




Repositioning the concept of Xenophobia in the African context: Why do we allow ourselves to be defined by others?

 Jonathan Oshupeng Maseng ^{(a)*}



^(a)Ph.D., Political Science Senior Lecturer and Programme Coordinator for BA Honours in Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences, University Mpumalanga, Mpumalanga, South Africa.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28 January 2024

Received in rev. form 18 March 2024

Accepted 24 April 2024

Keywords:

Africa, Anglo-American conspiracy theory, complex interdependence theory, Xenophobia, South Africa

JEL Classification:

Z10

ABSTRACT

The main goal of this work is to reposition the concept of xenophobia in the African context. This is to reflect on Thabo Mbeki's narrative on Xenophobia. Africa continues to remain a pawn due to the Eurocentric ideas that have been forced on the Africans also brought about a foreign concept of xenophobia as if Africans are not brothers in the name of brotherhood. It is incontestable that brothers are, in some cases engage in fight, but there was a laid down rules and norms of resolving such misunderstanding. With the employment of qualitative research methods, complex interdependence theory garnished with Anglo-American conspiracy theory; we argue that, Anglo-American imperialist managed to spread and enforce the usage of English through imposing the concept xenophobia in the continent while failing to capture the essence of sibling fights or fights amongst African brothers and sisters conceptualised by the Batswana speaking people as maragana teng a bana motho. Through acknowledging Mbeki's narrative and some sampled African languages, we argue that, while there is a word for foreigner in these sampled African languages, there is no direct or indirect translation of xenophobia in African languages. We conclude that the concept xenophobia has its etymological foundations in Greek and is therefore foreign in any of the African and South African indigenous languages.

© 2024 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Introduction

For the purpose of this paper, we examined Africa from sub-Saharan perspective due to the historical perspectives of the Maghreb sub-region that is more into the Middle East than Africa that is geographical belong (Abderrahim & Aggad 2018; Bukarambe, 1986; Meredith, 2005; Richards & Waterbury, 1996). At the time of conceptualizing this work, we had just viewed on YOUTUBE one of the former Presidents of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki 'speech on defining Xenophobia in South Africa's official languages. From his speech Mbeki asserted that there was no 'word' for xenophobia in any of the South African official languages. It came to our very little knowledge though being Africans ourselves, in particular South Africans, have precise definitions for a foreigner. While the concept of xenophobia does not exist in any of the South African indigenous languages. This is also applicable to those languages from other sister African countries. For instance, in South African languages such as 'Sesotho', 'Setswana' and 'Sepedi', there exists two concepts that refer to being a foreigner in both languages, which are 'Mofaladi' and/or 'Motswakontle'. On the other hand, in Zulu, a foreigner is referred to as 'Intlanga'. Another African language found respectively in South Africa and Zimbabwe is Shona, which refers to a foreigner as 'Mubvakure'. Furthermore, in one of Nigeria's official languages known as Urhobo, a foreigner is known as 'Owho Obatafe'; while in Yoroba foreigner is regarded as 'Ajoji'. In the existing text of these African languages, not even a single one of them has a word or concept for xenophobia.

* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5727-3593

In this regard, when you look into the concept 'xenophobia' it only has its etymological foundations in Greek; in this regard the word 'xeno' means 'stranger'; while 'phobia' means 'fear'. Integrating the two words then leads to a simple definition of xenophobia meaning 'fear of strangers' (Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011; Framondino & Manino, 2017). Sanchez-Mazas and Licata (2015) similarly indicate that the Greek words "xenos" is tantamount to stranger, while "phobos" is "fear". They state that the conceptualization of "xenophobia" by the Greeks denoted "a hostility toward the stranger perceived as a threat" (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015, 802).

The ancient Greeks conceptualized two concepts when it came to relating with outsiders or foreigners; on the one hand there was "philoxenia", while on the other had there was "xenophobia". In ancient Greece "philoxenia" was defined and operationalized as "friendship or hospitality" towards a foreigner, while "xenophobia" was defined as being "afraid of foreigners" (Papanikos, 2020, p237). The Ancient Greeks did not embrace the idea of xenophobia and did not embrace philoxenia. This was demonstrated through disliking barbarians and others who were foreigners to Greece who belonged outside their own city-state (Papanikos, 2020, p237). Therefore, from the foundations of both concepts, it was found that ancient Greeks were xenophobic rather than xenophiles (Papanikos, 2020, p237).

Subsequently, the word xenophobia finds its way and extreme usage in English in both popular and scholarly discourse. This has been having been well documented by various scholars who argue that English which has much of its foundations in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) (Gordon 1997 & Crystal, 1999), has emerged in former British and American colonies to become pluricentric and also offered Britain and American norms and innovations in the language. Thus, English has been described as a language that kills indigenous languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). What is clear is that while there are words for foreigner in various African languages, there is no word for xenophobia in any of the African texts and/or languages due to its plurecentricity globally. This then brings us to Thabo Mbeki's thoughts on xenophobia in the YOUTUBE video titled 'Why do we allow ourselves to be defined by others'? In addition, it then reminds one to go back to the argument that African immigrants and South African nationals have an element of co-existence based on positive contact as well as positive interactions amongst themselves (Maseng, 2018; 2019; 2020). Moreover, there are studies that have concluded that 'contact between immigrants and South African nationals is not necessarily inherently conflict-inducing (Maseng, 2018; 2019; 2020). The social cohesion between these Africans rests on the logic of mutual and complex interdependence (Maseng, 2018; 2019; 2020) coupled with the twin principles of *ubuntu* and *batho pele*. These findings relate to hand in glove with the assertions made by Thabo Mbeki that there is no word for xenophobia in any of the South African official languages and therefore suggestive that xenophobia as a concept does not exist in the African vocabularies. It is also worth bearing in mind that, though South Africa has witnessed some sporadic emotional as well as physical attacks on the African immigrants; this is not always the case as such attacks on African immigrants and conflicts between African immigrants and South Africans are not experienced on a daily basis. Based on the latter background, the intention of this paper is to argue that the concept of xenophobia is non-existent in African vocabularies.

This paper proposes that through looking into indigenous languages of South Africa (except English and Afrikaans, which exist as a result of international immigration into the continent) that xenophobia does not exist and has never existed in any of the South African and African indigenous languages vocabularies, phrases and idioms. In addition, the researcher assert that foreign man-made or colonial borders are the ones that promoted Africans to see each other as foreigners whereas they are siblings and that xenophobia does not exist in Africa, instead; the conflict between South Africans and African immigrants are fights between or amongst siblings. We further argue through relying on African idioms (drawn from IsiZulu and Setswana) as well as Mbeki's renaissance project that; these African Idioms and Mbeki's position assert the connectedness of Africans and downplays the existence of the concept xenophobia in African context. It is part of what Stiglitz and Pike (2004) described as globalisation and its discontent.

This paper is dissected into the five sections. The first sections present the Research Method and Data Collection Techniques employed in the paper. The second section elucidates and reflects on the theoretical discourses on which the paper adopted. The third section provides an analysis on xenophobia and its relations to foreigner in some selected (South) African languages vocabulary. The fourth section focuses on xenophobia vs foreign man-made borders. The last section prior to concluding provides the reader with an analysis of African Idioms (specifically Setswana and IsiZulu) and how they emphasize Thabo Mbeki's version of Africans connectedness.

Literature Review

Gaps, Divergences and Convergences on Scholarly Discourses

Since the early 2000s, discourse surrounding hatred and attacks on foreigners, particularly African immigrants residing in South Africa, has been prevalent in both popular and scholarly circles. The predominant discourse aimed to conceptualize such acts as "xenophobia" (Harris, 2002; Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005; Steenkamp, 2009; Tella, 2016; Chenzi, 2021). However, others proposed a reconceptualization, suggesting that it was specifically African immigrants who faced hatred and attacks from South Africans, thus advocating for understanding these occurrences as "Afrophobia" (Thakur, 2011; Ochonu, 2020; Anju, 2023).

While these scholarly narratives hold validity from certain scientific perspectives, it is essential to consider additional academic and popular views, opinions, and perspectives. Through my doctoral studies, I unearthed empirically based findings that challenge the conventional discourse on "Xeno/Afrophobia" debate. These findings revealed that (a) African immigrants and South African nationals exhibit elements of co-existence through positive contact and interactions (Maseng, 2018; 2019; 2020); (b) contact between

immigrants and South African nationals does not necessarily breed conflict (Maseng, 2018; 2019; 2020); and (c) there exists social cohesion between African immigrants and South African nationals, rooted in mutual and complex interdependence (Maseng, 2018; 2019; 2020).

Consequently, the narrative evolved from "Xeno/Afrophobia" to my own scholarly interpretations, which I termed "Threats and Enhancers" to social cohesion between African immigrants and South Africans (Maseng, 2018; 2020). Nonetheless, Amanuel Isak Tewolde's 2019 article, "Reframing xenophobia in South Africa as Colour-Blind: The Limits of the Afro Phobia Thesis," suggested moving away from the concept of Afrophobia towards what he termed "colour-blind xenophobia". Despite these significant contributions, there has been a notable absence of works addressing the origin of the concept "xenophobia" and critically examining its origin against the vocabulary of African languages. Thus, the primary objective of this work is to reposition the concept of xenophobia within the African context, as will be elucidated in the following sections.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

In social sciences, there is hardly a theory that can capture a problem with academic solutions. This could have brought about the adoption of partial theory as against general as applicable in natural science. This brings us to a need to identify some likely theories such as complex interdependence and Anglo-American Conspiracy Theories.

Complex interdependence theory

Complex interdependence theory focuses on globalisation and organic linkages that exist due to the forces of demand and supply. Among others, the theory identifies multiple channels of interaction between states and non-state actors; there is absence of hierarchical system; it also relies on what may be termed as 'jointness' and non-exclusiveness. In this regard, dependence means a state of being determined or significantly affected by external forces (Keohane & Nye, 1977, 8). The fact that there are multiple channels of interaction between states and non-state actors suggest that there is no limit of interaction through one dominant language (English) which is used in a globalized world. The prominence and dominance of the English language has and still remains the anchor of 'jointness' and 'non-exclusiveness' of various states and its citizens in the international system. Due to the forces of demand and supply there became a need for a language which is a foundation for organic linkages between states and citizens. In addition, in a Globalized world, interactions and exchanges are cemented by language to lubricate communication and agreements in various social, economic and cultural levels of the world's existence.

In their paper titled "*How English Become Global Language: Historical Overview*",

Mamadjanova and qizi Malikova (2023) provide evidence and argument on how English evolved historically from being a regional language to what they call a "*global lingua franca*". From this work, it becomes very clear on what and which "key historical events, socio-political factors, and technological advancements contributed to the widespread adoption and dominance of English as a global language" (Mamadjanova & qizi Malikova, 2023, p888). Hence, we argue that dependence by Africans on former colonial masters specifically regarding the usage of foreign texts and languages, in particular at various social and official government, Non-governmental and International Non-governmental levels cements Thabo Mbeki's thesis that Africans have allowed themselves to be defined by others. Thus various external forces have significantly affected Africans to conceptualise their internal conflicts in Africa's cosmopolitan state (South Africa) as xenophobia, while there is a plethora of scholarly contributions which point out that the etymological foundations xenophobia is in Greek (Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011; Framondino & Manino, 2017). Subsequently due to complex interdependence of states, various groupings of non-state actors and individuals, the word xenophobia found its way and extreme usage in official governments, popular and scholarly discourses and its entrenchment in Africa (being foreign to the continent as it is).

The usage of English in Africa does not only rest in the complex interdependence theory, but also finds resonance in Anglo-American conspiracy theory.

Anglo-American conspiracy theory

The Anglo-American conspiracy pioneered by scholars such as Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) assumes that, powerful British and Americans imperialists have engineered the spread of English even beyond their removal from direct imperial control. In addition, the use of English intends to harm and prevent development and usage of local or indigenous languages. Anglo-American conspiracy theorist argue that English language is used to distract the self-esteem and collective identity of individuals through conveying Western or Anglo-Saxon as a world view foreign to other societies. As such, Anglo-American imperialists have in historical and contemporary sense spread the usage of English in Africa, there also being clear intention to prevent the usage of indigenious languages in Africa (i.e. the special status of English in South African context has been proven by Kamwangamalu (2003) since it used in the media and various government institutions). Furthermore, most of other African countries, language policy is informed and forestalled by decisions of usage of foreign languages such as English, French and Portuguese (Hameso, 1997). From this context, the fact that foreignness languages such as English are used as medium of instruction has resulted in an education system that is a culturally alienating process on indigenous languages (Hameso, 1997). From the context of Anglo-American conspiracy theorist, were English was forced to dominate other languages has led to scholars such as Samof (1993) to conclude that there is lack

of integration of object of education which embraces African cultures and values. Thus, education is irrelevant to the real issues facing African citizens (Hameso, 1997).

In addition, because of its importation to the African continent, English fails to capture various African concepts and practices. While the Anglo-American imperialist managed to spread and enforce the usage of English, they still failed to capture the essence of sibling fights or fights amongst African brothers and sisters conceptualised by the Batswana speaking people as *maragana teng a bana motho* as will be elucidated later in the paper. Thus, I argue in this paper that, Anglo-American imperialist indeed managed to spread and enforce the usage of English and that popular, academic and government discourse accepted this usage of the English language through embracing it. As such forgetting that Africa can define itself and breakaway from imposed concepts foreign concepts such as “xenophobia” which have no direct meaning in African context. Anglo-American imperialist directly or indirectly pushed African to allow themselves to be defined by others. In South African context, there are eleven languages legislatively promulgated, however, English is a dominant language in all domains such as of government structures as well as the education space (Chaka, 2024). In addition, for both South African schools and universities, English is the main, if not the sole, language of learning and teaching (LoLT) (Chaka et al., 2022; Ndlangamandla & Chaka, 2022; Chaka, 2024).

Research and Methodology

Qualitative Research Method

The aim of this paper is to reposition the concept of Xenophobia in the African Context through reflecting on Thabo Mbeki’s Narrative on Xenophobia. In order to achieve this goal, this paper relies on qualitative research methods to examine the contributions of scholars through their various works on how man-made/ colonial borders in Africa influenced Africans to treat each other as foreigners. In addition, this method assisted the researcher to glaze through various selected text as an attempt to validate the existence of the concept xenophobia in African and South African indigenous language vocabularies. This method also assisted to examine written scholarly narratives on African connectedness as well the concept of sibling bullying assert that the concept xenophobia is non-existence in African context.

Data Collection Techniques

This paper relied on three data collections techniques which are document analysis, videography and desktop review as will be further elucidated in the following sub-sections.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a qualitative research technique used to interpret documents in order to provide meanings and voices on subjects under study. This technique was employed by the researchers to solicit existing published material which validates the concept of xenophobia as being foreign in African and South African indigenous languages. For instance, amongst the scholarly text analyzed, was that of Hjerm and Nagayoshi (2011) who explicitly state that ‘xenophobia’ has its etymological foundations in Greek. In addition, various written scholarly works related to the subject of this paper were used and those used were published from the mid-1970s to 2020. The researcher drew and used Zulu, Setswana and Sesotho idioms from the work of Kgari-Masondo and Masondo (2019) titled “‘*For Peace Sake*’: African Language and Xenophobia in South Africa”. As such document analysis assisted the researchers to provide meaning to various existing texts as a way of supporting Mbeki’s position that xenophobia does not exist in any of the South African languages and that the existence of the term xenophobia in Africa is due to Africans allowing themselves to be defined by others.

Videography

In addition, I relied on videography defined as a process of capturing videos or moving images on various electronic media instruments or platforms. This method focuses on video analysis. This paper made use of a YOUTUBE video posted of former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, titled ‘Why do we allow ourselves to be defined by others’(See link- (23) Why do we allow ourselves to be defined by others - former President Thabo Mbeki - YouTube). The reliance on this speech was precisely because Mbeki’s question and position was the inspiration behind this work. As a result, it was mandatory of the researchers to focus on the YOUTUBE video analyzed against existing scholarly text relating and able to provide voices to this current paper.

Desktop Review

Desktop review is a research technique suitable for identification of specific as well as useful qualitative data which is relevant to specific research project. This technique was useful to the researchers due to the fact that google translate had to be used to ascertain the existence of the concept xenophobia in African languages. The languages which were purposively used in searching for the meaning of xenophobia in African context included Setswana, Sepedi, IsiZulu which are South African; Shona which is both South African and Zimbabwean and Urhobo and Yoroba which are both Nigerian. These languages were used due to proximity of North West University (NWU) staff members who spoke them and were therefore convenient to sample by the researchers.

Sampled Population

The researcher relied on convenience sampling which is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in a study due to easy accessibility. In the then workspace of the researcher, there are colleagues who speak Setswana, Sepedi, IsiZulu, Shona, Urhobo and Yoroba who were accessible and also conveniently assisted the researchers in validating whether there was existence of the concept xenophobia in these mentioned languages in addition to the usage of google translate. Therefore, five of NWU academic staff from each of the Setswana, Sepedi, IsiZulu, Shona, Urhobo and Yoroba speaking groups were sampled to offer translation for both xenophobia and foreigner in order to reveal the definitions of the latter and former concepts in all the sampled languages.

Findings and Discussions

This section presents and discusses findings through providing expositions on xenophobia and foreigner with focus on some selected (South) African languages vocabulary. The section further discusses xenophobia and its intersections with foreign man-made borders as well as the nexus African idioms with Mbeki's stance on connectedness of Africans from a Setswana and IsiZulu perspectives.

Xenophobia and Foreigner in Some Selected (South) African Languages Vocabulary

It is worth noting that even though English is one of the official languages of South Africa as inscribed in the 1996 constitution of the Republic as amended. The arrival of the British as well as their English language in the country was on 17 March 1820 (South African History Online 2021). From this context, the English language itself has no original foundations in South Africa (as well as in other Anglophone African states). Therefore, it would not be true reflection of the reality to coin the meaning of 'xenophobia' in regards to any of the *bona fide* African and South African languages. The *bona fide* South African languages, as spelt out in the 1996 South African Constitution as amended, are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa and Isizulu (with exception of Afrikaans and English). This is entirely based on the fact that all these languages with exception of Afrikaans and English are of African descent. While the British and the Afrikaners internationally migrated to Africa; Africans themselves were internally and continuously migrating within their own continent.

For instance, Sepedi as a language of the Babepi, is one of over 400 languages which belongs to the family of Bantu language. They form part of the Bantu languages constituting a language family spoken around the equatorial area of Southern Africa (Mokwana 2009). According to Prinsloo (1976) the Bapedi migrated from central Africa to Southern Africa through Botswana until crossing Limpopo River into South Africa. The crossing of the Bapedi into South Africa is believed to have occurred in the sixteenth century (Mokwana, 2009). Even though, they are not of South African descent, they are truly an African *Bona Fide* ethnic group and unlike the English and the Afrikaners who had to cross thousands of miles of the oceans to arrive in Africa. In this regard, the Bapedi like other *bona fide* African and South African languages do not poses foreign origin to Africa (Mokwana, 2009).

The Basotho, Batswana, Swatis, Vendas, Tsongas, Ndebeles, Xhosas and Zulus have their origins in Africa, irrespective of their internal migratory patterns within the continent. As such, in all these Bantu speaking groups there is not even a single text that provides a conceptualisation of Xenophobia. When one considers the Languages such as Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi; these languages only have a few nouns for a foreigner which are 'Motswakontle', 'Motswantle' and/or 'Mofaladi'. However, in all these, Bantu languages there is no concept 'xenophobia' in their vocabulary. Therefore, xenophobia is a concept that was imposed on Africa and was already popularised by both academic and popular discourse due to the usage of English as a dominant medium of communication within the country. There are scholars for instance who argue that choice of African middle-class parents to send their children to English based schools threatens the being and survival of African languages (De Klerk, 2000; Kwamangamalu, 2003a; 2003b). In addition, English has become most widely spoken and spread and still is spreading to non-English mother tongue individuals (Kanchru, 1986; Fishman & Rubal-Lopez, 1992; Chisanga & Kamwangamalu, 1997). Hence, Thiong'o (2005) underscores that the challenge to recognition of Pan-Africanism is rooted in African heads of states and/or intellectuals who are Western-educated and still embracing common inheritance of European languages and memory. In this vein, embracing western education and languages lubricates the popular and academic discourse and usage of Eurocentric rather than Afrocentric concepts. As was already indicated in the introduction, some of the sampled African languages in this work provide no definition for xenophobia but has definitions for foreigner. For instance, in South African languages such as 'Sesotho', 'Setswana' and 'Sepedi', conceptualises a foreigner as 'Mofaladi' and/or 'Motswakontle'. While the Zulus, refer to a foreigner as 'Intlanga'. In addition, Shona language found respectively in South Africa and Zimbabwe, refers to a foreigner as 'Mubvakure'. Furthermore, in one of Nigeria's official languages known as Urhobo, a foreigner is known as 'Owho Obatafe'; while in Yoroba foreigner is regarded as 'Ajoji'. In the existing text of these African languages, not even a single one of them has a word or concept for xenophobia. In this regard, the acceptance of the concept of xenophobia in Africa is due to what Kamwangamalu (2003) conceptualizes as the trend of language shift from African languages to English. This language shift from African to languages to English has led to lack of conceptualizing of fights amongst through African languages such as Setswana. For example, and as will be clearly articulated fights amongst Africans must be understood as sibling bullying or fights; alluded to in a Setswana idiom, as '*maragana teng a bana motho*'. I will now explore the meanings of xenophobia against a scholarly and popular discourse of foreign man-made borders in my presentation and discussion.

Xenophobia vs Foreign Man-Made Borders

The concept of Xenophobia is defined by scholars such as Neocosmos (2012, 2) as “the intense dislike or fear of strangers or people from other countries”. It is “an attitudinal orientation of hostility against non-natives in a given population” (Neocosmos, 2012, 2). This concept is operationalised through negative attitudes, prejudices and behaviour as well as rejection of foreigners (Neocosmos, 2012). While this is the manner in which academic and popular discourse has operationalized xenophobia in South Africa, our argument based on Thabo Mbeki’s perception and narrative is that there is no concept such as xenophobia in Africa. For instance, there is what is regarded as ‘threats’ to social cohesion between South Africans and Africans from other African countries.

The above cited finding therefore underscored that instead of speaking to hatred of outsiders, operationalized as xenophobia in the current popular and academic discourse, there is a need to regard the conflict between South Africans and other Africans as ‘threats to social cohesion’. In this regard, xenophobia as a concept has no space in Africa as Africans are brothers and sisters who were separated by artificial borders born from the Berlin Conference. African from the formative years of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) cemented the relations among nations in the continent through the concept of brotherhood. The use of good offices in resolving fights among member states was prominent as against dragging on another to the Western inspired International Court of Justice (ICJ) (Landsberg, 2004). Some of the Setswana idioms speak to threats to social cohesion amongst Africans in the manner that, these are fights between and/or amongst siblings. One Setswana idiom states that, the fights between siblings or those construed to be related would be regarded as ‘*maragana teng a bana ba motho*’ (Rammala, 2020). Simply translated, this idiom means siblings are often engaged in fights, however at the end they come to a realisation that they are related in one way or the other (Rammala, 2020).

Therefore, the fights between South Africans and Africans from other African countries popularly known and misconstrued as xenophobia are fights between and/or amongst siblings belonging to the same continent who cannot treat each other as outsiders or foreigners since they belong to one and the same continent. These are in the Setswana idiom, ‘*ke maragana teng a bana motho*’, (fights between and/or amongst siblings). Therefore, one may not consider tensions between South Africans and African immigrants from other African countries as xenophobia but merely conflicts between siblings inspired by various factors which may include competition over scarce resources such as jobs and other economic opportunities. This is well captured in the works of Anthony Giddens as pull-push and macro- and micro levels. Thus, this can be regarded as sibling bullying which is operationalized as aggression-based behaviors between and amongst brothers and sisters that may take place in a repeated manner over time with an intention to hurt and achieve domination (Dantchev et al, 2018). Such acts of sibling bullying may occur through verbal abuse such as teasing and/or name-calling, social exclusion as well as physical abuse and in some instances damage to property (Dantchev & Wolke, 2019b; Tippett & Wolke, 2015). In various South African communities, sibling bullying occurred in a sense of name calling and negative teasing of African immigrants as ‘*Amakwerekwere*’ and *Magrigamba* (Derogatory name for foreigner). In addition, there has also been physical attacks and confrontation of African immigrants by South African nationals, while some African immigrants have also experienced damage to personal property. Sibling bullying, as alluded to above, in Setswana idiom, is considered as ‘*maragana teng a bana motho*’. In this vein, *maragana teng a bana motho* is simply sibling bullying between and amongst Africans who reside and share similar space in various South African communities and not xenophobia. This is due to competition for scarce resources. Even though there has been scholarly works that speak to the failure of Thabo Mbeki’s administration to openly condemn xenophobia (Pityana, 2019); the perception and position by Thabo Mbeki were and are still founded on the notion that the concept ‘xenophobia’ does not resonate with ‘*maragana teng a bana motho*’ or sibling bullying or fights between and amongst siblings (Africans). Therefore, it is a foreign concept and does not have any direct definition in African languages. Sibling bullying amongst cannot and must not be misconstrued as xenophobia. This underscores Mbeki’s position that Africans cannot allow themselves to be defined by others linguistically and culturally amongst many other factors. Henceforth, Mbeki in supplementing the notion that Africans should not be defined by others; African renaissance project focused amongst others, on advocating for Africans to be empowered through provision of education, knowledge as well as information as a means of being in charge of defining their lives and that of their countries (Mbeki, 2001).

As such, hatred of an outsider is misconstrued due to the fact that borders amongst African countries were imposed by the colonial masters through the Berlin Conference as mentioned above, which introduced the General Act and created a legal and political framework for partitioning of the African continent (Mieville, 2005). In addition, the value of connectedness amongst Africans was disintegrated through colonialism and eventual partitioning of the continent in line with economic objectives of the European states. Challenges that this brought about received academic interrogations elsewhere. The creation of these borders was without due consideration of factors such as culture, languages, climate and other environmental variables that could serve as challenges to social cohesion amongst Africans. Hence, the sharing of communities as well as neighborhood and positive contact are variables or factors that serve as “enhancers” of social cohesion between South Africans and immigrants of the rest of the African descent. As such there is a need to critically interrogate imposed borders and the foreign language ‘English’ as the very cornerstones of this concept of ‘Xenophobia. This is due to the fact that, Africans initially did not treat themselves as being foreign to one another on the basis of the intra-African migration which made them related in one way or the other until the arrival of the man-made borders. For instance, in the context of Southern Africa there are Sothos (respective citizens of South Africa and Lesotho), Swatis (respective citizens of South Africa and Swaziland), Ndebeles (respective citizens of South Africa and Zimbabwe) as well Shonas (respective citizens of South African and Zimbabwe) who were separated by intra-African migration caused by infighting within each individual bantu

groups listed supra (this boils down to the Setswana idiom '*maragana teng a bana ba motho*' meaning fights between and/or amongst siblings).

The existing colonial borders have created an element of every African being a foreigner to around 80 per cent of his/her African siblings and as a result the violent murders of Africans from outside South Africa by fellow Africans in South Africa, and the seeing of fellow Africans as 'foreigners' should be understood in this context (Ki-Zerbo, 2005, 97). Thus due to colonial borders, Africans started to see each other as foreigners in their own shared land and this ushered in an opportunity for adoption of foreign and Eurocentric concepts that ordinarily and historically were non-existent in the continent. This fact is also entirely based on the Anglo-American conspiracy theory to stymie any effort that seeks to develop local Africa languages and also convey a world view that is foreign to African societies and cultural practices. This is a paper written by an African from an Afrocentric discourse, it would not be of justice without mention of African idioms and Mbeki on connectedness of Africans, which is the next focus.

African Idioms and Mbeki on Connectedness of Africans: A focus on Setswana and IsiZulu

This value of connectedness is embodied in the Setswana idiom which alludes to '*bana ba thari entsho*' (people of the same group) (Kgari-Masondo & Masondo, 2019, 94). In translating this connectedness, '*thari entsho*', would simply mean '*a womb of a black woman*'. Meaning that, Africans are siblings coming from a black womb irrespective of biological definitions of bearing a child. The essence of people of the same group goes back to the concept of '*Bana ba Motho*' (Siblings), meaning that all Africans are siblings born from the same womb (African continent). This is for the reason that persons from the same group and siblings cannot refer to each other as foreigners. Because of some multi-layered factors such as imposition of borders, Kgari-Masondo and Masondo (2019, 99) came to a conclusion that 'people who lived in the same place suddenly became strangers. The essence of African is born out of the spirit of two idioms, in Setswana and the other in IsiZulu. These idioms are captured by Kgari-Masondo and Masondo (2019), which state that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu* in isiZulu and *motho ke motho kabatho babang* in seTswana (a person is a person through other people).

Based on the above discussion, these African siblings rely on each other for livelihood, they become persons through other persons of similar continental descent. Mbeki once asserted that a democratic South Africa was not only home to South Africans alone, rather it was also home to the rest of Africans (Mbeki, 2001). To corroborate our discussion thus far, he averred further that the liberation of South Africa could not have been possible without the contribution of other African states. This on its own cements the African idioms that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu* in isiZulu and *motho ke motho kabatho babang* in seTswana (a person is a person through other people). Thus, the contribution of other African states in South Africa's liberation from Apartheid was based on the notion and practice of siblings assisting each other to achieve a certain cause. This is cemented through the concept of brotherhood alluded to above in the form of solidarity among member states of the OAU. Mbeki' and the latter cited African idioms therefore simplify the connectedness of all Africans and downplays the existence of the concept of xenophobia in the African context.

Conclusions

The main goal of the work was to reposition the concept of Xenophobia in the African context in line with Thabo Mbeki's narrative on xenophobia. Based on the Eurocentric notion of hatred and how the same leads to brothers against one another, it is the position of this paper to conclude that xenophobia is a foreign concept in Africa with emphasis on the sub-Saharan of the continent. Employment of partial theories as is the case in human behaviour, I was able to point out that there is linear approach to the study of brothers at conflict due to the imposed globalization on the Africans, an approach that is alien to the continent. At the same time, employment of theories such as complex interdependence and Anglo-American conspiracy theory; point out to the notion that, Anglo-American imperialist managed to spread and enforce the usage of English through imposing the concept xenophobia in the continent while failing to capture the essence of sibling fights or fights amongst African brothers and sisters conceptualised by the Batswana speaking people as *maragana teng a bana motho*. The theses point to a notion that adoption of foreign theories in explaining African system hook-line-and-sinker are perpetual agents of neo-colonialism at best. Conflict between South Africans and other Africans are wrongly conceptualised as xenophobia. Rather, such conflicts should be treated as 'threats to social cohesion'. Therefore, African leaders and scholars must regard xenophobia as a concept which has no space in Africa as Africans are brothers and sisters who were separated by artificial borders born from the Berlin Conference. African connectedness is embodied in the Setswana idiom which alludes to '*bana ba thari entsho*' (people of the same group), but not foreigners to each other. Africans should therefore not allow themselves to be defined by others.

The discourse surrounding hatred and attacks on foreigners, particularly African immigrants residing in South Africa, has been prevalent in both popular and scholarly circles, which has led to the conceptualization of "xenophobia". There was then reconceptualization, suggesting that it was specifically African immigrants who faced hatred and attacks from South Africans, thus advocating for understanding these occurrences as "Afrophobia". Indeed, these scholarly narratives hold validity in academic and popular views, opinions, and perspectives. However, as seen in this work, there are works that have unearthed empirically based findings that challenge the conventional discourse on "Xeno/Afrophobia" debate. These findings revealed that (a) African immigrants and South African nationals exhibit elements of co-existence through positive contact and interactions; (b) contact between immigrants and South African nationals does not necessarily breed conflict; and (c) there exists social cohesion between African immigrants and South African nationals, rooted in mutual and complex interdependence. Consequently, the narrative evolved from

"Xeno/Afrophobia" to my own scholarly interpretations, which I termed "Threats and Enhancers" to social cohesion between African immigrants and South Africans. While, others termed "Colour-blind xenophobia." Despite these significant contributions, there has been a notable absence of works addressing the origin of the concept "xenophobia" and critically examining its origin against the vocabulary of African languages, this work repositioned the concept of "xenophobia/afrophobia/ colour-blind xenophobia" to lay a valid scientific conclusion that, Africans allowed themselves to be defined by others. This in line with (a) African heads of states and/or intellectuals who are Western-educated and still embracing common inheritance of European languages and memory and lastly, (b) African leaders, Academics and citizens have allowed themselves to be defined by others in their various socio-economic, political, economic as well other various lively hood factors to be defined by other. There is therefore, no direct or indirect translation of xenophobia in African languages. It is time that acceptance occurs in all levels and complex discourses that, the concept xenophobia has its etymological foundations in Greek and is therefore foreign in any of the African and South African indigenous languages. The decoloniality of thoughts comes from ceasing to embrace colonial languages and ideals. There is therefore a need to conduct research in African context that seeks to unravel my claims and arguments forward. This research must look into what the ancient Greece called "philoxenia" which was defined and operationalized as "friendship or hospitality" towards a foreigner. Little is done by African scholars to research on "philoxenia" in African context due to much focus on "xenophobia".

Acknowledgments

My work in this thematic area owes its initiation to the Govern Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GMRDC) at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) for funding and allowing me to conduct my Doctoral studies with them (as well as funding my Doctoral Studies) some years ago. I would like to thank my former colleagues at the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) where I really had an opportunity to come close to African studies in their various nature. To my former colleagues at the North West University (NWU) from various African countries, you became the epicenter of my thoughts in this work from conceptualization till completion.

The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Author Contributions: Jonathan Oshupeng Maseng; writing and original draft preparation and completion.

Funding: University of Mpumalanga financed the Article Processing Charge (APC).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Abderrahim, T., & Aggad, F. (2018). Starting afresh: The Maghreb's relations with sub-Saharan Africa. *European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM, Netherlands-based think tank)*, (225).
- Angu, P. (2023). Being black and non-citizen in South Africa: intersecting race, white privilege and afrophobic violence in contemporary South Africa. *Sociology compass*, 17(9), e13123.
- Chaka, C. (2024). Multilingualism, translanguaging, diversity, equity, social justice, and activism: A tenuous nexus and misrepresentations?. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 18(1).
- Chenzi, V. (2021). Fake news, social media and xenophobia in South Africa. *African Identities*, 19(4), 502-521.
- Dantchev, S., & Wolke, D. (2019). Trouble in the nest: Antecedents of sibling bullying victimization and perpetration. *Developmental Psychology*, 55(5), 1059.
- Dantchev, S., Zammit, S., & Wolke, D. (2018). Sibling bullying in middle childhood and psychotic disorder at 18 years: a prospective cohort study. *Psychological medicine*, 48(14), 2321-2328.
- David, C. (1997). English as a global language. UK: Cambridge University Press. Print.
- De Klerk, V. (2000). Language shift in Grahamstown: A case study of selected Xhosa-speakers. *International Journal of Sociology of Languages*, 146, 87-110.
- Dunne, T., Kurki, M., & Smith, S. (Eds.). (2021). *International relations theories: Discipline and diversity*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Framondino, C., & Manino, L. (2017). What is the impact of xenophobia on consumers' predisposition toward foreign products?. [dissertation/master's thesis]. [Copenhagen]: Copenhagen Business School.
- Giddens, A. (2009). *Sociology*. (5th Ed). Cambridge.
- Hameso, S. Y. (1997). The language of education in Africa: The key issues. *Language, culture and curriculum*, 10(1), 1-13.
- Harris, B. (2002). Xenophobia: A new pathology for a new South Africa. *Psychopathology and social prejudice*, 169-184.
- Hjerm, M., & Nagayoshi, K. (2011). The composition of the minority population as a threat: Can real economic and cultural threats explain xenophobia?. *International Sociology*, 26(6), 815-843.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2003). Globalization of English, and language maintenance and shift in South Africa. *International Journal of Sociology of Languages*, 164, 65-81.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M.b (2003). 14. Social Change and Language shift: South Africa. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23, 225-242.
- Kgari-Masondo, M. C., & Masondo, S. (2019). " For Peace Sake": African Language and Xenophobia in South Africa. *Journal of African Foreign Affairs*, 6(3).

- Ki-Zerbo, J. (2005). African intellectuals, nationalism and pan-Africanism: A testimony. *African intellectuals: Rethinking politics, language, gender and development*, 78-93. Mkandawire, T. (Eds). *African intellectuals: Rethinking politics, language, gender and development*. Zed Books/UNISA Press. 78-93.
- Landau, L. B., Ramjathan-Keogh, K., & Singh, G. (2005). *Xenophobia in South Africa and problems related to it*. Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Landsberg, C. (2004). *The quiet diplomacy of liberation: international politics and South Africa's transition*. Jacana Media.
- Mamadjanova, M. U., & qizi Malikova, G. X. (2023). How English Become Global Language: Historical Overview. *Educational Research in Universal Sciences*, 2(17), 888-892.
- Maseng, J. O. (2018). Cross-Border Migration, Social Cohesion and African Continental Integration: Perspectives of African Immigrants and South African Nationals in Gauteng, South Africa. [dissertation/Doctoral thesis]. [South Africa]: University of Fort Hare.
- Maseng, J. O. (2019). Effects of cross-border migration on idealizations of Gauteng residents towards social cohesion and African continental integration. *Journal of African Union Studies*, 8(3), 7-33.
- Maseng, J. O. (2020). Revealing "threats" and "enhancers" to social cohesion between African immigrants and South Africans. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 10(4), 41.
- Mbeki, T. (2001). *Mahube: The Dawning of the Dawn: Speeches, Lectures & Tributes*. Skotaville Media.
- Meredith, M. (2005). The state of Africa: A history of fifty years of independence. *Africa Watch*, 126, 126-129.
- Miéville, C. (2005). Between equal rights: a Marxist theory of international law. *Historical Materialism*.
- Mokwana, M. L. (2009). *The melting pot in Ga-Matlala Maserumule with special reference to the Bapedi culture, language and dialects* [dissertation/Doctoral thesis]. [South Africa]: University of South Africa.
- Ndlangamandla, S., & Chaka, C. (2022). Relocating English studies in the Global South: Towards decolonizing English and dismantling the coloniality of language. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, 17(2), 39-56. <https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29495>
- Ochonu, M. E. (2020). South African Afrophobia in local and continental contexts. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 58(4), 499-519.
- Olusanya, G. O., & Akindele, R. A. (1986). *Nigeria's external relations: The first twenty-five years*. University Press.
- Papanikos, G. T. (2020). Philoxenia and xenophobia in ancient Greece. *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 6(3), 237-246.
- Pityana, B. (2019). Presentation at the launch of the book Building Blocks Towards an African Century: Essays in Honour of Thabo Mbeki. *Institute for pan-African Thought and Conversation (PATC), University of Johannesburg*, 22.
- Prinsloo, M. W. (1976). *Grondslae van die administratiefreg by die Matlala van Maserumule* [dissertation/Doctoral thesis]. [South Africa]: University of South Africa.
- Rammala, M. N. R. (2021). Lekgotla and idiomatic expressions in traditional dispute resolution: the case of Makapanstad, North West Province, South Africa. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 16(1), 220-241.
- Richards, A., & Waterbury, J. (1996). *A political economy of the Middle East* (p. 195). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Ruggie, J. G. (2016). Taking embedded liberalism global: The corporate connection. In *Embedding Global Markets* (pp. 243-266). Routledge.
- Samof, J. (1993). The reconstruction of schooling in Africa. *Comparative Education Review*, 37(2), 181-222.
- Sanchez-Mazas, M., & Licata, L. (2015). Xenophobia: Social psychological aspects. *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*, 25, 802-807.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2013). *Linguistic genocide in education--or worldwide diversity and human rights?*. Routledge.
- South African History Online (SAHO). 2021. "The first 1820 British Settlers arrive in South Africa. The first 1820 British Settlers arrive in South Africa | South African History Online." Accessed August 25, 2021. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/>.
- Steenkamp, C. (2009). Xenophobia in South Africa: What does it say about trust?. *The Round Table*, 98(403), 439-447.
- Stiglitz, J. (2002). Globalization and its discontent. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 29 (2): 321-324.
- Stiglitz, J., & Pike, R. M. (2004). Globalization and its Discontents. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 29(2), 321.
- Tella, O. (2016). Understanding xenophobia in South Africa: The individual, the state and the international system. *Insight on Africa*, 8(2), 142-158.
- Tewelde, A. I. (2020). Reframing xenophobia in South Africa as colour-blind: The limits of the Afro phobia thesis. *Migration Letters*, 17(3), 433-444.
- Thakur, V. (2011). Who is a South African? Interrogating Africanness and Afro-phobia. *E-International Relations Students*.
- Tippett, N., & Wolke, D. (2015). Aggression between siblings: Associations with the home environment and peer bullying. *Aggressive behavior*, 41(1), 14-24.
- wa Thiong'o, N. (2004). Europhone or African memory. *Wajibu*, 19(3), 4-9. Mkandawire, T. (Eds). *African intellectuals: Rethinking politics, language, gender and development*. Zed Books/UNISA Press. 155-164.



Publisher's Note: SSBFNET stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations. © 2024 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478) by SSBFNET is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.