

XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS: THE MEETING POINT OF JULIO-CLAUDIAN ROME AND RAMAPHOSA'S SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT: *Migration of people to various places is a permanent feature of human history. For example, shifting from a nomadic economy to a system based on food production in the past allowed people to settle permanently in a place and hold claim to it. Such a situation is known to have induced creation of group identity and led to stereotype relationship between host communities and foreign migrants with far reaching effects. Xenophobia, an age old phenomenon, is one of the products of the stereotype. This paper goes back in time to review xenophobic sentiments in Rome during the reign of the Julio-Claudian emperors in which large numbers of foreign migrants were attracted to Rome due to the empire's economic prosperity and opportunities for wealth creation. In doing this, the paper digs up the forms, causes, patterns, and consequences of xenophobic actions. Then, following an exploration of contemporary South-African xenophobic sentiments, which match closely with the Romans', the work makes a comparative assessment to find sociological parallels between the ancient and modern states which share common hopes for the migrants. The paper particularly identifies xenophobia as a form of social depravity that requires all moral strength to root it out.*

KEYWORDS: *Roman, Xenophobia, Migration, Sentiments, Foreign Migrants, Stereotype, Co-exist, South-African*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Julio-Claudian Dynasty was, perhaps, the strongest dynasty that ever existed. The operations and actions of the rulers from this dynasty are, without gainsay, captivating, intriguing and novel. The Julio-Claudians were the first five emperors of the Roman Empire who ruled from its formation under Augustus in 27 BC, until AD 68 when the last of the line, Nero, took his own life. Emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero, ruling respectively, made up this dynasty.

The Imperial era, which was for Rome a period of great and extensive political and cultural influence in Rome and in the entire world at the time, was that which succeeded the Roman Republic. It was characterized by government headed by emperors and large territorial holdings around the Mediterranean Sea in Europe, Africa and Asia (Ian, 2010). The 500-year-old Republic which preceded it was severely destabilized in a series of Civil Wars and political conflict, during which Julius Caesar proclaimed himself as a perpetual dictator and was subsequently murdered gruesomely in 44 BC. Civil wars and executions continued, culminating in the victory of Octavian, Caesar's adopted son, over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC and the annexation of Egypt. Octavian's power was then unassailable and in 27 BC the Roman Senate formally granted him overreaching powers and the new title *Augustus*, effectively marking the end of the Roman Republic.

Rome flourished magnificently during the reign of the Julio-Claudians and became the ganglion of the ancient world. Rome was the United States of America at that time and attracted large number of peoples from several nations. The people were called *Peregrini*, which translates in English as *foreigners*. Anyone who was not a Roman, whether in Rome or *elsewhere*, was regarded as a foreigner. Yet, even while some foreigners gained Roman citizenship because of the benefits that came with it, it did not make a significant difference.

As a result of the new Roman position in the world at that time, she assumed the stature of the ancient world's ganglion which encouraged massive movement of people, including Romans themselves, within and outside Rome. In lieu of this, Rome was faced with issues such as immigration, hence, the treatment of foreigners (within and outside Rome).

The inundation of foreigners at Rome was not without stress. This was the background to the Romans being as xenophobic and ethnocentric as any people there has ever been (McLaren, 2016). At a time, there were too many Syrians on the streets of Rome while at another time, some group of foreigners were considered for contesting political offices in Rome. The Romans were xenophobic towards the peoples who lived outside the Roman Empire, also referring to them as 'barbarians', a word which got to them through the Greeks. Beside the pejorative connotation of the term, it also implied apprehension and uneasiness about foreigners.

II. CONCEPTUALISING XENOPHOBIA

'Xenophobia', which seems to be a new phenomenon, is actually an old and enduring notion. The word is the result of the combination of two Greek words, 'Xenos' which means 'stranger' or 'foreigner' and 'phobos' which means 'fear', 'apprehension', or 'alarm'. To put simply, it means the 'fear of a stranger or foreigner'. It is critical to conceptualise the term xenophobia in relation to the Roman experience during the Dynasty of the Julio-Claudians. This serves two purposes: first, by so doing, a meaning to apply to the ancient phenomenon is readily available; second, it further clarifies the approach to the research on this subject (Isaac 2004:38). The term is a creation of modern civilisation and should not be credited to ancient Greeks even though they may have been guilty of xenophobic sentiments (Isaac, 2004:38).

A psychological perspective of xenophobia as given by Winters (2002) reveals that humans are naturally quick to judge, fear and even hate the unknown. According to him 'we may not admit it, but we are all plagued with xenophobic tendencies' as that fear, known as xenophobia, seems to be hardwired into the human psyche. Nonetheless, even though all nations and every human naturally feel threatened by the presence of foreign elements, not all are xenophobic. Research shows that when it comes to whom we fear and how we react, we do have a choice (Winters, 2002). We can, it seems, choose not to give in to our xenophobic tendencies. It occurs in every society, but in widely differing degrees, social settings and moral environments (Isaac, 2004). This, therefore, reveals that for a nation or state to be considered xenophobic, they must have displayed certain morally unacceptable inimical behaviours, attitudes and actions towards foreigners. The discussion that follows indicate such behaviours are obvious in methods/patterns of the Roman expression of xenophobic sentiments.

With the foregoing understanding, xenophobia is defined as the fear, distrust and contempt shown by the Romans during the reign of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty from 28 B.C. to 68 A.D. towards foreigners and foreign culture. Great care is taken not to mistake xenophobia for racism, although they may be viewed as related terms. In order to have a clear distinction between these two terms, racism is defined as 'discrimination of peoples based on phenotype i.e. skin colour.' Therefore, while manifestations of xenophobia occur against people of shared physical characteristics, even of shared ancestry, racism is strictly based on skin colour in this article. Hence, the comparison of Rome and South Africa is in the context of host communities' expression of xenophobic sentiments against foreign migrants of shared physical characteristics, even ancestry.

As Rome feared, disdained and distrusted anything foreign that threatened her safety, prosperity, tradition and the future of the empire, she employed various measures to assure Roman citizens that all was well. Some of these measures which led to various wars such as the Battle of the Angrivarian Wall took place in foreign lands, while others such as the maltreatment of Jews happened in Rome (Tacitus, Annals 2.19-21). In clear terms, the forms of Roman expression of xenophobic sentiments were offensive and defensive in nature. The former means that xenophobic sentiments were manifested in the victims' own fatherland while the latter, in Rome itself. And the adoption of either form was determined by factors such as international laws, economic and military strengths (McLaren, 2016).

III. THE CAUSES OF ROMAN XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS

Fear of Religious Beliefs

Durkheim (1912) sees religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. That is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one simple moral community called church, all those who adhere to it. It is a relationship between a Supreme Being and a people with rewards if the people adhere to the prescriptions of the Supreme Being and punishment if they do not. As a city, Rome had her own distinct religion and its practice was important at both the family and state levels (Adhikari, 2019). Furthermore, Rome had made a pact with Jupiter, promising to look after the god's need by providing proper sacrifices and worship. In return, it was believed that the god would protect and ensure the progress of Rome. Hence, practice of another religion, such as Christianity, which meant refusal to make sacrifices to the gods was perceived as insulting and dangerous to the progress of Rome. The relationship between the Roman state and Christianity in the Julio-Claudian period was characterized by bitter suspicion, cruel punishment and name-calling. The state and Christianity clashed during the reign of Claudius while the first severe punishment was

inflicted upon Christians in the time of Claudius' successor, Nero (AD 54-68) (Effe, 1984:90). The Romans accused Christians of superstitious beliefs such as cannibalism, because they supposedly ate the "body" and "blood" of Christ; of practice of incest, because they married their "brothers and "sisters" in Christ; and of atheism, because unlike the Romans who could point to the erected statues of their gods, Christians could point to none as it was an imageless worship which was beyond the comprehension of the Romans at the time (Gonzalez, 1984). The Romans clearly perceived the alien way of worship as a threat to their religious order.

Roman writers such as Suetonius and later, Tacitus, bring this fear to light in their writings. In the *Lives of the Caesars*, 16.2, Suetonius words are full of xenophobic sentiments when he describes Christians as: 'a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition'. This charge of superstition, 'eating the body and blood of Christ' was perhaps the most serious and most common pagan accusation (Cassel, 2019). The Roman historian, Tacitus, later echoes the apprehension over the Christian beliefs in his description of the aftermath of Nero's fire: "Neither human resources, nor imperial munificence nor appeasement of the gods eliminated sinister suspicion that the fire had been instigated. To suppress this rumor, Nero fabricated scapegoats and punished with every refinement the **notoriously depraved Christians (as they were fondly called)**. Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius's reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus. But in spite of this temporary setback, the **deadly superstition** had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome where all degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish" (Tacitus' Annals 15.44, the bold emphasis is mine).

The phrases, "mischievous superstition", "notoriously depraved Christians...deadly superstition", of Suetonius and Tacitus, respectively, are poignant expressions of the Roman xenophobic view of the Christian religious beliefs which were widespread as Tacitus hints. The polemical words explain why the Christians suffered persecution in the hands of the Romans. With the least tolerance, the foreigners were viewed as holding to religious beliefs were both alien and dreadful. Nero's punishment of Christian is also attributable to xenophobic sentiment as Tacitus relates: "First, Nero had self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned—not so much for incendiaries as for their antisocial tendencies"(Tacitus' Annals 15.44). The apprehension over "antisocial tendencies" stemmed from the Christians' not joining other Romans in sacrificing to the gods as expected of all those living in the empire as well as Christians' supposedly having clandestine meetings, marrying their "brothers and sisters" and eating the "body" and "blood" of Christ. The Romans' hostile verbal and physical reaction to strange religious beliefs are fittingly classified as xenophobic.

The situation resonates the idea of *religio*, the approved religion and primarily the Roman state religion, which was a formal link between men and gods who protected the state, versus *superstitio*, a private belief that originated in a rebellious country and had no link to the gods (Effe, 1984:90). *Superstitio* was considered a threatening omen of misfortune for the Roman state, hence, the xenophobic distrust, fear and contempt for any foreigner promoting it. The prejudiced view of foreign uncompromising beliefs only created xenophobic anxieties in the Romans and led ill treatment of the Christians.

Political Threat

Tacitus reports that the great aim of Augustus had been to consolidate the Roman Empire. However, Rome faced serious political threats from other nations. Consequently, moved by the fear of possible invasion by foreigners, Rome embarked on several wars such as the Battle of the Angrivarian Wall with the Germans (Tacitus, *Annals* 2. 19-21). In the first place, the Romans invaded Germania because they feared Germans would invade Rome if they did not. Therefore, in 4 CE and 6 CE, a good number of tribes were subjugated by the Roman general Tiberius (who later became emperor) and by Gaius Sentius Saturninus and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. Tired of Roman oppression, the Germans ambushed Roman soldiers who were sent to quell a false German revolt. This worked and the defeat of the Romans was so great that Augustus, shaken, stood butting his head against the walls of his palace, repeatedly saying: "Quintus Varus, give me back my legions"(Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, 23). The xenophobic feeling of the Romans towards the Germans resulted from the grave political fear that the Germans created. This became evidenced by the events that followed.

After the death of Augustus, the Romans retaliated with so much xenophobic sentiment that they levelled everything sacred or profane to the ground and even treated the Germans' sacred temple, Tamfana (as they called it) as contemptible. Tacitus relates the great losses incurred by the Germans:

Many in attempting to swim across the Visurgis were overwhelmed under a storm of missiles or by the force of the current, lastly, by the rush of fugitives and the falling in of the banks. Some in their ignominious flight

climbed up the top of trees, and as they were hiding themselves in the bough, archers were brought up and they were shot for sport, others dashed to the ground by the felling of trees (Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.17). So vehement was the Roman xenophobia that, seeing the final battle as desperate and critical, Germanicus strictly informed the soldiers 'that the utter destruction of the nation would be the only conclusion of the war' (Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.21). It is noteworthy that Tacitus while giving a historical account of the battle contemptuously labelled the Germans as 'barbarians' at every opportunity he had (Tacitus, *Annals*, 2). Germanicus also employed the same degrading word in describing the Germans while charging his legions for war (Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.21).

During the reign of Claudius, Roman senators expressed xenophobic sentiments when the chief men of Gallia Comata, who according to Tacitus, "had long possessed the rights of allies and of Roman citizen, sought the privilege of obtaining public offices at Rome" (Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.23). When this proposition was made public and brought before the senate for deliberation, the Roman senators revealed the fears, contempt, suspicion and dislike they had for these men. Tacitus reports that the matter was argued before the emperor with vehement opposition: "Italy is not so feeble as to be unable to furnish its own capital with a senate. Once our native-born citizens sufficed for peoples of our own kin, and we are by no means dissatisfied with the Rome of the past. To this day we cite examples, which under our old customs the Roman character exhibited as to valour and renown. Is it a small thing that Veneti and Insubres have already burst into the Senate-house, unless a **mob of foreigners**, a **troop of captives**, so to say, is now forced upon us? What distinctions will be left for the remnants of our noble houses, or for any impoverished senators from Latium? Every place will be crowded with these millionaires, whose ancestors of the second and third generations at the head of hostile tribes destroyed our armies with fire and sword, and actually besieged the divine Julius at Alesia. These are recent memories. What if there were to rise up the remembrance of those who fell in Rome's citadel and at her altar by the hands of these same barbarians! Let them enjoy indeed the title of citizens, but let them not vulgarise the distinctions of the Senate and the honours of office" (Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.23, the emphasis is mine)

The vehement argument as put forth by the senators is an evidence of the Romans' xenophobia. A critical examination of this argument shows that contemptuous epithets, "a mob of foreigners", "a troop of captives" and "barbarians", were used to characterize the people of Gallia Comata. Mendels (2007) states that it did not matter whether these arguments were put forward on this particular occasion as this kind of arguments against Gauls were certainly articulated from time to time. A quintessence of one of these arguments is found in a forensic speech when Cicero, in an attempt to make unreliable the credibility of Gallic witnesses, calls Gauls "an arrogant and faithless people...the time descendants of those who burned down the capital" (Mendels, 2007).

Social Behavior

Rome expected foreign migrants to behave in such a way that the community's mode of social interaction was not contaminated. She expected foreign migrants to respect law and order and refrain from any anti-social behavior. Hence, xenophobic sentiments were expressed against foreign migrants who were seen as disturbing social peace. With regard to this, two incidences of anti-social behaviour which moved Emperor Claudius to expel or contributed to his expulsion of the Jews from Rome stand out. The first was a conspiracy by Decius Mundus and the priests of Isis to lure and have sexual relationship with a married Roman woman by the name Paulina. Despite his wealth, rank and several amorous advances, he had failed to win her love. Hence, knowing fully well of her faithful devotion to the goddess Isis, he conspired with the priests to lure a married Roman woman, Paulina, to the temple under the pretext that the god Anubis had fallen in love with her and to express this, he (Anubis) had demanded that she came to the temple to "sup and lie" with him (Josephus, 3456). On hearing this news from the very mouth of the priests themselves, Paulina was so happy that she informed her husband (who consented) and friends about how she had found favour in the eyes of the God Anubis. As an ardent worshipper of the goddess Isis, Paulina went to the temple where Decius Mundus, pretending to be the god Anubis, according to Josephus, enjoyed her and left. But being over-zealous, proud and uncouth, Decius Mundus met her one day and revealed the whole stratagem to her. When this crime was reported to the emperor, moved by religious xenophobic sentiment, he ordered the priests to be crucified and the statue of the goddess Isis thrown into the river Tiber.

The second was when a certain Jew with his accomplices used the name of the temple of Jerusalem to defraud a Roman woman. This woman by the name, Fulvia, was asked to send purple and gold to the temple and when she had sent these things, the culprits employed them for their own use as they had planned to from the start. This incident was reported to Tiberius who ordered all the Jews to be banished out of Rome (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18. 65-84). Nonetheless, according to Rutgers, various scholars doubt the veracity of Fulvia's deception as the reason for the expulsion of the Jews as presented by Josephus on the premise that the Roman government dealt only with the *autoresseditio* who were judged guilty of gravely abusing the Roman woman, Paulina, and

given Rome's generally considerate policy towards the Jews and the fact that the Roman magistrate took the trouble to issue the special *senatusconsultum*, why would Rome, confronted by a less serious offence committed by a few Jews resort to the expulsion of every Jew? Therefore, these scholars express the possibility of inserting the story of Fulvia by Josephus in order to absolve the Jews from any real responsibility for the expulsion of 19 AD (Rutgers, 1994). However, despite scholars' rejection of fraud as the reason for the expulsion of Jews, one thing is clear and that is the fact that Emperor Tiberius capitalized on these anti-social behaviors to expel Jews from Rome for a much bigger reason, possibly the large conversion of Romans to Judaism as these scholars hint (Rutgers, 1994).

Political Utterances/Blame Shifting

Humans may be naturally quick to judge, fear and even hate the unknown (Winters, 2002). However, these feelings may be dormant and not acted upon unless political leaders incite the people to express these feelings. A reason why some political leaders may do this is to blame foreign migrants for their own ineffectiveness. This was the case with the Roman expression of xenophobic sentiments of fear, distrust and contempt. Earlier on, Augustus had protected the Jews and other foreigners alike even though he knew about the existence of awful feelings towards the Jews (Rutgers, 1994).

As a result, the Jews continued to live in Rome undisturbed, but when Emperors like Nero made certain utterances in a bid to shift blame on foreigners as the cause of mischief, dormant xenophobic feelings became active: "Neither human resources, nor imperial munificence nor appeasement of the gods eliminated sinister suspicion that the fire had been instigated. **To suppress this rumor, Nero fabricated scapegoats and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were fondly called)**... their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle and exhibited displays in the Circus, at which he mingled with the crowd — or stood in a chariot, dressed as a charioteer..." (Tacitus' Annals 15.44, emphasis is mine).

The great fire of Rome occurred during the reign of Nero in AD 64, burning down two thirds of Rome. As an ambitious emperor, Nero had planned to tear down a third of Rome and build series of palaces that would be known as Neropolis, but the senate objected to this plan. Hence, following the conflagration, Nero was blamed, inferring that he caused the great fire to bypass the objections of the senate and build his "Neropolis". To suppress this rumor, Nero, in turn, blamed the Christians who were already hated. This is an instance of how a leader can make foreigners foul-smelling and generate xenophobic feelings in the minds of native citizens.

IV. PATTERNS OF ROMAN EXPRESSION OF XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS

In the instances discussed above, certain patterns of expression of Roman xenophobic sentiments are observable. These are highlighted below.

Name-calling

Use of contemptuous words seems to appear in all the instances of Roman expression of xenophobic sentiments. For instance, during the Battle of the Agrivarian War with the Germans, Germanicus contemptuously repeatedly referred to the Germans as 'barbarians'. Also, in the maltreatment of Christians and the chief men of Gallia Comata, contemptuous words such as "notoriously depraved Christians", (Tacitus, Annals, 11.23) "mob of foreigners", and "a troop of captives" (Tacitus, Annals, 15.44) were used. In fact, according to Tacitus, Christians were fondly called "notoriously depraved".

Expulsion

The instrument of expulsion was also sometimes used to keep certain foreign migrants away from the empire. Expulsion of the Jews by Emperor Tiberius allegedly for anti-social habits illustrates this point. Similarly, according to Suetonius, Emperor Claudius also expelled the Jews from Rome between AD 41 and AD 54 reportedly for disturbances which threatened peace in Rome: "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [the Emperor Claudius] expelled them from Rome" (Divus Claudius 25).

Invasion/War

The forms of xenophobia as discussed above reveal that the expression of xenophobic sentiments could take the form of an invasion/war as exemplified by the Romans when they invaded Germania, leveling everything sacred or profane to the ground.

Corporal Punishment and Homicide

In the expression of xenophobic sentiments against Christians during the reign of Nero, corporal punishments were inflicted on them which led to the death of many. Tacitus reports the xenophobic attack on the Christians that went with impunity: "... their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle and exhibited displays in the Circus, at which he mingled with the crowd — or stood in a chariot, dressed as a charioteer..." (Tacitus' Annals 15.44). It is pertinent to note that Nero took advantage of the common xenophobic sentiments against Christians in an attempt to convince the Romans of his commitment to advancing the interest of the empire.

Political Exclusion

Even after foreign migrants such as the chief men of Gallia Comata had gained citizenship in Rome and could contest political offices, their ambition was vehemently opposed by the Roman senators who thought these foreign migrants would contaminate the political tradition of Rome: "...is it a small thing that Veneti and Insubres have already burst into the Senate-house, unless a mob of foreigners, a troop of captives, so to say, is now forced upon us? What distinctions will be left for the remnants of our noble houses, or for any impoverished senators from Latium? Every place will be crowded with these millionaires, whose ancestors of the second and third generations at the head of hostile tribes destroyed our armies with fire and sword, and actually besieged the divine Julius at Alesia. These are recent memories. What if there were to rise up the remembrance of those who fell in Rome's citadel and at her altar by the hands of these same barbarians! Let them enjoy indeed the title of citizens, but let them not vulgarise the distinctions of the Senate and the honours of office" (Tacitus, Annals, 11.23-25)

The foregoing instance indicates that Roman politicians would be led by xenophobic sentiments to exclude foreigners from political privileges.

V. IMPLICATIONS OF ROMAN XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS

The xenophobic treatment of foreigners was not without implications for both the Romans and the object of their xenophobic sentiments. These are categorised as Political, Economic, Social and Religious implications.

Political Tension

The xenophobic sentiments of Rome led to an array of wars and military clashes with foreigners which gulped both money and men from both sides. Rome had the attitude of not leaving a conquered nation alone to administer its affairs. Instead of leaving after successfully flexing her muscle with a nation, Rome went ahead to create provinces. The administration of these provinces was not without difficulty. Wherever Rome established a province, she also established her laws and more importantly, the natives were subjected to perpetual state of taxation (Ando, 2010:179). Hence, there were revolts in many of these provinces. For instance, twenty thousand local Jews were massacred by the "pagans" of Caesarea while those who fled were later caught by Florus's troops and chained at the dockyards in one of such revolts (Levey, 1975:43-78).

Economic Burden

In the defensive and offensive method employed by the Roman State to cushion the danger posed by foreigners to the Empire, Rome was urged on by the huge financial resources which were at the disposal of the city. It is also likely that Rome was xenophobic towards foreigners due to the economic benefits that the Empire envisaged would be gained by the conquering and annexation of a whole city as the empire largely depended on slave-labour (Andrews, 2014). The battle with the Germans at Teutoburg forest was fought with three legions by the Romans: Legio XVII, Legio XVIII, and Legio XIX. This was supported by six cohorts of auxiliary troops and three squadron of cavalry. Collectively, this amounted to about twenty thousand men who were paid, fed and equipped by the state. As shown in the preceding paragraph, this was an enormous financial burden on the state. The subsequent complete defeat of these soldiers which is stressed by all Roman accounts set the number of Roman casualties at 15,000-20,000 dead (Bordewich, 2005). The victory was accompanied by a holistic sweep of all Roman forts, garrisons and cities (of which there were at least two) east of the Rhine.

Analysing from the point of view of the economic implication of this defeat, the Romans did not only lose all the money and other resources which had been spent on those soldiers, they also lost man-power which could have been employed for other purposes as well as the money invested in the establishment of forts, garrisons and cities east of the Rhine.

Social Stress

The Roman expression of xenophobic sentiments also caused strain in social relationships with the nations directly affected. For instance, the Jews supported Julius Caesar during the Civil Wars to the extent that Julius Caesar showed his gratitude by granting outstanding privileges to the Jews as a national group (Efron 1987:78). As a form of concrete confirmation, these privileges were written as statutes which formally declared the various Diaspora communities as more or less internally self-governing communities within the “pagan” cities in which they inhabited (Efron 1987:78). However, the expression of xenophobic sentiments towards the Jew strained this relationship. Consequently, the severed social relationship resulted in further resentment against the Romans, not only by the Jews, but also by Britons, Germans, Gauls and Druids. At various points, there were protests and revolts.

Moral Depravity

Morality is the mental disposition or character of behaving in a manner intended to produce morally good results. Roman xenophobic sentiments of fear, distrust and contempt for foreigners and anything foreign that posed a threat to the universal sovereignty of Rome served as a platform for Rome to demonstrate her moral standards to the world. As Rome exhibited xenophobic sentiments, it seemed the Empire got morally depraved: foreigners were murdered with impunity (Tacitus, Annals, 15.44). Crushing taxes were laid on foreigners, Rome’s provincial governors became so corrupt that they stole huge part of the taxes (Kirkegard, 2006).

The result of all these was a system of robbery which left nothing to be desired for thoroughness. Unjust valuation, extortion, blackmail, was the order of the day, and their subjects suffered (Kirkegard, 2006). While some of the Rome’s wealth was employed for public benefit in the appearance of large-scale building efforts undertaken with private contributions, much of it went to support lavish lifestyles. This may not be unexpected since the Roman expression of xenophobic sentiments was an indication of the people moral depravity.

Xenophobic Sentiments in South Africa between 2015 and 2019

There are many centuries between ancient Rome and contemporary South Africa. Yet, remarkable contacts with people in international movement and search for better opportunities characterise the two states. South Africa appears to be the epicenter of Africa following her industrialized and diversified economy. In fact, she was among the top five largest economies in Africa in 2014 (International Monetary Fund, 2014), after the downfall of apartheid in 1994. Hence, the country has become a highly desirable place to start a business. In 2014, the World Bank ranked South Africa 43rd in the world and 2nd in Africa relating to ease of conducting business (Ashwin, Mankiw & Taylor, 2016). Also, the South African government encourages small businesses which make a considerable contribution to South Africa’s GDP, and foreign migrants can own companies as long as at least 60% South Africans are employed.

As a result of this economic position, foreigners are attracted to South Africa which has caused a massive movement of foreigners, especially of African origin, to the country. Hence, South Africa, like Rome, is faced with issues such as immigration and treatment of foreigners. This has led to recurring expression of xenophobic attitudes and behaviors in the host community.

VI. THE CAUSES OF XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Political Utterances and Blame Shifting

“As the king of the Zulu nation, I cannot tolerate a situation where we are being led by leaders with no views whatsoever. We are requesting those who come from outside to please go back to their countries. The fact that there were countries that played a role in the country’s struggle for liberation should not be used as an excuse to create a situation where foreigners are allowed to inconvenience locals. I know you were in their countries during the struggle for liberation. But the fact of the matter is you did not set up businesses in their countries” (Ndou, 2015). The comment above was credited to King Goodwill Zwelithini, the King of the Zulu tribe in South Africa after blaming immigrants as the cause of dirty streets. Following this comment, members of the host community attacked foreigners throughout the country in April 2015. The attack comprised lynching and looting of foreigners and their shops (BBC, 2019).

Nonetheless, the King condemned the attacks, saying his comments were largely misinterpreted, especially by the media, while the South African Human Rights Commission absolved him from inciting the host community to express xenophobic sentiments. But despite his condemnation of the attacks and absolution from the Human Rights Commission, the xenophobic attacks show just how powerful political utterances that blame foreign migrants for certain inefficiencies are, especially when they come from influential leaders.

A report released by the Human Rights Watch makes clear the relationship between expression of xenophobic sentiments and utterances of political leaders. It resonates the fact that even though there may be xenophobic feelings in the atmosphere, such may continue to be dormant until a political leader awakens it through certain utterances, particularly those that blame foreigners for an inefficient system: “There is clearly a link [between unemployment and xenophobia]. But it’s not just about rising unemployment. Some political leaders use foreign nationals as a scapegoat, and they become easy target for locals, who are frustrated with the economic situation, and are looking for someone to blame” (O’Brien, 2019). Again, this article links political utterance and blame shifting as part of the causes of xenophobic sentiments by South Africans in 2019. In this case, the South African Health Minister, Aaron Motsoaledi, blamed foreign migrants for the country’s overburdened health care system at a nurses’ summit on 14 November, 2018 (Clifford & Hazvineyi, 2019).

Moreover, statistics show that there are about 3.6 million foreign migrants in South Africa out of an overall population of over 50 million (BBC, 2019). This blame was further strengthened by the statement of the South African Small Business Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu that foreigners who owned businesses would co-exist well with locals if they shared their trade secrets (Wilkinson, 2015). All these utterances portray foreign migrants as pests who only care about wreaking havoc on the host country. Therefore, portraying foreigners in this light, members of the host country must have seen this as a directive to rid their country of foreign migrants so that their streets can be clean, health care system sufficient and economic opportunities available.

Anti-social Behaviour

Blaming undocumented foreign nationals in South Africa for crime is nothing new (Newham, 2017). The Institute for Security Studies have clearly pointed out that despite the lack of evidence to support the claim that foreigners, especially those who are undocumented, are responsible for crimes such as murders, sexual offenses, assault, and robberies in South Africa, they are still blamed for these anti-social behaviours by both politicians and police. In September 2019, xenophobic attacks escalated in certain parts of South Africa after a foreign migrant specialised in drug trafficking shot a South African taxi driver who attempted a citizen arrest (Evans & Wiener, 2019). This was followed by mass protest by native taxi drivers which turned into violent xenophobic attacks on foreigners. Several shops belonging to foreign migrants were looted and set ablaze while some of the owners were still inside (Wikipedia citing Moneyweb). Also, on 21st October 2015 taxi drivers attacked foreign migrants of Pakistani, Somali, Bangladeshi and Ethiopian origin because they were accused of being responsible for the rampant murders in town (O’Halloran, 2016). The allegation was that an Arab man had killed and mutilated women around town. In an Aljazeera’s Inside Story, one of the South African protesters is seen saying thus: “They’re making our place corrupt...so we don’t want to bear anymore” (Aljazeera, 2019).

Thus, it was these accusations that incited the xenophobic attacks. This is not to say that foreign migrants are totally innocent of these accusations, but, the accusations emphasize a critical inciting factor in the South African expression of xenophobic sentiments.

Economic Threat

Foreign migrants have been blamed by South Africans for their poor economic status. According to them, foreign migrants are responsible for taking their jobs and driving unemployment levels by accepting minimal salary as the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union president, Louise Thipe notes: “The reason why foreigners are often preferred by employers is because they are not usually protected by a union. Some foreign employees are threatened with dismissal if they want to join a union. Those without the required documentation are controlled by their employers, who threaten to go to the authorities if they don’t comply with their conditions. Without a union, foreigners can be paid a minimal salary because they don’t have us to negotiate this for them” (Dirk, 2015). To be sure, the unemployment rate at the time stood at about 35% while the economy experienced slow growth. In addition, youths between the age of 25 and 30 spent one or more than one year looking for jobs (Quartz Africa, 2015).

But from all indications, it seemed foreign migrants were doing well despite the state of the economy as the Democratic Alliance ward councillor, Marcelle Booysen and South African minister of Small Business Development hint respectively: “when the ‘foreigners’ came back, they should have fewer shops” (O’Halloran, 2015); “They cannot barricade themselves in and not share their practices with local business owners” (Business Day, 2019). The Competition Commission – the country’s anti-trust regulator- undertook an inquiry, concluding that the seeming success achieved by foreigners in their businesses has created a feeling that immigrants are more prosperous than the locals (Quartz Africa, 2015). Hence, the belief is held that, if foreigners left, the competition would reduce and the economic status of members of the host community would improve.

VII. PATTERNS OF SOUTH AFRICAN EXPRESSION OF XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS

Looting

Perhaps to punish foreign migrants for 'taking their businesses away from them and threatening them economically', locals massively looted and burnt shops belonging to foreign nationals, thereby destroying properties and businesses worth millions of Rands (Ogundipe, 2019). In Grahamstown for instance, taxi drivers' associations incited and encouraged the looting by carrying xenophobic slogans and transporting looters for free while the police did little or nothing to stop them, according to community members (O' Halloran, 2015). The article therefore observes subscription to looting as a way of expressing xenophobic sentiments by South Africans.

VIII. DEMONSTRATION

This is one of the oldest instruments used by people to express their displeasure about certain situations or policies in organisations, institutions and countries. In several cases, protests that were intended to be peaceful later turned out to be violent. Almost all the expression of xenophobic feelings by South Africans began with protests by various groups such as taxi drivers. In these protests, locals were mobilized massively, making it easy for them to loot shops belonging to foreigners, while committing other crimes amidst chanting songs for foreigners to leave.

Corporal Punishment and Homicide

In the expression of xenophobic sentiments against foreigners in South Africa, corporal punishments which have led to the death of some foreigners have been used. In a video coverage by 'The Guardian' on YouTube, one of the victims of xenophobic attacks, who is probably from Zambia laments: "We're tired of being beaten every day. We're all Africans. Why must you be afraid to go to South Africa? Which South African has ever been beaten in Zambia? Which one? We want the ambassador to address us. We're tired! Enough" (The Guardian, 2019). The above outcry reveals the suffering that foreigners are forced to face due to xenophobic feelings towards them. In the xenophobic violence that broke out in September 2019, two foreigners lost their lives while over 600 Nigerians were evacuated (Adebayo, 2019).

IX. IMPLICATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA XENOPHOBIC SENTIMENTS

The xenophobic treatment of foreigners is not without implications for South Africa and the object of their xenophobic sentiments. These implications are political, economic and social in nature.

Political Tension

The xenophobic sentiments of South Africans caused political tensions between the country and others whose citizens were attacked. For instance, the Nigerian government closed its embassy in South Africa, evacuated over 600 Nigerians and boycotted the World Economic Forum on Africa that took place in Cape Town in protest at the violence (Adebayo, 2019). Also thinking that Nigerians had been killed in South Africa, Nigerians embarked on reprisal attacks on South African businesses in Nigeria. Hence, the South African government was forced to close its embassy in Nigeria. Throughout Africa and beyond, there were strong condemnations of the xenophobic sentiments in South Africa (BBC, 2019).

Economic Consequences

The xenophobic attitudes expressed by South Africans would lead to some economic consequences as foreign investors would be scared of investing in a country where foreigners are not welcomed, and where capital structures that cost so much to build can be destroyed in a single day due to xenophobic sentiments. Likewise, South Africans who were employed by foreign migrants whose shops were looted and burnt would be out of jobs. So, instead of the envisioned job opportunities, locals may witness rise in unemployment.

Social Stress

During the period when South Africans expressed xenophobic feelings in 2019, there were counter protests in some African countries such as Nigeria, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo. In some of these countries South African owned businesses were targeted. In Zambia, the protest was taken to the South African embassy as a Zambian undergraduate explains: "Yesterday, University students of Zambia were demonstrating against xenophobia. We went down the streets shouting, 'Xenophobia must come to an end'. We went into malls but didn't go into shops owned by South Africans. They were closed. They had their shutters down. Nothing was damaged; everything was left as it was. Then we marched to the embassy. When we got there we asked the police to lower the South African flag. There was a misunderstanding between the police and the students. That's why the police fired some teargas. Nobody was injured, nobody was arrested. The demonstrations were peaceful. Outside the South African embassy, a billboard was set on fire, but I'm not aware of any shop being

looted or burned. For me, I feel that [any protesters who damaged property] went too far. Those properties cost a lot... Students and everyone are upset with what's going on in South Africa. If our South African brothers stopped what they were doing, then the kind of thing we were doing yesterday would not happen..."(Capron, 2019). No doubt, xenophobic attacks in South Africa caused disaffection among Africans.

Moral Depravity

From whatever angle it is viewed, xenophobia remains a strong instrument in dehumanization of fellow human beings. Wherever xenophobia occurs, ill-treatment of human beings takes place, ranging from evil lynching and senseless looting to shameful denial of human rights. This is because the perpetrators of xenophobic sentiments perceive the measures used as right and come to believe that the 'end justifies the means'. The foregoing discussion of expression of xenophobic sentiments by South Africans clearly demonstrates the loss of moral consciousness of the South Africans. In the period under review, migrants and their properties were targeted in several attacks by mobs of protesters who looted and burnt foreigners' shops and homes without any shame or remorse.

X. WHEN ANCIENT ROME REFLECTS MODERN SOUTH AFRICA

The expression of xenophobic sentiments in ancient Rome and contemporary South Africa strongly indicates that, indeed, 'nothing is new under the sun'. Even though the two periods under consideration are far apart, humans have not really changed and, the fact that man has only been doing the same thing in different ways for a long time remains one of the most striking features of mankind's history. Below are the words of Marcus Aurelius, a Roman Emperor from 161 CE to 180 CE, that may be extended to succinctly capture the unchanging pattern of life experience that is exemplified by xenophobia: "Think by way of example on the times of Vespasian, and you'll see all these things: marrying, raising children, falling ill, dying, wars, holidays, feasts, commerce, farming, flattering, pretending, suspecting, scheming, praying that others die, grumbling over one's lot, falling in love, amassing fortune, lusting after office and power. Now that life of theirs is dead and gone... the times of Trajan, again the same" (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.32). Xenophobic sentiments are interpretably implicit in Marcus Aurelius' "suspecting, scheming, praying that others die, grumbling over one's lot". While this applies to the xenophobic Romans, Marcus would be made to say that, 'now that the time of the Romans is gone, the tragedy of xenophobic sentiments are being reenacted after many generations on the stage of the contemporary South Africa'. To a reasonable degree, it is fitting to conclude that a consideration of the Roman xenophobic sentiments provides a perspective to understanding the contemporary phenomenon of hostility to foreigners in South Africa.

The causes, patterns and implications of expressing xenophobic sentiments appear to be the same with only little difference in fear of a particular religious belief that was peculiar to the Romans. Aside this difference, the other causes—political threats, political utterances by influential personalities, blame shifting, anti-social behaviour and economic threat—remain strong causes of xenophobia. Since these causes recur, they are good warning signs of possible expression of xenophobic sentiments for foreign migrants and also for the host communities' governments. The use of extreme violence also connects both societies in their expression of xenophobic sentiments. In both, foreign migrants are forced to go through various forms of disgraceful corporal punishments which oftentimes led to the death of the victims of xenophobic sentiments. Xenophobic acts of violence include beating, burning of lives and properties of foreign migrants as well as expulsion of foreigners. In the case of South Africa, there was no official state approval of expulsion even though South Africans called for the deportation of foreign migrants—both documented and undocumented. The xenophobic violence led to the Nigerian government to evacuate over 640 citizens from South Africa (Adebayo, 2019). The Roman state was rather actively and overtly involved in promoting xenophobia.

In the period under review, the absence of organisations such as the United Nations to regulate the relationship among nations at the international level, coupled with superior economic and military power, made it easy for Rome to express xenophobic sentiments in foreign lands with impunity. Although the perpetrators of xenophobic sentiments may think that only the victims suffer losses, this article shows that in any expression of xenophobic sentiments, both the perpetrators and victims suffer huge losses. For instance, Rome incurred huge financial burden to maintain her military and the provinces; had her relationships with other nations strained and lost thousands of soldiers to wars. In the case of South Africa, although foreign migrants suffered great losses, South Africa has experienced strained diplomatic relationships with countries' of foreign migrants. The damage to businesses of foreign migrants that contribute significantly to the South African economy can only get the situation worse for the country if the situation persists. Besides, in both cases under consideration, xenophobia remains a strong indication of moral depravity.

XI. CONCLUSION

Display of xenophobic sentiments has been shown in this paper as one of the sad recurring historical phenomenon. The issues that are involved are as ancient as migration, the movement of people from one place to another in search of the good life or solutions to problems. The instances of Rome during the reign of the Julio-Claudians and the contemporary South Africa indicate that the presence and activities of foreign migrants, even when they are not illegitimate, sometimes elicit nervous and tense feelings from host communities and result in vicious attacks. In asserting control over territorial space or seeking explanation for actions or inactions, host communities make foreign migrants scapegoats in a behaviour that could be viewed as gross morally deficient treatment of fellow humans. Understandably, migrants should accept the moral obligation to avoid acts that may lead to negative stereotype or hostility from host communities. However, even when no real reasons exist for them, xenophobic sentiments have been shown here to be products of fears and distrust that host communities morally fail to rein.

Finally, although xenophobia is unmasked as a terrible social ill, xenophobic attacks are yet to be resisted successfully as criminal acts. The open support of the Roman state for xenophobic attacks came under no criticism of any international bodies in the past, perhaps because such bodies did not exist. Sadly now, even when xenophobia tendencies are officially condemned by the host community, human rights activists and diplomatic organisations, when a community of people lacks the moral strength against such a vice it becomes difficult to succeed in the fight against Xenophobia. Therefore, xenophobia is a clear marker of social depravity when it triumphs over native show of hospitality to strangers.

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