

Pan-Africanism and the Seeds of Destruction: The Role of Post-Liberation Xenophobia in Southern Africa

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The Southern African region, in particular South Africa, is attempting to take lead of the pan-African ideal in the continent, through various projects such as the African Renaissance and the NEPAD initiative. A major problem, however, with this attempt at leading the way forward is post-liberation xenophobia. Herein, lie the contradictions in the process. That, while the achievement of national liberation and installation of majority rule in the region was always considered as an important project of the pan-African movement within the continent, the critical problem of xenophobia, is a major stumbling block in achieving the ideals and objectives of Pan-Africanism. Regional co-operation and integration cannot be successfully realized as long as people of the continent face social exclusion through various forms of intolerance such as xenophobia. Xenophobia is, therefore, partly an antithesis of Pan-Africanism. This paper argues that post-liberation xenophobia, is to a certain extent a consequence or reaction against calls or attempts by the region's political leaders to implement policies aimed at achieving the pan-African ideal. Coupled with the fact that the region has witnessed the lack of political will among its member states to tackle the problem of post-liberation xenophobia, as political leaders attempt to take into account domestic pressures and external relationships, calls for pan-Africanism in the region are breeding the seeds of its own destruction. In other words, the more the calls for Pan-Africanism by the region's leaders, the more xenophobic the region becomes. Hence, Southern Africa is unlikely to successfully lead the rest of the continent in this endeavour.