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South Africa's Xenophobia: A Call for an Ubuntu-Centred Intra-African Migration

Abstract: There have been deliberate mob attacks allegedly led by the anti-immigrant activist group Operation Dudula, which led to the death of Elvis Nyathi, a Zimbabwean citizen, in South Africa. These attacks on migrants prove the loss of important Ubuntu ethical values, such as interpersonal relationships characterised by identity and solidarity, a value recurrent in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper contributes to the discourse on intra-African migration by suggesting practical ways to achieve effective migration and peaceful coexistence of African migrants within the African continent. I use the experiences of migrants in South Africa as a referent. I submit that the xenophobic attacks in South Africa, specifically targeting black people of African descent, are one of many issues that indicate the current loss of Ubuntu values, such as interpersonal relationships of identity and solidarity within African consciousness. As a result, this and other issues threaten intra-African migration. I conclude by providing prescriptive measures to strengthen the aforementioned values and enable a peaceful coexistence between migrants and South Africans.

Keywords: Economic Migration; Identity and Solidarity; Xenophobia; Violence; Intra-African Migration.

Introduction

Currently, the most prized destinations for African migrants are South Africa, Nigeria, and the Ivory Coast (Masilo et al., 2021; ACSS, 2023). However, my focus in this paper is South Africa. South Africa is considered to be Africa's biggest host of immigrants, with over 2.5 million international migrants, according to the South African Population and Housing Census (Census, 2022; Statistics South Africa, 2023). The study shows that there has been a decrease in international migrants in the country between 2012 and 2022, from 4.2% to 3.9%. However, within the current immigration landscape in South Africa, a large proportion of the international immigrants in the country are migrants within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with a share of 83.7% (Statistics South Africa, 2024). The number of migrants in South Africa is instigated by various factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, the despicable economic quagmire faced by other African countries, especially those within the SADC (Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mozambique).

This has resulted in the displacement of millions of people. Furthermore, other factors, such as the demilitarisation of borders in the post-apartheid era, have weakened borders and made borders more porous for people within the region to flock into the country in a high proportion (Nkala and Masuku, 2023).

South Africa offers opportunities for labour migration. Thus, migrants are somewhat convinced that they cannot secure good working prospects in other African countries compared to South Africa (Badenhorst, 2016; Mathe, 2018; Murenje, 2020). As a result, over the last five years, South Africa has experienced a high inflow of migrants into the country's commercial provinces like Gauteng. Between the years 2016-2021, provinces in South Africa, such as Gauteng, had the most significant inflow of migrants totalling 1,048,440, while the Western Cape had an inflow of 311,004 migrants (Statistics South Africa, 2018: 1; Masilo et al., 2021). The implication of these benefits and the massive inflow of migrants has resulted in stringent pushbacks from the citizens towards migrants.

Recently, there have been attacks on foreign migrants from other African countries, such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Nigeria, by an anti-immigrant group called *Operation Dudula* in South Africa. This group has marched to the streets and protested on social media, expressing their disdain towards migrants being preferred in the labour markets over locals. These protests and expressions of frustration have led to several xenophobic attacks on foreign migrants. Xenophobia in South Africa is not a recent phenomenon or occurrence – its existence can be traced as far back as the beginning of the new political era of 1994. According to Xenowatch, a research group tasked with the mandate of monitoring xenophobic violence in South Africa alludes that between the beginning of democracy in 1994 and 2021, the country has experienced over 769 incidents of violence attributed to xenophobia across the country. These acts have resulted in several damage to properties, displacements, injuries and deaths. In 796 incidences, there have been 588 deaths, 121,945 persons displaced, 1,118 physical assaults, 4,693 looted shops, and 1,386 damaged properties (Xenowatch, 2021). However, the most notable xenophobic violence in South Africa occurred in 2008, with an annual total of 149 incidents. To give a clear context, it must be noted that between 1994-2007, xenophobic incidence averaged 3.6 per year. However, between 2008 and 2021, it rose to an average of 53.7 incidents annually (Mian et al., 2011; Sosibo, 2015; Nkala and Masuku, 2023). The most recent xenophobic attacks in April 2022, led by *Operation Dudula*, resulted in the death of a forty-three-year-old Zimbabwean citizen called Elvis Nyathi (Sikhakhane, 2022; Pijoos, 2022).

While this expression of frustration could be explained by the high unemployment rates and the low job creation rate in South Africa (Budlender and Fauvel-le-Aymar, n.d), killing migrants ought to be considered barbaric and inhumane. For some South Africans, foreigners are considered a threat to their labour – a perception which is uncritical and untrue (Hussein and Hitomi, 2019; Nkala and Masuku, 2023). This is not the only reason for the xenophobic attacks, but part of the reason. Given the acquiescence of foreign migrants taking almost any job, especially illegal migrants, some employers in South Africa continue to break the law by employing illegal migrants to take advantage of their labour and remuneration. However, in as much as the above expression of frustration through protest is justifiable given that a threat to livelihood could also be considered a threat to life, in this paper, I seek to investigate whether it is justifiable for these attacks on foreign migrants to result in the loss of lives and properties. What is the underlying instigation for the gruesome killing of foreign migrants in South Africa? Should the killing of foreign migrants due to their supposed threat to the South African labour market be condoned? Should people who supposedly operate within a human-centred ethical framework carry out deliberate actions that result in the loss of life no matter the circumstance? What is the South African government doing about the hatred of foreign nationals by the locals?

In this paper, I argue that the best possible explanation for the unjustifiable killings of foreign migrants by some anti-immigrant groups in South Africa is due to the loss of Ubuntu values of identity and solidarity. According to Thaddeus Metz, identity, on the one hand, entails being able to consider ‘oneself part of the whole, being close, participating, sharing a way of life, belonging, and thinking of oneself as bound to others’ (2022: 147). It means considering oneself as ‘we’ rather than ‘I’. On the other hand, solidarity means ‘achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, sharing, promoting the common good, engaging in service and being committed to others’ good [...] caring for others’ quality of life’ (*ibid.*). Despite the objections levied against this African way of life by thinkers like Benard Matolino and Wenscelslous Kwindigwi (2013) and recently by Arribiah Attoe (2024), with whom I engaged later on in the paper, I still hold that the values of Ubuntu are integral aspects of the sub-Saharan human-centred ethics. Furthermore, this paper makes a novel contribution to the existing literature on intra-African migration by arguing that the current violence towards foreign migrants of African descent is due to the loss of these important Ubuntu-informed values. Thus, it would be challenging to mitigate the threat of intra-African migration unless we recentre our worldviews on what it means to live out the values of Ubuntu.

This paper is structured in five sections. In the first section, I provide a brief exposition of the current migration landscape in Africa to show the intricacies associated with intra-Africa movement. The second and third sections focus on the destination of African migrants within Africa. Here, my focus is on South Africa. I show the tension that arises from the inflow of migrants to South Africa. In section five, I prescribe measures that can be taken to resuscitate the values of Ubuntu in South Africa to allow for a peaceful coexistence of South Africans and foreign immigrants in South Africa.

Intra-African Migration

Intra-African migration is considered as migration or the movement of people within the African continent (Mlambo and Mpanza, 2019). Africans have a long history of mobility within the continent, extending from the precolonial era until the current century (*ibid.*). In precolonial times, Africans within the continent engaged in what is known as seasonal migration and migration for a permanent settlement to sustain their livelihood (*ibid.*). Intra-African migration in the past also included forced migration, which people engaged in without their willingness to migrate. One such forced migration was the shipments of Africans to other African countries and outside the continent, as well as through the Trans-Atlantic-slave trade (Ware, 2017; Mlambo and Mpanza, 2019). During the colonial era, forced migration was carried out to enable economic growth in colonies. One notable example is the shipment of Mozambican migrants to the Cape colonies to work in the farms (Wetzel and Tlabela, 2006). In addition, within the period when diamonds were discovered in places such as Kimberly and the Witwatersrand in South Africa, there were inflows of migrants from places like Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho to these places to work in the mines (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014). Migrants from Zambia and Mozambique also travelled to places like Zimbabwe to work in the mines (Crush et al., 2005).

To understand why people migrate within Africa, it is necessary to underscore the factors that propel people to move from their homes in search of a good life or safety outside their places of origin. Factors that propel migration include cultural, socioeconomic, political, or environmental factors (Curtin, 1997; de Bruijn et al., 2001; Mercandalli et al., 2019). To understand the factors leading to migration, one must first ask where the migration is heading.

On close scrutiny, one sees that migrations within the African continent, especially for economic reasons, are always concentrated in big cities. For example, people migrate from Pietermaritzburg in South Africa to places like Durban or Johannesburg to make a living. This is because, in places like Johannesburg or Durban, there are several economic opportunities these places offer to migran-

ts. Furthermore, according to the scholarship on intra-African migration, it is noted that people migrate domestically in their countries of birth to economically buoyant places (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2013; Moyo et al., 2021); second, they migrate to neighbouring countries within their regions or countries within proximity to their nations within the continent (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014; Moyo et al., 2021). In this context, I am specifically looking at economic migration – a common form of migration in Africa. For example, people in West Africa migrate mostly within the economic community of the West African States or the Southern African region (Moyo et al., 2021).

In some cases, migrants within the African continent are undocumented (Nshimbi and Moyo, 2017). This is because most African migrants do not have the legal documents to enter the countries they find themselves in. As a result, upon arriving in host countries, they remain undocumented migrants. For instance, consider some Zimbabwean migrants who travel to South Africa due to famine, hunger, starvation, and political harassment in their countries; it is evident that all they care about is safety or means of livelihood. However, border officers are not sympathetic to excuses such as famine, hunger, and starvation as a yardstick for people to enter their countries without legal documents. As a result, illegally crossing borders to neighbouring countries is the most ‘responsible’ thing to do (Adeniran, 2014; Moyo, 2020; Nshimbi and Moyo, 2020).

One must understand the role of borders in contemporary migration discourse. This is because borders are mechanisms that control inclusion into a nation-state. Borders affect the mobility of people into and out of a country. They are maintained by ceaseless processes and practices that function politically to create a strong defence for a nation-state (Laine and Casaglia, 2017). Borders have ‘obvious presence and even where visually indistinct, they are typically the bearers of a wider symbolism’ (Anderson and O’Dowd, 1999:595). As much as borders are concrete and fixed, they are fluid and abstract (Brambilla et al., 2015). Borders establish dialectics and in-betweens as much as they create dichotomies and division (Konrad et al., 2019:5).

There are certain adverse implications with some border control measures and stringent immigration policies for migrants in Africa. One such adverse implication is stalling intra-African trading. This is because intra-African migration is considered to have the potential to build both regional and continental integration and Pan-Africanism, as well as grow the economic and social situation in the continent. For instance, it is easier for people in First World countries to gain access to Africa than it is for Africans to gain access to Africa due to the restricted and stiff immigration laws (Andrucki, 2010; Mau, 2010; Achiume,

2019). One of the reasons European countries can easily gain access to Africa is because of the so-called 'strength' of their passport, which gives them leverage (Mau, 2010; Achiume, 2019:1530). However, intra-African travel, Pan-Africanism, and African Open Trade cannot be feasible if we do not let Africans travel easily within the continent. States should ensure that mechanisms are put in place to reduce the push factors that are responsible for migration from and for Africa.

The Sojourn of African Migrants Towards South Africa

As stated earlier, one of the reasons why people migrate from one place to another is in search of ways to improve their quality of life. Quality of life, here, means the total physical, sociological, and psychological well-being of an individual (Inoguchi and Fujii, 2013:3). Given the search for a quality life, migrants, especially economic migrants, are appreciative of any increase in the standard of living that they experience that is better than their experiences in their home countries (Hendriks and Bartram, 2016:92). In Africa, South Africa offers a pleasant environment and good economic benefits to migrants. As a result, the government continues to attract foreign migrants (Mathe, 2018; Murenje, 2020).

South Africa offers essential services for both its citizens and migrants. For example, primary healthcare and emergency services are offered to South African citizens and foreign nationals (Gumbu, 2020). Services such as primary healthcare are essential to enable migrants to pursue their quality of life. Healthcare services are a prerequisite and necessary to enable human beings to live prolonged lives. The South African Refugee Act 130 of 1998, section 27, states that refugees should be provided with the basic healthcare services citizens enjoy. This aligns with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which states that citizens and migrants have a right to access good healthcare services and should never be refused treatment, especially in an emergency (RSA, 1996, 1998). Given this provision, the reasons for the high-density inflow of migrants to South Africa are apparent.

Besides healthcare services, the second essential service South Africa provides to migrants is social security (RSA, 2004). Providing social security is to prevent and reduce poverty (RSA, 1996; Kaseke, 2010). However, migrants can only gain access to social security after applying for citizenship and naturalisation into South Africa. Nonetheless, the South African government continues to support and make provisions for the livelihood of migrants in the Republic. This is evident in how the South African government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. During the Coronavirus outbreak, South Africa's government ensured that a Social Relief of Distress Grant was provided for re-

gistered refugees in the Department of Home Affairs. Furthermore, places of higher education, such as the University of Johannesburg, provided food parcels for international students who could not afford to travel to their home countries due to the border restrictions. These incentives contribute to the pull factors in South Africa. Other factors include the right to a peaceful environment. The Declaration for Human Rights states that human beings are entitled to the right to freedom and a conducive environment that allows human beings to pursue a decent life (see Yousfaoui and Yousfaoui, 2020). Amidst these pull factors, there have been several pushbacks from South African citizens.

The Migration Tension in South Africa

The general cause of tension is that migrants are taking jobs in South Africa, and this has resulted in xenophobic attacks. Here, xenophobia is considered to be a form of hatred towards foreign nationals or strangers. This form of hatred is embodied in discriminatory attitudes, demeanours, and behaviours, which aggravate violence, varieties of abuses and the portrayal of hatred (Mogekwu, 2005). There are several causes of xenophobia: it could be the irrational fear that locals will lose social status and identity; foreign nationals could be perceived as a threat to the economic success of locals and others (Harris, 2001). Scholars like Mogekwu (2005) allude that xenophobes have little or limited knowledge about those they hate. As a result, they lack the requisite skills and knowledge to engage with them during an encounter.

To understand xenophobia, one must understand that it takes its form from post-coloniality – the kind of politics that is concomitant with the views of the dominant groups after independence. Xenophobia is about the feelings of superiority which is embedded in ‘scapegoating.’ This implies that those perpetuating the scapegoating act are faced with unfulfilled expectations in a newly found democratic state. These xenophobes move to envision foreigners as the embodiment of poverty, unemployment and deprivation that have come into their country for the sole aim of becoming economically better (Harris, 2001; Neocosmos, 2006). While xenophobia is somewhat connected to a more broadly construed global phenomenon, it is more prevalent in countries that are undergoing a transition, especially as expatiated above.

It is important to note that one of the reasons for the several attacks on foreigners can be understood within the context of illegal migrations and the employment of illegal migrants. For some South Africans, if foreigners are conceived as a threat to their labour, then allowing undocumented migrants to have jobs in the country makes it even harder for citizens to get some jobs. This is not the only reason for the xenophobic attacks, but the ‘primary’ reason. Because of

the docility of foreign migrants, especially illegal migrants, taking almost any job, some employers in South Africa continue to break the law by employing illegal migrants to take advantage of their labour and remuneration (Badenhorst, 2016). Furthermore, the Employment Services Act 4 of 2014 stipulates that any employee who has been employed without a valid work permit can enforce valid claims on their status of employment and contracts. This means illegal migrants can also make valid legal claims to employment despite breaking the law by being in the country illegally. These are some of the issues that cause tension between South Africans and migrants, thus leading to xenophobic attacks.

To mitigate and deal with xenophobic attacks in South Africa, the government has ensured that it takes the plight of migrants seriously. For example, the South African government, in 2019, launched its national plan of action to combat discrimination, xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance (Masilo et al., 2021). The identifiable actions to combat the above social ills have been to create and impose mechanisms that allow migrants to access services they are entitled to and ensure that they are integrated into society in human-centred ways by respecting and considering their dignity (Human Rights Watch, 2020). However, the measures implemented to create a conducive environment for migrants to explore their quality of life have been necessary but insufficient.

While it is evident that some political leaders in South Africa, like Julius Malema, are fighting against xenophobia, especially those directed towards Africans, xenophobic violence has also garnered some backing from the government. As it has become even more evident in the current socio-political milieu in South Africa, most of those who suffer from xenophobic threats are those within the SADC region. In the events leading to the 2024 general elections, some of the political campaigns and manifestos were centred on the mass deportation of foreign nationals, especially those from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and even Nigerians (Haffajee, 2024). For instance, there were incidences of government officials in South Africa berating Zimbabwean patients for receiving medical care in hospitals in South Africa. The reason for being berated was that this official claimed South African healthcare was only meant for the locals (Maseko, 2022; Attoe, 2024). Within the timeframe, a South African mayor and leader of the Patriotic Alliance, Gayton Mckenzie, publicly claimed that things such as oxygens in hospitals must be reserved for locals. He proceeded to claim that oxygens for foreigners must be turned off – this action he promised to carry out personally (Charles, 2022).

Talks like the above are not recent phenomena. As far back as 2003, the then South Africa's Home Affairs Minister, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, once said that

‘illegal immigrants’ were his ‘biggest headache’ (BBC News, 2003). He considered immigrants as ‘aliens’ ‘pouring into South Africa’ to thwart the economic growth of the country. Furthermore, besides the Patriotic Alliance using adverse talks on immigrants and their deportation to score political points in their manifesto, other political parties have been known for using xenophobic-in-stigated or oriented speeches to sell their political campaigns. For example, in 1999, there was an observation that:

‘[i]n an unlikely show of alliance politics, the Pan African Congress (PAC) and Freedom Alliance (FA), as well as the New National Party (NNP) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM), raised the spectre of the negative impact that foreigners are assumed to have on South Africa’s economy and society. The election manifestos of the UDM and the FA explicitly advocated stricter immigration controls. Images of the NNP’s Marthinus van Schalkwyk walking along South Africa’s borders and promising to seal them against illegal immigrants were flashed across our television screens.’ (Quoted in Harris 2001: xx).

In recent years, the sentiments and public statements of the political leader, Gayton McKenzie, led to the blockage of roads leading to hospitals by the anti-immigrant group *Operation Dudula*. However, their actions were targeted at people with darker skin colour. This was because it was easier to identify the darker-skinned individual as the other/foreigner who needed to be excluded (Maromo, 2022). It is in light of the above that Attoe (2024) considers the change of terminologies from xenophobia to Afrophobia – because the phenomenon is targeted at those within the colonial borders rather than other races or dark-skin individuals outside the colonial border. To this, Attoe (2024) echoes (I share in his concerns) that this Afrophobic phenomenon is an expression of Frantz Fanon’s (1952) ascription that there is a desire for the colonised to mirror the (neo) colonial masters.

Xenophobic attacks, as underscored in the introduction, have led to many deaths. Between 2018 and 2020 a total number of approximately 213 lives have been lost (Nkala and Masuku, 2023). Recently, one such attack led to the death of a Zimbabwean citizen in 2022. On 6 April 2022, a mob protest in Diepsloot, north of Johannesburg, led by an anti-immigrant group called *Operation Dudula*, resulted in the death of a Zimbabwean migrant, Elvis Nyathi (Sikhakhane, 2022; Pijoos, 2022). Elvis was dragged out of his house, beaten, and burnt alive in the location mentioned above on the account that he did not have a valid permit to be in South Africa. It was reported that on the day of this incident, a group of protesters marched from door to door, asking foreign migrants for their valid

documents that permit them to stay in South Africa (Sikhakhane, 2022; Pijoos, 2022). However, when Elvis, who was a father of four children, tried to run, he was caught, dragged, and burnt alive in front of his wife and children. These actions are contrary to the moral values of Ubuntu – a supposed moral compass of indigenous South Africans and arguably the entire African continent.

An Exposition of the Meaning of Ubuntu

It is in view of the above that I now turn to Ubuntu, a sub-Saharan human-centred moral compass. I aim to show how actions like the above are antithetical to the values of Ubuntu. Ubuntu originates from the Nguni linguistic-speaking tribe comprising Zulu and Xhosa languages in southern Africa. Ubuntu, in this context, means humanness. According to Thaddeus Metz, 'to have Ubuntu is to be a person who is living a genuinely human way of life, whereas to lack Ubuntu is to be missing human excellence or to live like an animal' (2014: 6761). This implies that living a brutal life is antithetical to Ubuntu. Ubuntu's human quality is not only salient to where the linguistic interpretation comes from but is shared by most indigenous sub-Saharan African communities. Thus, in this paper, I use Ubuntu as a common term that broadly cuts across sub-Saharan African countries.

Ubuntu has been given accolades as the principal term behind creating inclusive democratic states such as Zimbabwe and South Africa (see Gade, 2011; 2012). In Zimbabwe, the term *Hunhu*, derived from the Shona language, has the same meaning as Ubuntu, a term derived from the Nguni language. The theorists Samkange and Samkange point out that the term Ubuntu or *Hunhu* means 'kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in a relationship between two people' (1980: 39). In the democratic dispensation of South Africa, Ubuntu 'provided a historic bridge between a deeply divided society characterised by, strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy, peaceful race, class, belief or sex' (Gade, 2011: 311).

Ubuntu has stood as a bridge or a guiding moral compass to bring together those wounded in various ways. Furthermore, Ubuntu stands as a guide towards creating the well-being of the community and individuals in the community. The well-being of the community is based on the interest of the collective group as opposed to the individual's interest. This argument is based on the claim that the community creates the path, obligations, and duty to which an individual should conform and follow. According to Menkiti, following this path and carrying out these duties enable the individual to be recognised as a person in the community (Menkiti, 1984:176). Leonard Praeg (2014) expounds on this point

more clearly within the paradigm of Ubuntu.

Praeg (2014) provides an understanding of Ubuntu, which explicitly shows how it is historically the centre of the African worldview and became a theory. For Praeg (2014), there is a certain form of anthropological meaning attached to the definition of Ubuntu. The anthropology of Ubuntu informs us about how indigenous African people should be and how they are now. To understand the concept of Ubuntu, as Praeg argues, we must have a better understanding of the historical informant of Ubuntu. He argues that Ubuntu comes from a fundamental belief of being and belonging to the traditional African system (2014). In Ubuntu society, being and belonging is not an ethic but a philosophy describing pre-existing/precolonial and post-existing/post-colonial African societies. He uses the notion of being and belonging to explain that beings in the African context do not exist in isolation but in a closely knitted kinship bond. The idea of kinship is underscored by the Kenyan theologian and philosopher John Mbiti. For Mbiti (1989: 102), 'the kinship system is like a vast network stretching laterally in every direction to embrace everybody in any given local group'.

In precolonial African society, the community was interrelated as one body, and as a result, an individual was seen through the lens of the community. In indigenous sub-Saharan African communities, 'a person is a person through other persons' (Metz and Gaie, 2011: 274). In this sense, a person is not an individual independent of others but dependent on the kindred for a harmonious relationship, solidarity, and friendship that would develop their personhood (virtue). For instance, Mbiti (1969) argues that shared responsibility towards one another is a prerequisite for moral excellence. Mbiti writes, 'In case of internal conflicts, clan members joined one another to fight their aggressive neighbours in former years' (1969: 104). This notion entails that one of the values of Ubuntu that a person must grow into is the ability to foster friendship with other members of the community. In his *Relational Moral Theory*, Thaddeus Metz (2007; 2022) clearly exposes ways Africans foster friendship with each other.

Metz (2022) argues that Africans relate with each other by identifying and exhibiting solidarity with one another. The idea of identity and solidarity comes from the theories of some African scholars like Mbiti (1969), Mokgoro (1998), and Tutu (1999). According to Mbiti, Africans live harmoniously with each other because of the realisation that they are interdependent. For instance, Mbiti writes that the way Africans perceive each other can be summarised by the aphorisms 'I am because you are since you are, I am' or 'a person is a person through other people' (Mbiti, 1969). In addition, South African legal scho-

lar Yvonne Mokgoro expounds on this point when she contends that Africans always project sympathetic social relationships towards each other (Mokgoro, 1998: 17). To confirm the above, the South African theologian Desmond Tutu argues that Africans conceive a person as one who can belong, participate, and share a way of life with other persons rather than just possessing some metaphysical qualities like free will or rationality (Tutu, 1999:35). What does it mean to belong, participate, and share a way of life with others?

On the one hand, Metz (2022) argues that we belong, share and participate in communal relationships by identifying with each other. Identifying with group members means 'considering oneself part of the whole, being close, participating, sharing a way of life, belonging, and thinking of oneself as bound to others' (2022:147). Metz argues that we identify with each other through the following ways: cognitive identity, emotional identity, practical identity, and motivational identity (2022:148-50).

On the other hand, we also relate with others by exhibiting solidarity with them. According to Metz, exhibiting solidarity means 'achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, sharing, promoting the common good, engaging in service and being committed to others' good...caring for others' quality of life' (Metz, 2022:149). Exhibiting solidarity means having a certain awareness of the other. This awareness is being attentive to details and the expressions of the other in order to extrapolate their innermost feelings and desires. To exhibit solidarity means to be empathetic towards the other in the 'we web,' knowing what it feels like to be the other, be sympathetic towards the other, celebrate the successes of the other, and suffer with the other when they fail. Exhibiting solidarity means striving to work together with others to improve their lives and meet the social, biological, or psychological needs of the other. It means 'not merely striving to make people better off or to advance their self-interest, but also to make others better people or to advance their self-realisation' (Metz, 2022:152). For Metz, identity and solidarity go together, for 'identity without solidarity is hard-hearted and solidarity without identity is intrusive' (2022:155).

Through a closer consideration of Metz's argument, we can at once infer that this relational interpretation of Ubuntu and community gives room for a balanced cohabitation between the members of the community and specific individuals in the community. Metz's views on Ubuntu show that an individual's rights do not threaten the rights of other individuals since they jointly support each other's goals and act compassionately towards each other. Hence, individuals must work together to uplift each other. However, the quest to reenact Ubuntu values in Africa has received criticism from theorists like Matolino and

Kwindingwi (2013) and Attoe (2024). Nonetheless, I only briefly engage with Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) in this paper as it directly impacts my argument.

Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) claim that Ubuntu has come to an end. They provide two main reasons for their assertion. The first argument, which is less significant, is that Ubuntu cannot be conceived as the only African way of life. This is grounded on the notion that there are possible competing and even rival interpretations of life in traditional African society that may not have aligned with the tenets of Ubuntu. I agree with the authors on this claim. According to the theorists, the second argument for the end of Ubuntu is that the discourse on Ubuntu is more of a revivalist discourse.

The authors theorise revivalism as a pursuit that seeks the narrative of return – a search to relive an outdated notion of being (Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013). They claim that the project of the narrative of return cannot be achieved on the basis that Africans cannot return back to their pristine mode of being prior to colonialism and apartheid. Furthermore, in its pristine state, Ubuntu can only be achievable in close-knit/natural communities found in traditional African communities before the advent of colonialism. In the wake of industrialisation and modernity, such communities are non-existent, especially in African townships and cities. As a result, the Ubuntu-informed mode of being in the current social milieu is impossible to achieve.

I agree with the authors that reviving the notion of Ubuntu as practised prior to colonialism and industrialisation is impossible. This is because African societies no longer operate in close-knit/natural communities. However, for the authors to move from the argument that these communities no longer exist and thus the end of Ubuntu is contentious and debatable. First, it is important that we engage with what it means to live an Ubuntu way of life. To live an Ubuntu way of life, first and foremost, means being human, kind, friendly, compassionate, and caring towards others. One who has Ubuntu must be able to recognise the suffering of others and come to their aid or their joy and share in it. These values of Ubuntu do not necessarily need to be practised within the context of the natural communities of the pre-colonial era. These values transcend beyond specific times and contexts. In view of the above account of Ubuntu, I argue that we do not need to enforce Ubuntu in its pristine state for us to relive the aforementioned values.

A counterargument to my position might be that Ubuntu is a thing of the past. However, even if it were true, nothing stops us from going back into the past to search for important practices that can aid us to live a better present and future.

We often use the valuables in our past to reshape our present and future. This is what I aim to do in this paper – to show how Ubuntu values can help us reshape our current societies to enable individuals to coexist with each other. Suppose we apply this to the case of intra-African migration; in that case, it becomes immediately evident that, if lived, such values can enable us to mitigate the hostile treatment of migrants who come to South Africa.

Evaluating the Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa Through Identity and Solidarity

The xenophobic attacks and killings of foreign migrants using the justification that they are taking away jobs meant for South Africans, as well as the claim that some of them are undocumented, goes contrary to the values of Ubuntu and what the ethics represent. According to Metz, possessing Ubuntu means seeing the other as part of the collective, identifying with the other, seeing oneself in the other, and helping others realise their goals. It means seeing migrants as part of the collective, treating them as persons who can relate with the larger groups. To treat migrants, even undocumented migrants, in a human-centred way means being in solidarity with them. It means being sympathetic to them, knowing what it feels like to flee from their home countries in search of safety, refuge, or a better life in South Africa. It means referring to migrants as 'we' rather than 'the other' or 'aliens.'

However, a critic might ask: at what point should South Africans push back towards foreign migrants? Considering that the country suffers from high unemployment rates, youth unemployment, high crime rates allegedly committed by undocumented migrants, and limited resources to cater for South Africans; are the citizens not justified in chasing migrants to their countries? The contention here is that the country does not have the resources to cater for itself; thus, it becomes a matter of injustice to South Africans if the country continues to admit migrants and use its limited resources to care for them. Additionally, xenophobic attacks must be seen through this lens: The struggle for survival. South Africans struggle to survive in their country, and their expression of frustration through xenophobic attacks becomes valid and justified. Lastly, sending foreign migrants back to their countries will enable them to fight and challenge their home governments to do better and create an enabling environment for them to thrive in their home countries. This will then lead to the creation of multiple migration destinations in Africa.

While the above contention requires a sympathetic engagement, the above arguments are insufficient to warrant any barbarous attacks on foreign migrants in a society that ought to be governed and guided by human-centred values.

First, killing another human being or destroying their means of livelihood because they are migrants is inhuman. Yes, I understand that pushbacks are normal. However, they should not lead to the loss of lives and properties. Second, carrying out such actions means one has ceased to see the other as a human being like themselves, a being with dignity. Xenophobes fail to help their victims to realise their potential, dreams, and aspirations. Finally, even though the governments of migrants ought to be challenged to do better, I contend that such awareness should be raised using lawful means rather than killing migrants who, like other human beings, are searching for a better life. It is imperative that South Africans return to their human-centred values to see themselves in the other (migrants) and understand what it feels like to be them. To achieve this, in the final section of this paper, I discuss practical ways the human-centred ethics of Ubuntu can be reinvigorated in the consciousness of South Africans.

Practical Ways to Reinforce Ubuntu in South Africa to Enhance the Quality of Life of Migrants

As pointed out in second and fourth sections of this paper, South Africa offers a conducive environment for migrants and their children. Different sections of the Constitution and the Refugee Act clearly state that migrants ought to be respected and treated with dignity; they are entitled to healthcare and emergency services, basic education, and social security. While the Constitution requires that migrants are accorded respect and provided with all the above services, in practice, it has not been the case that migrants all over South Africa benefit from the constitutional provisions due to xenophobic attacks and slurs by uninformed locals. Thus, I provide the following prescriptive measures to mitigate xenophobia using the underscored Ubuntu-informed guidelines.

First, I contend that Ubuntu values should be taught in schools, from primary and secondary to tertiary education institutions. Learners should be conscious of these values and should act on these values while at school. Principals, head teachers, teachers, lecturers, and heads of departments must ensure that the teachings on Ubuntu values are reflected in their study guides, curriculum, and lectures. In addition, students should also be taught about migration and immigrants and the need to peacefully coexist with them by invoking the values of Ubuntu.

Second, political leaders and those seeking elections must ensure they do not use inflammatory rhetoric to appeal to biased voters during their campaigns or elsewhere to score points. This approach to campaigns is dampening and unethical, like the case of the 2024 general elections and the campaign promises

made by the Patriotic Alliance. Politicians who use xenophobic inflammatory rhetoric and slur language to refer to foreign immigrants must be prosecuted.

Third, employers must ensure that their employees are made aware of the constitutional provisions for foreign migrants. Furthermore, employers must enforce measures that will enable their employees to be conscious of how to treat foreign migrants in a human-centred way. One of these measures would be that foreign migrants are treated respectfully and not exploited for any reason.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued for a human-centred intra-African migration by using the case of the xenophobic attacks on African migrants in South Africa as a reference. It is my contention that the relational moral values that stem from Ubuntu, which ought to guide South Africans and Africans, have been lost. The loss of these human-centred relational values has created lacunas for treacherous and barbaric acts such as killings and destruction of the livelihood of foreign migrants on some occasions in South Africa. While the Constitution and the Refugee Act of South Africa clearly stipulate that migrants should be treated with respect and dignity, provided with healthcare and emergency services, social security, a conducive environment to achieve their quality of life, and provided with education, I argued that the reality is somewhat opposite of what they receive. As I have shown in this paper, instead of the above services as stipulated by the Constitution, migrants are treated scornfully, their properties are destroyed, and they are killed in the most brutal ways.

The aforementioned acts point towards the loss of the moral values of Ubuntu, which ought to be South Africans' ethical and moral compass. The values of Ubuntu, as I have explored in fifth section, are friendship, compassion, kindness, harmonious living, identity and solidarity. These values dictate that persons able to enter into communal relationships with other beings are treated with the utmost respect, considered part of the "we" web in the community, and sympathetic towards others. However, the killing and destruction of the properties of foreign migrants, as I have shown, are antithetical to the values stated above. Thus, given the importance of human-centred values that stem from Ubuntu as a guide to a harmonious and peaceful coexistence of everyone in the community, the last section of this paper provides some prescriptive measures that would resuscitate the values of Ubuntu in South Africa. Finally, this paper makes a novel contribution to the existing literature on intra-African migration and migration discourse by providing ways relational moral values stemming from Ubuntu can guide peaceful and human-centred intra-African migration.

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