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Reframing Xenophobia in South Africa as Colour-Blind: The Limits of the Afro Phobia Thesis

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Abstract

Many scholars and South African politicians characterize the widespread anti-foreigner sentiment and violence in South Africa as dislike against migrants and refugees of African origin which they named 'Afro-phobia'. Drawing on online newspaper reports and academic sources, this paper rejects the Afro-phobia thesis and argues that other non-African migrants such as Asians (Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Chinese) are also on the receiving end of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. I contend that any 'outsider' (White, Asian or Black African) who lives and trades in South African townships and informal settlements is scapegoated and attacked. I term this phenomenon 'colour-blind xenophobia'. By proposing this analytical framework and integrating two theoretical perspectives — proximity-based 'Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT)' and Neocosmos' exclusivist citizenship model — I contend that xenophobia in South Africa targets those who are in close proximity to disadvantaged Black South Africans and who are deemed outsiders (e.g., Asian, African even White residents and traders) and reject arguments that describe xenophobia in South Africa as targeting Black African refugees and migrants.

Keywords: Afro-phobia; citizenship; colour-blind xenophobia; migration; South Africa.

Introduction

“Any out-group (Somali, white, or Asian) that threatens the in-group's economic interests is likely to elicit strong negative sentiments” (Godwin Dube, 2019: 203).

In the past two decades, South Africa has attracted economic migrants², immigrants³ and asylum seekers⁴ coming largely from African countries (Chinomona and Maziriri, 2015; Vandeyar, 2011). Even though many migrants in South Africa are from Africa, there are also a significant number of migrant from Asian countries, such as Pakistan, Indian, Bangladesh and Chinese (Crush, 2013). As the number of migrants living among South Africans continue to increase, there has been persistent xenophobic violence against foreign nationals (Gordon, 2010; Gordon, 2016; Handmaker and Parsley, 2001; Landau 2010; Madue, 2015; Langa and Kiguwa, 2016; Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh, Singh, 2005; Matsinhe, 2011; Mothibi, Roelofse and Tshivhase, 2015; Ndinda and Ndhlovu, 2016;

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² *Migrants* are defined those who choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution but mainly to improve their lives by finding work; however, throughout this paper I use this term to include immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

³ *Immigrants* are persons who migrate to another country voluntarily to settle permanently

⁴ *Asylum seekers* are involuntary or forced migrants who fled their countries due to persecution or violence and are seeking asylum in another country



Neocosmos, 2008). For example in 2008, 2015, and 2019, there were widespread attacks targeting individuals who were perceived to be ‘foreigners’.

Many migrants in South Africa come from the African continent (75.3 %); and a small percentage originate from Asia (4.7%) (Meny-Gibert and Chiumia, 2017). Due to the presence of undocumented migrants in South Africa, it is difficult to provide an accurate picture of the number of migrants actually living in the country; however, it is estimated that there are anywhere between 1- and 2-million migrants in South Africa (Meny-Gibert and Chiumia, 2017). The country profile of Asian immigrants entering South Africa legally varies. For example, according to Statistics South Africa (2015), citizens of China, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh account for a significant number of Asian-origin international migrants in South Africa.

Many migrants of Asian origin make a living by running clothing and grocery shops in informal settlements, townships and city centers. Most African migrants, like their Asian counterparts, also survive as street vendors by selling vegetables, sweets, or some as shop keepers (Crush, 2017). As Crush noted: [Migrants] are not confined to refugee camps or physically separated from citizens, which means they have direct interaction with South Africans with the potential for both conflict and integration into local communities (2017: 785).

Asian and African migrants therefore find themselves in a social context where non-South African migrants living among South African citizens are perceived as competitors for scarce resource and hence targets for xenophobic violence (Crush, 2017; Matsinhe, 2011; Neocosmos, 2008; Tshishonga, 2015). Many scholars who study xenophobia in South Africa characterize the phenomenon as a Black-on-Black violence or Afro-phobia, given the fact that Black African migrants tend to live and work among Black South Africans and hence African migrants are largely perceived as economic competitors. I challenge the Afro-phobia literature by incorporating the experiences of Asian migrants with xenophobia and hence viewing xenophobia as a post-apartheid phenomenon that does not see the skin colour or race of a person.

By introducing an analytical framework I refer to as ‘colour-blind xenophobia’, I argue that xenophobia in South Africa targets those ‘foreigners’ who are in close proximity to Black South Africans and who are deemed non-indigene outsiders (e.g., Asian and African residents and traders). I reject xenophobia as a form of racism that categorically targets Black migrants from Africa. Migration scholars and commentators argue that White migrants are spared from xenophobic violence, but this argument fails to appreciate that many White immigrants do not reside and trade in townships in the midst of Black South Africans hence they are spared from prejudice and attacks that target foreigners. I would argue that had White immigrants traded and resided in the midst of Black South Africans in townships and informal settlements, like their Asian and African refugees and migrants, they would have been the target of xenophobic violence.

This article is organised as follows. The next section contextualizes xenophobia in South Africa by discussing Black South Africans’ history of exclusion and dispossession. This is followed by the literature on xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. Next, the theoretical frameworks of realistic conflict theory and exclusivist model are outlined. The Method section is presented followed by the Results and Discussion section. The last section concludes the paper.

Historical exclusion and dispossession of Black South Africans

The phenomenon of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa is arguably linked to the history of systematic exclusion and dispossession of Black South Africans during colonial and apartheid



eras. The violence of historical exclusion of Black South Africans manifest themselves in post-apartheid South Africa as violence against the African 'other' (Matsinhe, 2011: 295; McKnight, 2015; Tshishonga, 2015). Historically, Black South Africans were denied access to political power, economic resources and equal social status (Posel, 2001a).

Before the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the various independent Colonies and states (Cape Colony, Natal Colony, Transvaal and Orange Free State) systematically excluded and marginalized Black South Africans (Frederickson, 1981; Cell, 1982; Christopher, 1988). After the discovery of gold and diamond in the later part of the 19th century there was need for cheap labour for the mining industry and large numbers of Black African males were recruited and housed in spatially segregated compounds near the mines (Frederickson, 1981; Keegan, 1996). White Europeans regarded Black Africans as only a source of cheap labour and socially and residentially segregated them.

After the four Colonies came together and formed a Union Government called 'The Union of South Africa', laws and policies were created to socially and spatially isolate Black Africans from White Europeans (Keegan, 1996). Legal discrimination against Black South Africans was formally instituted and enforced (Christopher, 1988). White Europeans systematically excluded Blacks from taking part in the political, social and economic life of the state (Cell, 1982).

A series of exclusionist laws were passed particularly from 1911 through 1920s. For example, in 1911, the Mines and Works Act excluded Blacks in the mines and railroads while extending to Whites better working conditions and wages (Frederickson, 1981: 34). In 1913, the Natives Land Act took away land from Black Africans and forcibly relocated them to under-resourced reserves away from the cities while conferring on Whites vast, fertile land. In 1920, the Native Affairs Act set up Native Councils to create 'self-government' for Blacks with the intention of excluding Black Africans from participating in the national political life of South Africa (Frederickson, 1981: 36-37). In 1923, the Native Urban Areas Act reserved urban centers for Whites while Black South Africans' access to urban centers was heavily policed and regulated (Frederickson, 1981: 37).

The Immorality Act was passed in 1927 to prohibit Black South Africans from engaging in sexual relations with Whites (Cell, 1982: 62; Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 10). Furthermore, services and amenities were also racially segregated. Blacks were legally prohibited from accessing certain services that were legally reserved for White South Africans, such as transportation, education, health and recreation (Frederickson, 1981: 38; Cell, 1982: 62; Beinart and Dubow, 1995: 10). Black South Africans were disenfranchised and they had virtually no political representation in national parliament (Frederickson, 1981: 35).

With the emergence of apartheid rule, in 1948, the fate of Black South Africans worsened. The apartheid government formally created four racial categories: White, Black, Coloured and Asian/Indian and regulated the everyday life of the South African society along these racial lines (Posel, 2001a; Posel, 2001b). Whites were positioned at the top of the racial pyramid with full access to political power, economic resources and social status. Coloured and Indians occupied an intermediate position with limited access to those resources while Blacks were excluded from such resources altogether effectively living in abject precarity (Christopher, 2001; Posel, 2001a). Black South Africans were physically removed from urban areas and relocated to under resourced areas on the outskirts of major South African cities to limit their access to the city centers (Frederickson, 1981; Guelke, 2005).

Mirroring the previous racist predecessor government, the apartheid government also passed a series of laws to exclude Black South Africans. In 1949 the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and in 1950, the Immorality Act prohibited Black South Africans and White South Africans from engaging in sexual relations. This was done to preserve the myth of White ‘purity’. (Frederickson 1981: 35; Guelke 2005: 12). In 1953, The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act segregated amenities and public facilities between Blacks and Whites: train couches, libraries, buses, beaches and swimming pools were racially segregated (Frederickson 1981; Guelke 2005: 13). Black South Africans suffered immensely until the dawn of democracy.

After the advent of democracy, in 1994, many Black South Africans still find themselves at the bottom of the historically structured racial hierarchy even though there is a special provision for Black South Africans in the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) that is the basis of affirmative action to redress past racial inequality (Posel 2001a: 109-110). However, even though the economic conditions of some South Africans have improved in post-apartheid South Africa, the economic and social conditions of the majority of Black South Africans in post-apartheid South Africa still bear the imprints of centuries of historical dispossession, marginalization and othering (Christopher 1997; Winant 2004). Relative to other racial groups, Black South Africans are disproportionately unemployed and the majority of Black South Africans still live under impoverished socio-economic conditions in informal settlements and townships (Stats SA 2011). Frustrated by their unbearable socio-economic conditions, Black South Africans routinely engage in largely violent service delivery protests and at times take out their frustrations on foreign-owned shops by burning or ransacking them.

It is within this historical and contemporary framework of impoverishment and suffering of Black South Africans then the phenomenon of xenophobia emerged in post-apartheid South Africa. The immigration and settlement of migrant traders in townships such as those from Africa and Asia then appears to have provided a reason for Black South Africans to feel marginalized again. The coming into contact of new migrants and the native citizens (mostly Black South Africans) within shared spaces (in informal settlements, townships and city centers) has arguably created a condition for group conflicts over scarce resources.

Literature on Xenophobia in South Africa

Many scholars have advanced various explanations for the phenomenon of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. For example, some blame the legal or institutional exclusion of migrants as a reason for the prevalence of xenophobic sentiments on the part of South Africans (Harris 2002; Warner and Finchilescu, 2003; Neocosmos, 2006; Mosselson, 2010; Akinola, 2014; Tsheola, Ramoroka and Muzondi, 2015). Others argue that South Africa’s past divisive history is still manifesting itself in the form the citizen-non-citizen, autochthon-other binaries (McKnight, 2008; Matsinhe, 2011; Tshishonga, 2015). Still others contend that the unfavourable economic standing of Black South Africans causes them to feel anger at some successful migrants (Abdi, 2011; Mamabolo, 2015; Tshishonga, 2015).

In discussions of the targets of xenophobic violence in South Africa, many scholars have argued that Black African migrants are mainly the target of recurrent and widespread anti-foreigner violence. For example, Langa and Kiguwa (2016) argue that Black African migrants in South Africa tend to be a target by Black South African males. Other scholars, such as Harris (2002), Mngxitama (2008) and Matsinhe (2011) also characterise xenophobia in South Africa as a Black-on-Black violence or ‘Afro-phobia’.



Neocosmos (2008), for example, argued that specifically African migrants are targeted by both a wide variety of government agencies and South Africans alike. Adjai & Lazaridis (2013: 192) also argue that ‘South African citizens exhibit high levels of xenophobia towards fellow African citizens...’ Matsinhe (2011: 306) also noted that during xenophobic attacks, the victims tend to be ‘Black outsiders’. Politicians have also characterized xenophobia in South Africa as ‘Afro-phobia’—Black-on-Black attacks. In 2015, South Africa’s Police Minister Nathi Nhleko said, ‘in a sense, what we are witnessing are *Afrophobic* kinds of activities and attacks, resembling elements of self-hate among Africans.’ (Gqirana, 2015). In his interesting article titled ‘Is xenophobia racism?’ Tafira (2011) argues that violence against foreign nationals in South Africa can be attributed to culture-based racism targeting migrants of African origin. Tafira contends that this ‘Black-on-Black’ racism is a reproduction of apartheid’s White-on-Black racism.

Some researchers such as Dube (2019) have highlighted the limitations of the Afro-phobia thesis. Drawing on the South African Social Attitudes Survey (2008–2016), Godwin Dube (2019) analysed patterns of Black South Africans’ dislike of foreign nationals. He found that Black South Africans not only disliked the presence of African migrants and refugees in South Africa but persons of other nationalities such as Asians and Americans. Dube also found that the degree to which Black South Africans disliked foreigners differed by nationality; for example, Nigerians, Zimbabweans and Somalis were disliked most compared to other African migrants. With regards to xenophobic violence, Dube (2019) contends that the Afro phobia thesis is too limited to capture the more complex and nuanced dimension of anti-foreigners sentiment and violence among Black South Africans. Dube (2019) argues that Black South Africans living in marginalized conditions in townships and informal settlements do not distinguish between Black African migrants or other races and nationalities when it comes to posing an economic threat to them. As Dube (2019: 203) noted: ‘any out-group (Somali, white, or Asian) that threatens the in-group’s economic interests is likely to elicit strong negative sentiments’.

The present article builds on these emerging debates that challenge the Afro-phobia or Black-on-Black violence thesis. By drawing on some empirical studies and online newspaper reports, this paper dismisses the hegemonic ‘Afro-phobia’ discourse and argues that migrants of non-African origin such as Asians (Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Chinese) are also targeted during xenophobic violence. To capture this phenomenon, this paper introduces a concept I refer to ‘colour-blind xenophobia’. By developing this analytical framework, I argue that xenophobia in South Africa is colour-blind and reject arguments that attempt to view xenophobia as a form of racism targeting African migrants.

This article does not conceptualize ‘xenophobia’ as an innate characteristics or predisposition of South Africans but a product of external historical and structural violence and exclusion imposed on largely poor Black South Africans. For example, Tsheola, Ramoroka and Muzondi (2015: 233) argue that South Africans ‘...cannot be generalised as intrinsically xenophobic...’ but instead structural conditions shape their attitudes towards foreigners. In other words I conceptualise some South Africans as interpellated subjects (*Althusser, 1971; Foucault, 1980*) whose thoughts and actions towards foreign nationals are framed and informed within their unfavourable socio-economic condition.

Exclusivist citizenship perspective

To make sense of the ways in which xenophobia in South Africa is premised on ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ or the ‘indigene’ vs. the ‘outsider’ logic, I frame this paper within Neocosmos’ (2006) perspective

of 'exclusivist citizenship. According to this theoretical perspective, in the post-South African context, belonging to the nation (community) or citizenship is officially based on supposed 'indigeneity' or 'autochthony' (Neocosmos, 2006: 6). The indigeneity logic presupposes distinctions between those who belong to the South African community and those who are excluded (foreign refugees, migrants, immigrants). The state and its officials define 'who is a citizen and who is not, who is included in community and who is excluded' (2006: 16). Neocosmos (2006: 16) defines 'indigeneity' and 'autochthony' as 'an exclusive conception of nationality and citizenship'. The legislation/law makes a distinction between 'citizen' and 'foreigners' on the bases of the myth of autochthony (2006: 92). Such 'citizen-foreigner denotes both the creation of a new community as well as the exclusion of some from community' (Neocosmos, 2006: 90). Therefore, 'xenophobia is thus intimately connected to citizenship, in other words to the fact of belonging or not belonging to a community, often but not exclusively to a nation' (Neocosmos, 2006: 16).

It is within this official exclusionary policies and practices of the state that migrants find themselves. The anti-foreigner state position is shared by the majority of the South African public in the form of hostilities and violence against those constructed as not belonging to the South African citizenry (Neocosmos, 2006).

I would argue that such public perception towards non-South Africans is not only directed towards migrants of African origin but anyone of foreign nationality residing and making a living in close proximity to local Black South Africans, such as Asians. Such sense of belonging on presumed indigeneity and autochthony is linked, I would argue, to the feelings of one's own economic resources being 'infiltrated' by those deemed 'aliens' or 'others' — be it African or Asian migrants. Such sentiments relative deprivation on the part of largely poor Black South Africans creates what scholars named 'Realistic Conflict Theory' whereby citizens accuse non-indigene migrants of taking away jobs and resources and enjoying the fruits of post-apartheid South Africa.

Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT)

Many scholars have used Realistic Conflict Theory to make sense of xenophobia in various contexts (Sanchez-Mazas and Licata, 2015). For example, the theory has been applied to makes sense of xenophobia in the US (Esses, Jackson and Armstrong, 1998; Yakushko, 2009), xenophobia in Europe (Pereira, Vala and Costa-Lopes, 2010; Hjern and Nagayosh, 2011; Velasco, Verkuyten, Weesie and Poppe, 2008), in Israel (Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur, 2003), *inter alia*. Sanchez-Mazas and Licata, (2015: 6) suggest that RCT is useful in highlighting 'competition for access to limited resources [which] results in a conflict between groups. Competition for these limited resources between groups leads to prejudices against the out-group, whose members are viewed by the in-group as a source of competition.' Sanchez-Mazas and Licata (2015: 6) further noted that 'xenophobic rhetoric depicting immigrants as taking advantage of jobs, [other opportunities] opportunities originates from the perceived realistic threat foreign workers...pose to nationals'

I therefore frame xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa within Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1988). According to this theory, when two groups compete over the same scarce resources, group conflicts arise due to, especially one group perceiving the other as a threat (Sherif, 1988). According to realistic conflict theory, scarce resources are at the centre of animosity. The term *realistic* in RCT suggests that the conflicts arising from intergroup competition over scarce resources are real or actual rather than imagined (Sherif, 1988). They may manifest in the form of battles, violence or attacks of one group against the other group. According to RCT, as one group perceives the other as a competitor, it constructs negative stereotypes and prejudices against what



it perceives to be a threat to the control over scarce resources (Sherif, 1988). Central to this theory is proximity (the coming into contact) between the two competing groups.

Realistic Conflict Theory is a useful lens in making sense of the contours of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. For example, migration scholars have documented that in the context of immigration to South Africa, South African citizens perceive migrants as a competitor who come to the country to take away jobs or their women (Mamabolo, 2015; Tshishonga, 2015). Migrants are seen as a threat to especially poor Black South Africans who are at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. When the economically disadvantaged, predominantly Black South Africans, feel threatened by the continued arrival and settlement of migrants in their midst, such feelings manifest in realistic/actual violence, such as in the form of anti-foreigner rallies and xenophobic violence (Tshishonga, 2015; Matsinhe, 2011). For example, Asian and African migrants who operate grocery and/or clothing stores in the midst of impoverished South Africans might be perceived as those who take advantage of South Africa's economic resources at the expense of poor South Africans and this could trigger actual violence against such migrants.

Method

Four representative South African online newspapers, *Times Live*, *Daily Maverick*, *Mail and Guardian* and *News24* that reported on xenophobic violence were selected. The focus of analysis was on reports where Asian migrants such as Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Chinese featured as victims of xenophobic violence in South Africa. Excerpts from the newspaper news article are then presented as evidence to illustrate that xenophobic attacks against foreigners also include Asian migrants as victims. The above newspapers were not the only media outlets that reported on xenophobia. The criterion used to select the newspapers was that the newspapers must carry content that depicted other non-African immigrants as victims of xenophobic violence. The timeframe used for analysis of the newspaper reportage was from 2015 to 2018. In addition to the online newspaper reports, academic articles that challenged the Afro-phobia thesis are also used.

Results and Discussion

Various online newspapers have reported that besides migrants of African origin, migrants originating from Asia, such as Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were also victims of xenophobic violence in South Africa. For example, referring to attacks against foreign nationals living in Beacon Valley, Western Cape Province, *News24* reported, 'Police said four tuckshops owned by two *Bangladeshis*, a Somali and a *Pakistani* were set alight within minutes of each other' (*News24*, 2012). In reference to the wide spread xenophobic violence in 2015, *Times Live* reported that 'immigrant-owned shops, belonging to people from Somalia, Bangladesh, China and Pakistan, have been closed since Monday last week after they were looted by residents.' (Mutandiro, 2018). Another online newspaper *Daily Maverick* also featured a news article citing Pakistanis and Bangladeshis as victims of xenophobic violence in South Africa: 'Jubilant mobs hound Somalis, Mozambicans, Zimbabweans, *Pakistanis* and *Bangladeshis* from their homes and businesses' (Africa Check, 2015). Reporting on wide-spread attacks against foreigners in Grahams town, the South African *Mail and Guardian* online newspaper reported that "more than 300 shops were targeted, and some burned to the ground...The shops were owned by Bangladeshis, Chinese, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Malawians, Senegalese, Somalis, Zimbabweans" (Allison, 2015).

When viewed through the lens of exclusive citizenship theory proposed by Neocosmos (2006), migrant traders of Asian origin who lived and traded in the midst of impoverished Black South

Africans in townships were targeted because they were seen as non-indigene ‘foreigners’ who do not belong, like their African refugee counterparts, to the post-apartheid national community. Due to their non-indigene and allochthonous social position (Neocosmos, 2006) in the country, Asian immigrants were targeted in xenophobic attacks despite their non-Black phenotype.

Viewed through realistic conflict theory (Sherif, 1988), the motive for South African citizens’ attacks against foreigners was not purely based on hatred of non-South Africans *per se*, but a manifestation of competition over scarce resources. In a country with high levels of inequality and unemployment where the majority of White South Africans own much of the country’s wealth and a disproportionate number of Black South Africans live in poverty, new migrant entrepreneurs’ presence in the midst of poor South Africans creates a perception that migrants are enjoying the wealth of the country (Mamabolo, 2015; Tshishonga, 2015). Such perception seems to have given rise to actual violence against migrant entrepreneurs (Asians and Africans).

As the reports on the four online newspapers suggest, xenophobic violence against foreign nationals in South Africa also affects migrants of Asian origin rather than only African migrants. This phenomenon reveals that attacks against foreigners tend to be colour-blind rather than targeting migrants of African phenotype (Tafira, 2011; Matsinhe, 2011). The phenomenon of colour-blind xenophobia does not support some studies and politicians’ statements on xenophobia in South Africa who characterised it as a social phenomenon that targets African migrants or ‘Afro-phobia’ (e.g., Harris, 2002; Neocosmos, 2006; Mngxitama, 2008; Neocosmos, 2008; Mosselson, 2010; Matsinhe, 2011; Tafira, 2011; Langa and Kiguwa, 2016).

Key to understanding xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa through exclusivist citizenship theory and realistic conflict theory is the factor of *proximity*. Exclusivist forms of belonging to community are predicated on alienating and othering groups that are deemed non-indigenes (Neocosmos, 2006) irrespective of their skin colour and phenotypic characteristics (e.g. Asian immigrants in post-apartheid South Africa). And hence violence against those seen as outsiders is mediated by how close foreigners live to ‘indigene’ and poor South Africans. Violence against such groups is enacted when the non-autochthonous immigrants are accessible (live and work among the impoverished sections of South Africans) which are seen as both non-indigenes and actual threats to the economic wellbeing of poor South Africans which realistic conflict theory suggests. Therefore, despite the racial characteristics and country of origin of migrants, as long as they are perceived as allochthonous and an economic threat to poor South Africans and are physically accessible (hence the factor of proximity), then xenophobic violence against them is enacted. An academic article by Dube (2019) also buttresses such argument in that xenophobia cannot exclusively be described as Afro-phobic but is shaped by geographic and socio-economic realities of the everyday. While Black Africans and Asians live and trade in the midst of poor Black South Africans in townships, White immigrants are geographically and distant from such spaces. As Dube (2019: 193) noted: “Xenophobic violence, when it does flare up, does not normally affect white immigrants or those African immigrants who do not live in the townships among poor South Africans. It is usually perpetrated by black South Africans mainly against black foreigners (and marginalized South African groups) living among them”.

As Dube argued above, many White foreigners and even South Africans tend to live in segregated residential areas away from predominantly Black neighborhoods and spaces. With reference to why White immigrants are spared from xenophobic violence in South Africa, Dube



(2019: 196) argued that: “most white immigrants do not end up living in the same spaces, in the townships, with black South Africans, as is the case with many black African immigrants, who are mainly very poor economic migrants”.

As the various newspaper reports and some academic studies suggested, violence against foreigners in South Africa is not exclusively directed at Black African migrants but it also targets other national origin groups such as Pakistanis, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Indian migrants who live and trade in residential areas with predominantly Black South African inhabitants.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to dismiss the ‘Afro-phobia’ thesis that has been advocated by some academics and politicians surrounding xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. Drawing on four online South African newspapers and academic sources I have illustrated that xenophobia also affects immigrants of Asian origin, namely Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Chinese. I have termed this ‘colour-blind xenophobia’. This paper, therefore, concludes that xenophobia as a post-apartheid phenomenon is a colour-blind rather than targeting African migrants of darker phenotype. The argument by some migration scholars and commentators that White immigrants are spared from xenophobic violence because of their race is erroneous. This is because the majority of White immigrants reside in areas further from townships and informal settlements where most xenophobic violence occurs. It is their lack of proximity to the disadvantaged Black South Africans in townships that makes them inaccessible to violence rather than their phenotype and skin colour. Further research is needed to explore, through interviews or focus groups, the extent to which White migrants in South Africa experienced xenophobic attitude or violence by South Africans.

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