that there are greater gatherings and planning taking place to attack foreigners to attain an agenda. These issues have to be addressed, as they are clearly against the formation of regional blocs. Attacks have come as a way to manage competition by South African businessman. It has been observed that in some instances, looting and destruction on target foreign businesses, while natives businesses are left open and operating. There was some evidence of "violent entrepreneurship" involving attacks orchestrated by South African competitors (Crush *et. al,* 2017). Improper business practices are now dominating the markets thereby violating corporate governance issues. Xenophobia denialism has also shaped official South African responses to criticism from the international community (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014). As indicated by Ochieng (2017) at the domestic level, while the government has condemned the xenophobic violence that has taken place, declarations remain distinct from concerted action to change community attitudes.

V. CONCLUSION

Although xenophobia is not a new phenomenon on the continent, the size and scope of South African xenophobic attacks in recent years indicate a great challenge for African integration (Okem, Asuelime and Adekoye, 2015). Xenophobia attacks have been observed as repetitive in South Africa. Before and after apartheid the issues have remained a concern. The spate of xenophobia in South Africa (post-apartheid) has been variously regarded as the "dark side of democracy", a "new pathology", "apartheid vertigo" and substantiation of the "demonic" nature of the society (Crush and Ramachandran, 2014). The perpetual attacks blights the collective conscience of South Africans and undermines government and other parties' efforts to address it. Such attacks have characterized the country, and hence, a risky destination for migrants.

In the face of regional integration agenda, the issue of xenophobia derails the much needed progress. Officials may express solidarity with the displaced and publicly oppose the violence, but direct attempts to restrain such behavior are few and far between (Ochieng, 2017). Failure to correctly address earlier xenophobic linked outbreaks have already ruined relationships between South Africa and other African countries (Lalbahadur, 2019). With such attacks continuing, there is weakened relationships between countries. Foreigners are killed, injured, displaces, and their businesses destroyed. There is a lot of uncertainty when contacting business in South Africa.

Ubuntu should be a rallying call to prioritize a broad vision of humanity. The concept of *ubuntu* should continuously been preached to the nationals. South Africa is a nation built on diversity, history shows that migrants have helped shaped the country's economic fortunes. The South African government's tacit endorsement of anti-immigrant protests in 2017 was a step towards addressing xenophobia. South Africa should position as a society built on democratic principles, social impartiality and fundamental human rights. The government should address labour disparities, curb misinformation about delivery of services and citizen education about rights of refugees and migrants living in the country. Greater collaboration between government and civil society organisations is highly emphasized, and political authorities should be held accountable on various actions they take related to violence in the country.

South Africa, just like other African countries should realize that it is weak in the international arena. Strength is brought about by unity among African states through integration. There should be no chance for isolation to enable progress in development. Disintegrative approaches to problem solving should be abandoned while emphasis is made on the importance and benefits of integrative or multilateralism.

In conclusion, the continual perpetration of xenophobic violence has huge impact to regional integration and hence economic growth. As already indicated by Nkwede (2019), there should be greater support for anti-xenophobic efforts and the exposure of media outlets that support anti-immigrant sentiments. Government has to completely eliminate the climate of impunity that makes foreigners appear to be unequal before the law.

REFERENCES

[1] Asakitikpi, A.O and Gadzikwa, J. (2015). Reactions and Actions to Xenophobia in South Africa: An Analysis of The Herald and The Guardian Online Newspapers. *Global Media Journal African Edition*, Vol. 9(2):217-247.

[2] Balassa, B. (1961). The Theory of Economic Integration. *Greenwood Publishing Group*.

[3] Bell, W. (2017). "The Southern African Development Community: Solid Achievements and Future Challenges." Strategic Analysis Paper, *Future Directions International*, pp. 01−07.

[4] Bonga, W.G. (2019). Measuring Macroeconomic Uncertainty in Zimbabwe. *MPRA Paper No. 94759, University Library of Munich, Germany.*

[5] Bonga, W.G. (2021). Corruption Prevalence in SADC Regional Bloc. *Quest Journals' Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, Volume 9, Issue 1, pp: 08-16.

[6] Bonga, W.G and Mahuni, K. (2018). Assessing the Impact of Ease of Doing Business and Corruption on Economic Growth for Africa Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) Member States. *MPRA Paper No. 88932, University Library of Munich, Germany*.

[7] Bruce, L-A. (2017). Recurrence of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. *Centre for Applied Legal Studies,* University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

[8] Choane, M., Shulika, L.S and Mthombeni, M. (2011). An Analysis of the Causes, Effects and Ramifications of Xenophobia in South Africa. *Insight on Africa*, Volume: 3 issue: 2: 129-142.

[9] Cinini, S.F and Singh, B.S. (2019). Xenophobia in South Africa: A Human Security Perspective on African Foreign Nationals in Durban. *Journal of African Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2: 51-73.

[10] Claassen, C. (2017). Explaining South African Xenophobia. *Afrobarometer*, Working Paper No. 173.

[11] Crush, J and Ramachandran, S. (2014). Xenophobic Violence in South Africa: Denialism, Minimalism, Realism. *Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP) International Migration Research Centre (IMRC)*, Migration Policy Series No. 66.

[12] Crush, J., Tawodzera, G., Chikanda, A and Tevera, D. (2017). Living with Xenophobia: Zimbabwean Informal Enterprise in South Africa. *SAMP Migration Policy Series No. 77.*

[13] De Melo, J and Tsikata, Y. (2014). Regional integration in Africa: Challenges and Prospects. In *"The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics: Volume 2: Policies and Practices.*" Oxford University Press.

[14] Dinka, T, Kennes, W. (2007). Africa's Regional Integration Arrangements: History and Challenges. *ECDPM Discussion Paper 74*, Maastricht.

[15] Geda, A and Kibret, H. (2002). Regional Economic Integration in Africa: A Review of Problems and Prospects with a Case Study of COMESA. *SOAS Economics Research Working Paper*.

[16] Lalbahadur, A. (2019). Xenophobia Erodes South Africa's Leadership Potential. *South Africa's Foreign Policy, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).*

[17] Magqina, S. (2017). Assessing the impact of the South African xenophobic attacks on SADC regional integration principles. *Bachelors Dissertation, Department of Politics and Public Management,* Midlands State University.

[18] Mahuni, K., Taru, J and Bonga, W.G. (2020). Africa's Incomplete Cycles of Development. In *"Africa in the Global Space; Vol. 1.*" Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York.

[19] Misago, J.P., Freemantle, I and Landau, L.B. (2015). Protection from Xenophobia: An Evaluation of UNHCR's Regional Office for Southern Africa's Xenophobia Related Programmes. *The African Centre for Migration and Society,* University of Witwatersrand.

[20] Mlilo, S and Misago, J.P. (2019). Xenophobic Violence in South Africa: 1994-2018: An Overview. *Xenowatch, African Centre for Migration and Society*, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

[21] Ndukwe, F.O. (2004). Promoting Trade: Regional Integration and the Global Economy. In *"New Partnership for Africa's Development: Macroeconomics, Institutions, and Poverty."* International Monetary Fund.

[22] Neocosmos, M. (2010). From 'Foreign Natives' to 'Native Foreigners': Explaining Xenophobia in Post-Apartheid South Africa. CODESRIA, Dakar.

[23] Nita, L (2018). "Corruption and Development in Southern Africa: Governance as a Conceptual Framework for Combating Corruption and Accelerating Economic Transformation." *Tralac.*

[24] Nkede, J.O. (2019). Xenophobic Violence and Economic Development in South Africa. *International Journal of Innovative Legal & Political Studies* 7(3):20-28.

[25] Ochieng, A. (2017). The Illusion of Inclusion: Xenophobia in South Africa. *The Harvard Africa Policy Journal.*

[26] Okem, A., Asuelime, L and Adekoye, R. (2015). Re-visiting Xenophobia in South Africa and its Impact on Africa's Integration. *Africa Insight*, Vol.45(2), pp: 75-85.

[27] Omolo, C.O. (2019). The Africa-EU Relations and Regional Integration in Africa: Reassessing EU's Influence on Africas's Integration Project(s). *L'Europe en Formation*, vol. 388, no. 1, pp. 27-50.

[28] Saya, K. (2017). Xenophobia attacks and Africa's regional integration: a case of South Africa's xenophobia attacks from 2000 – 2015. Bachelors Dissertation, Department of Politics and Public Management, Midlands State University.

[29] Tarisayi, K.S and Manik, S. (2020). An Unabating Challenge: Media Portrayal of Xenophobia in South Africa, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7:1.

[30] Van der Westhuizen, M and Kleintjes, L. (2015). Social Work Services to Victims of Xenophobia. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, Vol 51, No 1, Issue 7, pp: 115-134.