

DOING BUSINESS WITH XENOPHOBIA

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Outline

- 1. The Rise of Xenophobia Denialism
- 2. South African Attitudes Towards Migrants and Refugees
- 3. Implications for Business in A Xenophobic Climate: Questions for Consideration

1. The Rise of Xenophobia Denialism



Brief History of Official Xenophobia Denialism

- Dated to Thabo Mbeki's response to May 2008:

I heard it said insistently that my people have turned or have become xenophobic. When I heard some accuse my people of xenophobia, of hatred of foreigners, I wondered what the accusers knew about my people, which I did not know. Everything I know about my people tells me that ... they are not xenophobic... nor do they hate foreigners. And this I must also say - none in our society has any right to encourage or incite xenophobia by trying to explain naked criminal activity by cloaking it in the garb of xenophobia (Thabo Mbeki, July 2008).

- Inter-Ministerial Committee on Xenophobia appointed in 2010 articulated view that attacks on foreign nationals were not xenophobic . Perpetrated by isolated, anti-social criminal elements View has long outlived both Mbeki and the Committee which is effectively defunct
- Position articulated by a series of ministers and at different levels of government...

What is important is to work together in fighting any possible outbreak of the so-called xenophobia. We have to be a united front against any criminal behaviour, because this, by and large, has manifested itself as criminal activities, opportunistically so (Minister of Police Nathi Mthethwa, 2010)

The looting, displacement and killing of foreign nationals in South Africa should not be viewed as xenophobic attacks, but opportunistic criminal acts that have the potential to undermine the unity and cohesiveness of our communities (Minister of International Relations & Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, 2013)

We don't actually believe South Africans are xenophobic. We see [the violence] as a pure act of criminality (Gauteng Premier, Nomvula Mokonyane, 2010)

- Official Cabinet Position:

Communities must be vigilant against the possible resurgence of criminal violence targeting foreign nationals. Cabinet is cautious not to label this violence as xenophobia because ... these acts may be driven primarily by criminality (Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 29 May 2013)

- Various academic variants – “These acts are indeed criminal activities: robberies under the guise of xenophobia” (ISS); Coplan “innocent violence” thesis; HSRC problem is “state failure to control borders”. Whole range of studies suggesting that xenophobia may exist but is an epiphenomenon.

XENOPHOBIA MINIMALISM:

Hassim et al (2008) in *Go Home or Die Here*: xenophobia is “too easy a label” and “convenient alibi for a much more profound social and political malaise”

Council of SA Anthropologists (2008): “Presence of people who are deemed to be ethnically, racially or nationally different is not the core of the problem”

Sharp: “The term assumes a taken-for-granted hostile opposition against foreigners”

- Over time, xenophobia has become a blunt label by a reductionist approach which focuses purely on acts of violence and whether these are or are not motivated by xenophobia. Debate needs to be broadened out again to consider its many and varied expressions....
- By attributing abuse of foreign nationals to “criminality”, state externalises and stands outside the phenomenon, neatly diverting attention from actions and policies of state and embedding of xenophobia within state structures and policies...
- Binary construction. EITHER xenophobia OR criminality. Distinct possibility that verbal and physical abuse of foreign nationals can be both xenophobic AND criminal:

“Three men came into my shop and asked me for money. I gave them everything I had. They then told me to go into my room that was behind the shop. They said: ‘When we’re done with you, kwerekwere, you won’t stay in this country anymore -- you will run back to your own country.’ Then they took turns to rape me” (Somali woman, 2010)



2. SA Attitudes To Migration in Comparative Context

	Prohibit Entry	Place Strict Limits on Entry	Allow Entry If Jobs Available
SOUTH			
South Africa	30	48	16
India	23	23	25
Ghana	18	39	36
Zambia	11	30	44
Brazil	11	33	47
China	8	21	51
Indonesia	5	15	72
Thailand	5	15	65
Malaysia	2	8	72
NORTH			
USA	7	37	49
Germany	7	43	45
Australia	3	54	41
Canada	2	39	51

Source: World Values Survey

2 (cont). Tracking SA Attitudes Over Time

- SAMP National Attitudinal Surveys: three rounds in 1997, 2006, 2010
- Latest survey in late 2010. Added questions about May 2008 and World Cup
- 2006 survey developed quantitative xenophobia index based on answers to 11 questions. SAMP Xenophobia Index (SXI). Calculated again in 2010.
- *Soft Targets: Xenophobia, Public Violence and Changing Attitudes to Migrants in South Africa After May 2008*. SAMP Migration Policy Series No. 64, Cape Town, 2013 available at www.queensu.ca/samp

Five Findings

1. Want Tighter Controls/Fewer Rights

	Yes (%)
Attitudes to Immigration Enforcement	
Army to patrol borders	63
Electrify fences on South Africa's borders	62
Foreign nationals to carry IDs at all times	49
Attitudes to Deportations	
Deport migrants not contributing to economy	53
Deport migrants with HIV and AIDS	35
Deport all foreign nationals	24
Attitudes Towards Refugee Protection	
Compulsory HIV testing for refugees	41
Put refugees in special camps near the border	31
Increase refugee intake in South Africa	11
Refugees should always be entitled to legal protection	31
Refugees should always be entitled to police protection	36
Attitudes Towards Impacts	
Take jobs from South Africans	60
Bring Disease to South Africa	39
Create Jobs for South Africans	27

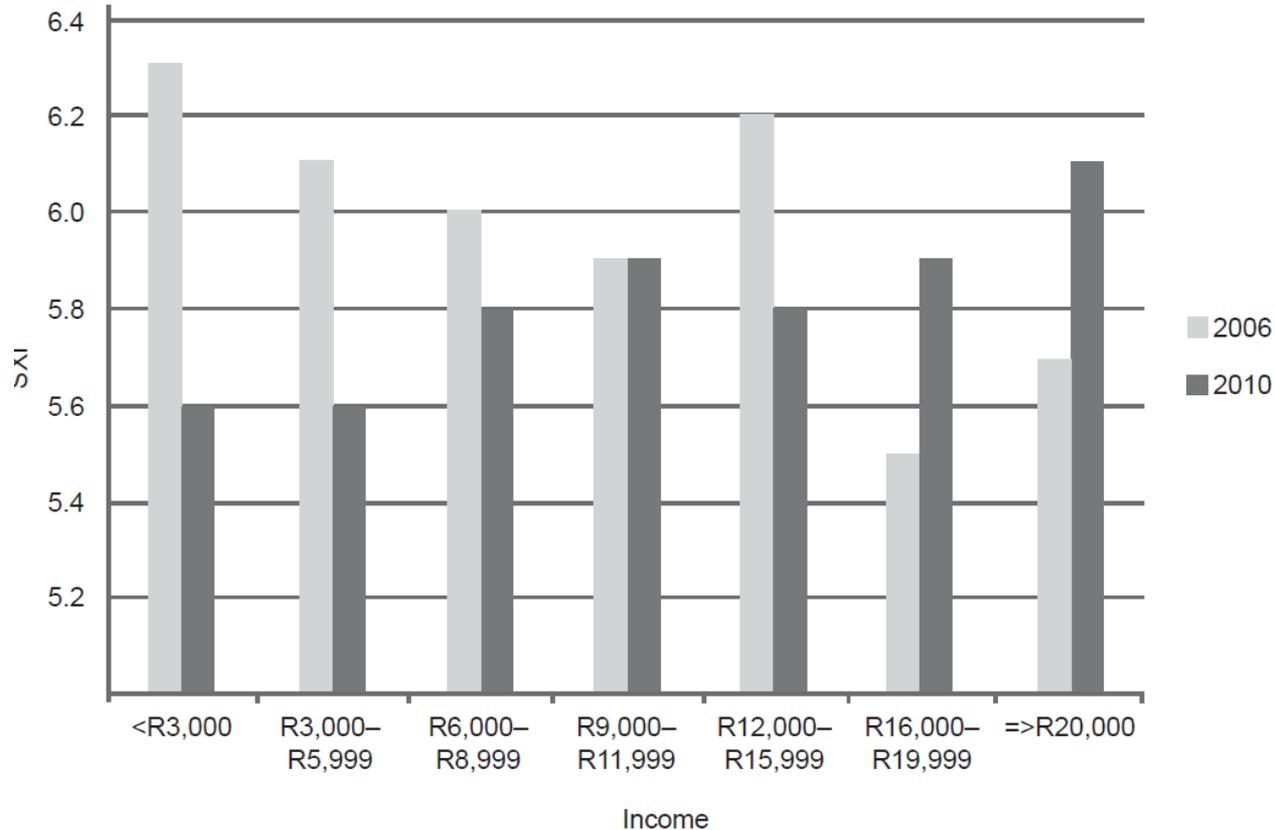
2. Explanations for May 2008 Reinforce Common Stereotypes

Table 35: Explanations for May 2008 by Hotspot Residents

	Hotspots (%)	Other areas (%)
Migrants cause crimes in South Africa	70	61
Migrants take jobs from South Africans	58	59
Migrants are culturally different	64	58
Migrants cheat South Africans	66	51
Migrants use health services for free	63	51
Migrants take RDP houses	57	50
Migrants steal South African women	57	50
Migrants do not belong in South Africa	62	54
The police do not protect migrants	23	29
South African criminals are to blame	31	33

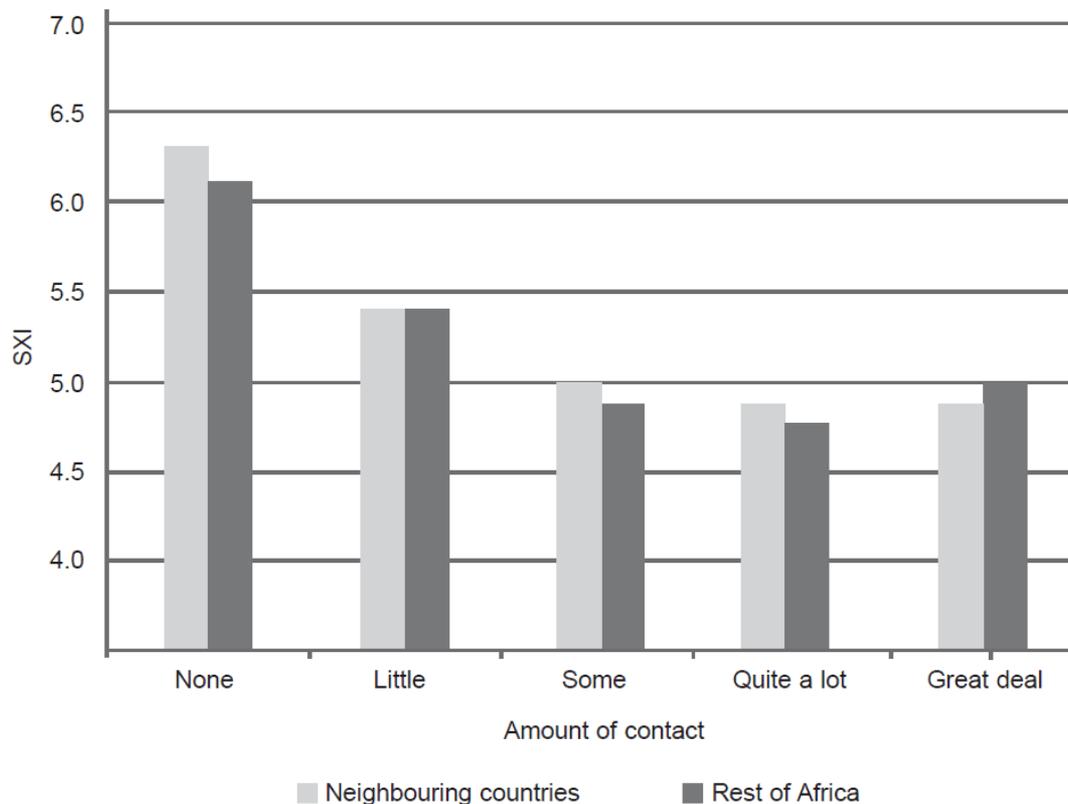
3. The Poorest Are Not the Most Xenophobic

Figure 2: Household Income and Levels of Xenophobia



4. Xenophobia Decreases with Increased Contact & Interaction

Figure 3: Levels of Xenophobia by Amount of Contact



5. Likelihood of Participating in Actions Against Migrants

Table 31: Likelihood of Action Against Migrants from Neighbouring Countries

	% Likely/Very likely		% Unlikely/Very unlikely	
	2006	2010	2006	2010
How likely would you be to take part in action to prevent migrants from doing the following in your area?				
Moving into the neighbourhood	24	23	51	45
Operating a business	28	25	49	46
Enrolling children in same schools	20	20	49	46
Becoming a co-worker	15	15	50	47

Table 30: Likelihood of Taking Action Against Migrants

	% Likely		% Unlikely	
	2006	2010	2006	2010
Report them to police	40	36	41	39
Report them to employer	31	27	46	45
Report them to community association	34	27	45	45
Combine to force them to leave	15	15	61	73
Use violence against them	9	11	77	72

3. Doing Business in a Xenophobic Climate

- 1. How do entrepreneurs cope with running a business in the context of individual and institutionalised xenophobia? What specific problems do they face? What strategies (business and other) do they adopt to deal with these challenges?



- 2. What is behind the growing spate of murder, looting and attacks on foreign-owned informal businesses? To what extent can these be attributed to criminality? organized violence by competitors? Xenophobic sentiment or all three? What role are the police and the courts playing in exacerbating/preventing the violence? Is there a culture of impunity?



- 3. Do consumers and competitors have conflicting attitudes and contradictory interests and attitudes to migrant entrepreneurship?



- Report in Cape Times (May 2010): “One of the local business owners said ‘We are tired of these people coming in and taking business from us’.... More than 50 women and children later began to march through the streets chanting ‘We want Somalis to stay.’ ”

4. Government's official position is that South Africans are not xenophobic. What about the state itself (central, provincial, local)? Plenty of evidence that state functionaries in various sectors (home affairs, saps, health, education) do not leave their xenophobia at home when they come to work. Do official policies and practices with implications for migrant entrepreneurship have xenophobic rationale or content? What are we to make of cleansing programs such as Operation Clean Sweep (Johannesburg) and Operation Hard Stick (Limpopo)? Attacks on informality in general or foreign nationals in particular?

Highly problematical Business Licensing Bill of 2013. Criticised from all sides. Definitely has a major intent to severely circumscribe informal entrepreneurship as well as target foreign-owned business in particular which, according to the Minister, are guilty of all kinds of "illegal"

All kinds of outlets [are] springing up that may well be involved in illegal imports and things of that sort. So, we have been saying for some time that we need to crack down on things like illegal imports, or sub-standard goods, or counterfeit goods, and things of that sort. But, if you are found guilty of a number of offences, such as selling counterfeit goods...[and have] contravened the Customs and Excise Act, in other words you've been involved in illegal imports, found guilty of contravening the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics, and Disinfectants Act, been selling sub-standard products, employing illegal foreigners, or found guilty of conducting illegal business from the licensed premises, you've been doing drug trade or illegal liquor selling or anything of the sort... your licence is automatically revoked. So we say, easy in, easy out. You do any of those things, we don't want you!

