Revealing the Scapegoat Mechanism in South Africa's Xenophobic Attacks.

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Abstract

Many explanations have been given for the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The escalation in the ferocity of attacks against locals and foreigners from Africa and Asia, notably in 2008, proved to be embarrassing yet confusing for government. This article investigates the randomness of xenophobic violence by applying the scapegoat mechanism of René Girard who argues that violence against scapegoats is unplanned and particularly vicious. It is a reaction by the community in response to particular interest groups ambitions. I wish to illustrate that these attacks can be placed within the scapegoat mechanism, thus revealing its complex nature. This would explain why these attacks will increase in ferocity and cause fatalities to escalate.

Keywords

Xenophobia, South Africa, Girard, Scapegoat Mechanism, Violence, Victimisation.

1. Introduction

South Africa is not unique in experiencing xenophobic attacks but it has become the focus of how particularly impoverished Africans can act with brutality against other Africans. Harris (2001) maintains that the South African experience is a worldwide phenomenon and particularly prevalent in countries undergoing socio-political transition. She insists that the xenophobic attacks must be understood in the South African paradigm of social violence. Countries such as the politically stable Botswana also experienced xenophobia, so consideration is given that South Africa experienced political transition to where all citizens are recognised equally and allowed to participate within the socio-political reality. Is the popular perception of xenophobia that it should be one racial or religious group against another rather than that of a similar racial background who desire to expel the other from the community? It is within this confusion of perception that the rationale of the scapegoat mechanism (the desire to expel) can be applied to reveal that popular perceptions of violence, particularly xenophobic violence, reveal the elimination of difference. Girard's theory depends on four basic premises, the first of which states that violence must be real (Girard 1996:20). The 2008 xenophobic attacks can be regarded as real violence - these attacks should be considered a separate event as distinct from preceding

events of violence. Violence can result in a catharsis heralding a new beginning of social engagement for the communities involved but without this catharsis no new engagement can occur. It is within this context that the violence will not subside and the affected community will remain frustrated and fearful.

In terms of rationalising South Africans' actions against foreigners it must be considered that the nation is only an imagined community. While it is a real concept, it does not possess social existence. Societies are increasingly multinational and while they might possess a dominant national culture (Pickel 2006:133-137) they are not a unified group in terms of cohesive support. Xenophobia arises when communities feel vulnerable (Hunter & Skinner 2003) but this is to exclude the role of elites in the violence. In South Africa where there is a culture of violence it is seen as a legitimate manner to achieve goals (Hamber & Lewis 1997). High levels of violence are part of the South African reality and the xenophobic attacks are but another manifestation of this violence. From this perspective the victims of the xenophobic attacks are innocent. Every public institution in South Africa, as well as the general public, should accept their responsibility in terms of the apathy towards xenophobia, (Morris 1998:1120). Various reasons are provided for the attacks in 2008: poverty and the quality of life in the informal settlements, corruption and crime (Burns 2008:120). If these reasons are true it does not explain why the xenophobic attacks are not constant or why they do not occur in every informal settlement where socio-economic conditions are difficult.

There are patterns of exclusion but the violence is not without precedent. Incidents involving the persecution of foreigners go back to 1997 when residents agreed to evict foreigners from living in or returning to these communities (Landau 2007:69). Yet many migrants do not intend to integrate with South African communities, preferring to retain their distinct identity. This marks them as outsiders, as they conform to other cultures. Landau (2007:72) suggests that if foreigners were given the choice either to assimilate or remain apart from the community, many would opt for the former. That remains an assumption, since it has not been deduced from any data.

Xenophobia is a 'noxious social phenomenon that does not manifest in healthy socioeconomic environments' (Burns 2008:120). To understand the scapegoat mechanism is to see the violence as transcending xenophobia and to consider those targeted as surrogate victims. It is not simply 'the outgroup' that is targeted, but equally members of the local community who are perceived to be sympathetic toward or similar in conduct to the victims. Discrimination against foreigners creates social marginalisation and fragmentation but Landau (2007:64) argues that South Africans are growing accustomed to living with foreigners, which is in itself a revealing aspect of the scapegoat mechanism. It explains how familiarity within a community and exclusion from the socio-political economy can degenerate into violent hostility. I disagree with the arguments of Landau (2007) and Harris (2001) that there is ignorance regarding migrants' rights. Firstly, I believe that the community thinks they do not have rights or do not deserve rights. Secondly, I thinkthat their rights are disregarded for a reason. The community wants the victims to remain silent because they are blamed for the social crisis and the violence. Denying a victim a voice is an essential part of mythology and it is similarly reflected in reality (Yamaguchi 1988:180). Since foreigners are reluctant to engage authorities and draw attention to themselves, they contributed to their silenced position (Landau 2007:65).

Our concern is elementary; it is the mechanics of the accusation and the interaction between representation and the persecution that is central to this article. Here I will attempt to examine the xenophobic violence in the context of Girard's scapegoat mechanism. This mechanism consists of the four stereotypes of persecution. Each stereotype will be used to illustrate the movement of the violence culminating when the victim pays for the irrational beliefs of others in some way. The scapegoat mechanism reveals that violence within communities can occur within any society. The violence takes on a cyclical pattern that can only be broken once a scapegoat is identified. Once identified and murdered the victim/scapegoat serves to provide a catharsis for the community who are relieved of their anxiety once the scapegoat is murdered (Girard 1972:96).

These stereotypes will reveal that the acts of violence are real, the crisis is real, and that victims are selected for the signs they display rather than crimes of which they stand accused. It all

culminates in blaming the victims for the crisis and ultimately in destroying the victims or banishing them from the community (Williams 1996:72).

2. Girard's scapegoat mechanism

The scapegoat mechanism is structural in its interpretation of the socio-political representations of persecution. Without expanding on the mechanism it is difficult to explain how the stages of persecution recur in the same pattern with regard to the violence, the crisis, the victims and their expulsion from the community (Girard 1986:28). In the first of Girard's four stereotypes of persecution, cultural order is eclipsed and there is confusion in the popular uprising. This indicates an undifferentiated society where individuals cannot be distinguished from one another in terms of hierarchy or whether they are friends or foe. Everyone in the community, social hierarchy aside, experiences hardship in varying degrees, no one is exempt from the social chaos. The community, influenced by particular groups, considers that certain individuals are responsible for the socio-political distress.

The second stereotype reveals that the crisis is real and the community is shown to be responsible for the violence. Crime, intimidation and retaliatory acts happen within the community by members of the community. As the tension increases so the time between violent actions is shortened becoming commonplace. Relationships within the community are undermined and destroyed as violence becomes the method by which to confront issues. Those construed as elites within the community use the anger and the frustration to mobilise the community into violent action. The intimidation is meant to inspire fear within the community and to justify defensive reactions to a perceived threat (Davison 2006:50). Those who possess leadership roles ensure allegiances from communities by exacerbating tensions.

The third stereotype reveals the victims. The crowd looks for a cause that will satisfy the appetite for violence. The mob consists of potential persecutors who want to purge their community of 'corrupting elements' condemning them as the traitors who undermine it. These

victims display characteristics that set them apart from community members. These range from acting different to being outsiders from another race, religion or culture. The difference can be absolute or simply inferred. However this difference is used against victims by influential community members. Fear can direct violence if the victims are dehumanised in the manner of vermin or diseases (Davison 2006:50). In South Africa foreigners are demeaned with terms such as the *makwerekwere,* a derogatory term meant to intimidate (McKnight 2008:21; Hamber 2008). Historically the accusations levelled against victims have become more rational as supernatural accusations, such as witchcraft and devil worship, have decreased, but we continue to identify people to blame for circumstances. The crime becomes rational as a material, more substantive cause (Girard 1986:16). While the crimes are rational, the accusation takes on supernatural proportions where foreigners are accused of spreading diseases. In this manner the objective remains the same; the accusation allows the community to lay responsibility for the real disaster on individuals. On the one hand they have yet to provide evidence to support their accusations while on the other hand the victim has no way by which to refute the allegations.

The fourth stereotype is to accuse the victim and demand retribution from them. In South Africa foreigners stand accused of all societal ills and frustrations (Morapedi 2007:231). Public opinion, amongst all races and socio-economic positions in Southern Africa, is deeply xenophobic. Media coverage is very harsh toward persecuted victims. Post-liberation xenophobia is not limited to South Africa but is prevalent in varying degrees in Southern Africa and Masuku (2006) concedes that xenophobia exists even within the South African Police Services. The persecuted, rather than being acknowledged as a victim, are blamed for their harsh treatment.

While Morapedi acknowledges the scapegoat theory in analysing the xenophobic attacks it is only viewed from an element within the fourth stereotype of accusing the victim and demanding retribution. This perspective arises from perceptions of unemployment, education and healthcare. The result that these attacks will 'tear the country apart' (Morapedi 2007:231) is to misunderstand the full extent of the rationale of scapegoating violence. Regardless of whether South Africans are aware of foreigners and particularly refugees' rights this is only part of the complexity that is the scapegoat mechanism, namely the third stereotype.

Landau (2007), Davison (2006), Njamnjoh (2007), Harris (2001) also make reference to the scapegoat theory in their work. Harris (2001) and Tshitereke (2003) have applied a partial scapegoat hypothesis in their work deducing that the attacks arose from inequality, expectation and deprivation. This approach forms part of the first stereotype revealing the reality of a crisis. While the xenophobic research contributed in part to understanding the scapegoat mechanism this article will reveal that xenophobic violence will continue in South Africa due to a lack of catharsis when assessing the four stereotypes of the scapegoat mechanism. For communities to proceed beyond resentment a catharsis is needed. This can only be realised if an innocent victim or victims are brutally murdered or expelled from the community.

3. The First Stereotype of Persecution

In order for the stereotypes to be applied it must be considered that violence must be directly or indirectly collective. It is only when the community experiences anxiety that the possibility for a social and cultural crisis exists. The first stereotype is a generalised loss of differences (Girard 1986:24). The socio-political and economic situation affects all within the community; there is no distinction between refugees, illegal immigrants, immigrants and nationals all live within the community and all are similarly affected. At this stage the community does not comprehend any distinction. The loss of differentiation can be reduced to a single characteristic that sometimes has idyllic connotations.

The names of the informal settlements are irrelevant but are established communities. These communities consist of South Africans who are dislocated from their rural areas having travelled to the city seeking to improve their lives. Citizens are afraid that in making this sacrifice their dreams will not be realised; that they will not receive any of the socio-economic gains promised by the government; for the community this represents an extreme crisis (Williams 1996:98). Informal settlements represent a form of institutional collapse where functional differences are obliterated and the reality is monotonous and monstrous. Much of the interpretation of events are improbable, such as the crimes that foreigners stand accused of, while others only partially

so. These communities are afraid of being left behind and not participating within the system that many do not speak of government incompetence. As Girard states, 'so helpless were they that telling the truth did not mean facing the situation but rather giving in to its destructive consequences' (Girard 1986: 187).

In South Africa the lack of government provision and the poor facilitation thereof are a major concern of anger within communities. Rather benefits of government provision are perceived to benefit certain individuals within communities. They speak of corruption and favouritism in which only a fraction of the community participate. These individuals are considered distinct from the rest of the community. The community is acutely aware of their inability to access resources and that access occurs singularly through corruption. In this manner most community members regardless of their position share in this crisis. Several other factors contributed to the social crisis such as unemployment, lack of housing, lack of service delivery, inflation, cost of goods and increasing poverty (Ensor 2008). From the available research the reasons given for the lack are varied but eventually leads up to the attacks ranging from jobs and houses and local development. Other issues include the reduction in the manufacturing base being lost to Asia and the decline of mineral resource industries (Steinberg 2008:9). These are several reasons but none are absolute but collectively they contribute to a real crisis. South Africa's democratic patronage, by creating a sense of entitlement, leads to inevitable tension that facilitates a crisis.

Many South Africans perceive that it is the role of government to solve their economic plight, and to facilitate their access to wealth and employment (Steinberg 2008:1). The dichotomy of interpretation in public opinion reveals that many perceive that their misfortune must be in contrast to someone else's good. If foreigners are perceived to be benefitting from service delivery or entrepreneurial ventures then in contrast the belief is that nationals are being hindered from accessing these limited resources. Within such an environment normal institutions that facilitate housing, welfare and protection do not exist and favours the collective gathering of people. By disregarding the responsible institutions for their lack of transparent efficiency blame is transferred to a group of vulnerable individuals who are visible to the community. Yet no matter what circumstances result in the gathering that leads to the persecution of individuals,

those who live through it share an experience (Girard 1987:107). The community perceives a loss in social order that reaches beyond the ineptitude of government institutions. This includes factors that can lead to the disappearance of normal social relationships that defines socio-cultural reality. What results from this disappearance is that people become terrified of others in their community and the fear of social alienation and the unknown throws everything into disarray. Individuals are accused of undermining the sacred cultural paradigm that the community defends and upholds (Davison 2006:38). The media fuels this fear amongst the community by dramatising the crisis and reminding the community of the volatility. In attempting to explain this crisis the media apportions blame to situations and to people. An example would be to exacerbate the social degeneration and subsequent violence (Morapedi 2007; Masuku 2006). This development leads to the second stereotype from the real violence overwhelming to community to the second stereotype of the real crisis.

4. The Second Stereotype of Persecution

Persecution always takes place when there is a crisis as normal institutions are weak and crowds can mobilise without interference. This can be represented by external or internal causes such as political disturbance or the lack of service facilitation. What is certain is the loss of social order and the adherence to rules. The second stereotype reveals that the crisis is real and particularly crimes that eliminate differences. This violence proves to the community that the crisis is real (Girard 1986:24). The community is in crisis and the social order collapses, time sequences shorten so it appears that positive and negative issues occur at an accelerated pace. Relationships are severed, attacks happen with little provocation and retaliation occurs with frequency.

To understand this second stereotype of persecution it should be noted that there is an initial improvement in the community economy. This is reflected by an entrepreneurship that improves the lives of many in the community (Hunter & Skinner 2003). This development can be construed for the benefit of all who reside there. However with the growing economic success crime also increases. There is jealousy toward those who are seen to be benefiting financially. There are positive exchanges within the community; these include South Africans and other

Africans, such as marriages, friendships and as neighbours. At the same time negative exchanges also increased. These negative exchanges have become reciprocal; there is reciprocity of insults, revenge and neurotic symptoms (Williams 1996:109). Negative reciprocity brings people into opposition with each other but their behaviour is uniform. The social behaviour highlights a process of creating uniformity through reciprocity (Girard 1987: 107). While there is an acknowledgement different cultural groups form part of the community it is not used to reflect difference and separation.

Mobs targets foreigners and locals alike in the informal settlements. An aspect of the second stereotype is this elimination of difference, in this case it is cultural difference. Those possessing similar linguistic and cultural traits were forced to flee their homes. In certain areas, groups threatened foreigners but local residents assisted by the police dispersed these threats. At this stage much of the community considers itself a unit absent of absolute differentiation. However due to nature of a real crisis any attempts to resolve violent conflict are temporary. As with all forms of socio-political violence, xenophobic attacks are a phenomenon that expands exponentially. It begins with the dissention of a few but eventually grows to include the majority of residents within a community (Steinberg 2008:3). Girard maintains that violence within the community is inevitable and that it can only be diverted never quelled. It can be diverted from an institution to a victim.

The loss of difference and the crisis reveals that there is no area for negotiation within the community. Within this dichotomous paradigm, there can only be familiars and aliens, friend or foe, everything is either for or against a particular situation to the extreme. The resentment is systematic (Davison 2006:38) spurred often by ignorance and insecurity. Victims are blamed for the crisis and for misleading the community. They stand accused of crimes that eliminate distinctions. It remains difficult to assess the manner in which victims do so (Girard 1987:112). In response to this perceived disrespect of cultural paradigms victims stand accused of initiating the violence first by murdering South Africans. When relating prejudice hatred is expressed, not for the differences, but for its absence of the significant distinctions (Girard, 1986:22). Despite what is bandied about persecutors are never obsessed by difference but rather with the lack of

difference. It is for this reason that groups or individuals within the community are accused of perpetrating particular crimes perceived as undermining social cohesion. These crimes are fundamental, perceived as undermining the cultural order, family and socio-cultural hierarchy (Williams 1996:110; Morapedi 2007:241).

The eclipse of culture is often perceived as a moral dilemma rather than the community's collective responsibility. The community is convinced that there are people who are extremely harmful to society. While the victims are yet to be identified either collectively or individually as being responsible for the crimes, the manner of the accusations becomes the connector between the individual and the complexity of the community (Townsley 2003; Williams 1996:110). The crowd demands solutions from their community leaders who in turn see the development of the crisis and violence as an opportunity to promote their personal ambitions. The easiest method to employ is to apportion blame on a tangible enemy. In this manner the community are convinced that they have the power to change the crisis and reduce the violence. At the same time the community leaders are assured of greater influence within the community due to their guidance. Issues of concern that led to the initial violence and crisis are put into a context where individuals are blamed for social and government failures.

In order to prevent the community from turning against its leaders, attention is directed toward individuals who are accused of encouraging the violence and creating the social crisis. While the accusations are farfetched the community considers it to be the truth even if it is devoid of logic. One such example is on the one hand South Africans, particularly those in the informal settlements, are led to believe that foreign nationals have greater access to South Africa's wealth to which they have no right. On the other hand the media, state and general public presume that African migrants are a burden to the community and do not contribute in a constructive supportive manner (Nyamnjoh 2007:75). For those accused of undermining the community the accusations present a contradiction where they are blamed for profiteering illegally and immorally yet also considered a burden to South African society.

Within the scapegoat mechanism the perception is that the victim is given powers that exceed that of the normal individual. The potential victim is imbued with power over the rest of the community such as the accusations of amassing greater wealth and accessing state resources while simultaneously being a socio-economic burden. Fears of alienation within the community from the greater South African society are reflected onto potential victims who now represent their desires and fears.

By moving to the third stereotype persecutors defend their choice of victim because of supposed crimes attributed to them. These accusations make the victims guilty and responsible for all disasters. According to Girard the actions of the persecutors must not be considered as simply targeting individuals or groups but to illustrate that the persecutors cannot see what is revealed of themselves (Girard, 1986:27).

5. The Third Stereotype of Persecution

The most important aspect of the generative mechanism is the arbitrary selection of the victims (Ushedo 1997:132) that is the third stereotype of persecution. However existing investigations of the 2008 xenophobic attacks do not reflect this randomness. Mimesis is a central component of the mechanism; it is a *pharmakon* that serves as a poison for the community and for potential victims. The scapegoat mechanism is extremely resistant to ordinary reason. It is difficult to determine without the stereotypes how a particular victim/s is selected. However there is no successful sacrifice in this violence; the actual victims cannot be defined in terms of innocence or guilt. Rather the community seeks an indifferent victim so that the community can be protected against the violence (Williams 1996:73). If South Africans hold government accountable for the socio-reality, then this institution is the object and is initially singled out for violence. This fades from the community memory once it focuses its attention on more accessible victims. This substitution is not a mistake rather the mechanism unveils an ability to conceal displacement (Townsley 2003). The third stereotype marks the victims blaming them for all social disasters. There are common accusations levelled at victims and suit the mindset of the frenzied crowd (Girard 1986:26).

While it is suggested that the choice of victim can be totally random, persecutors choose their victims because they are an easy target susceptible to persecution. Foreign nationals are a minority group in any society and tend to polarise the majorities against themselves. The victims are not born into the community but are well-known strangers (Girard 1986:32). Their behaviour marks them and is misinterpreted. The victim conforms to another custom and this is perceived as monstrous. The physical and the moral monster are inseparable; while the former is apparent, by their appearance, the latter is a projection of some unfortunate events, such as rape and disease, onto the victim. By simply being a foreigner is to suggest affinity to the monstrous (Girard 1986:34; Johnston 2002).

Landau noted that the majority of illegal foreigners entering South Africa were adult males (HSRC 2008:31) and the most antagonism comes from male South Africans in the 26-33 age groups. On the one hand this is further enflamed by the rejection that government perceived South African older black men as lazy while they respond that they no longer wish to exist in a life of menial servitude (HSRC 2008:32). On the other hand this sentiment is contradicted by local women who perceive that foreign men take responsibility for their lives and families by doing menial work in order to survive; there is admiration for their sacrifice (Chilwane 2008a). So it appears that women and men perceive foreign nationals differently. South African society inculcates a culture of violence (Hamber 1998). This violence is used when the community perceives that waiting, while creating expectation, doesn't deliver anything to them. They consider that it is the responsibility of government to provide everything for their citizens alone (Gomo 2008; Chilwane 2008b).

Many foreign nationals in South Africa are unwelcome immigrants (Steinberg 2008:2) who locate themselves within the informal settlements where communities continue to wait for government delivery. It should be noted that although the 2008 mob attacks were particular ferocious, these were not the first violent incidents against foreigners nor the first instance that foreigners were accused of partaking in state resources meant for citizens only. This resentment

toward the foreigners came not only from the population but is similarly fuelled by state officials.

The notion that the economy is a zero-sum game is not a uniquely South African issue (Johnston 2002). South Africans perceive they are entitled to certain resources as they have leaders who represent their interests (Steinberg 2008:2; Benjamin 2008) yet Girard's theory reflects that it is the population who seek to represent the leaders and mimic their behaviour. That the government represents new political elites is to misunderstand the impetus of victimhood because these elites form an intrinsic part of the persecution process. The victim is the link between the desperate community and the manipulative socio-political elites.

Foreigners are easy targets, they struggle to fit into and participate in the social infrastructure; for this reason they are targeted by persecutors for the simple reason that they have little recourse to the SAPS (Kosterman & Feshbach 1989). There are few societies that do not subject their minorities; wherever there is a disability termed as the physical monstrosity, this can include being from another country and observing different customs. This serves as an opportunity to mobilise the community. Foreigners are targeted because they are poor outsiders but as marginal insiders they are also excluded when they become wealthier. This double marginality is indicative of a community and society in turmoil (Girard 1986:18). In times of crisis these are extreme characteristics that attract collective destruction. Foreigners are accused of corruption and rape but the community reflects inwardly that they cannot themselves stand accused of similar crimes. Such a suggestion to the community would be perceived to be the work of the victims who are trying to implicate the community in their crimes; an attempt to deflect attention away from their actions and guilt.

Because foreigners are linked to criminal activity and economic decline related to South Africans contributes to the rationale that foreigners, particularly black Africans, cannot legitimately participate in South African society. As one report stated, 'xenophobia in South Africa is insidious in the way that it builds high levels of bonding social capital between South Africans to the detriment of non-South Africans' (HSRC Press 2008). In accessing the rationale after the

violence subsides provides the community with an opportunity to conclusively blame the victims so as to remove any blame from their attacks. Researchers fail to realise that the community will always absolve itself of any real responsibility and so much is given over to rumour. While the housing department has called the Human Sciences Research Council findings of the xenophobia as superficial (Ensor, 2008) is also to misconstrue the manner and the rationale of why certain people are targeted.

The HSRC made several suggestions that they perceive as being weak areas that stimulate aggression toward foreign nationals; these extend from the role of government, gender relations, access to housing, and the support for community forums (HSRC Press 2008). Rather it should be considered according to the scapegoat mechanism that it is within these areas that attacks on immigrants are justified; if people were to have access to the above is the suggestion that there would never be any xenophobic attacks? This seems improbable and also does not give credence to the intricacies of human socialisation. Creating a scapegoat is a method for the community to reach a catharsis in order to eliminate the crisis and the violence. It is also an attempt to seek a tangible solution to the crisis. In seeking the solution responsibility must be placed on a victim that can destroyed or expelled.

6. The Fourth Stereotype of Persecution

The scapegoat mechanism unfolds as real violence against real victims and the fourth stereotype is represented by the violence itself that focuses solely on the responsible victims. The more signs a victim possesses the more likely these individuals will attract disaster. While in Girard's analysis, the story is related by naïve persecutors portraying their victims as they see them – guilty of all the crimes they stand accused of. The persecutors do not deny that they have attacked the victim but they do not confess to certain aspects. There is a real victim behind the violence; this is not the victim accused of crimes but rather a victim of all the characteristics that are often specified in mythical texts where the paranoid crowd transfers their fear and inability, to explain their socio-reality onto the victim.

South Africans view patronage to be part of the democratic transition (Steinberg 2008:1). To connect with their political leaders communities attempt to mimic them. What is revealed is that certain elites engage in targeting potential victims whom they consider to be a threat to their influence within the community. The media is equally so; the South African print media reflects a negative stereotype of foreigners that is particularly hostile toward them (Harris 2001; Hamber & Lewis 1997). While diversity is celebrated in peaceful times the opposite is apparent when the community experiences a crisis. Foreigners are accused of not respecting the differences such as hierarchical and social structures (Girard 1987:112). They are accused of sexual crimes and selling drugs (Morapedi 2007:241).

Corruption amongst foreigners has a mythical component. The accusation that foreigners bring diseases and commit rape make it possible to lay responsibility for the real issues of economic difficulty and service delivery on people whose activities have not proven to be criminal (Girard 1986:72; Morapedi 2007:241). While it is unproven the community 'knows' of these transgressions. Access to resources and wealth accumulation is considered to be a zero-sum game so if foreigners have access to them then locals are being denied access. For the scapegoat mechanism these extreme issues are central. There is no area for negotiation and the resentment is systematic (Davison 2006:38) spurred by ignorance and insecurity. Those who were once considered a part of the community are now treated as outsiders who never belonged.

Foreigners had integrated well within their new communities; they married local women, created family structures, sustained themselves financially and created a social network including personal friendships with South Africans. The victims do not possess livelihoods that differ vastly from the rest of the community; many live modest lives. Yet many of the intimate friends were at one moment friendly but instantaneously turned against the victim threatening them with violence, looting and destroying their property (Steinberg 2008:2). They are no longer part of the community. This is represented externally by a police captain noted, '...whenever we suspect that they are illegal we arrest them and in many instances they try to be clever by producing fake papers...we tear those up in front of them to frustrate their efforts and send them to Lindela'

(Masuku, 2006). Findings by the University of Witwatersrand migration programme determined that many community forums were instrumental in provoking the violence (Johwa 2008).

 When intended victims heard of the threats they refused to believe it; they perceived themselves safe within their community of which they now considered themselves an intrinsic part (Steinberg 2008:3). Once the crowds become visible and their intentions apparent the targeted victims refuse to acknowledge any personal danger or that these developments could pose a threat to them. There were rumours that often crowds were not local residents but the scapegoat mechanism reveals that this is because communities refuse to consider that it is they alone who are capable of such violence against their own members. As Steinberg (2008:3) notes 'with the singing in our ears, something happened. The young unemployed South African men of Dark City, people I know very well, people who sit and play dice all day long, started to take things from our stalls' (Steinberg 2008:3). Even those who are friends, who offer assistance initially, are co-opted into the mob, and while they might not physically injure the victims, they no longer exhibit any goodwill towards them.

Steinberg further reveals that in the aftermath of the attacks while residents claimed to be embarrassed by the developments, they came 'one by one to pay their respects' to the expelled victims. Yet why have they chosen to approach as individuals and not as a group? It should be noted that it is only a minority who show their remorse to the victims but although there is remorse for the events no apology is offered. Rather there were many more who considered that the victims had brought misfortune upon themselves by simply being within the community (Chilwane 2008b).

While it is the community that acts violently against the foreigners, they are merely manifesting the desires put forward in political statements and media reports. These arenas of media and political environment of which the communities perceive as leaders are reservoirs of anger and resentment toward the foreigners. Media perpetuates the negative stereotyping of foreigners connecting them to crime, corruption and scarcity. While the image of the foreigner is created for

the South African community, the foreigner is given little opportunity to express his humanity and fears.

It should be noted that there will always be accusations against potential victims. As already revealed being accused of stealing local women and denying others the opportunity to profit exponentially from available resources is a recurring them within communities. While the community in the crisis considers them to be outsiders, in reality the victims have chosen to assimilate within their adopted communities. They have married local women, raised families and provided financially. The issues that foreigners are accused of, greater wealth accumulation, crime and securing houses all form part of Girard's implication that the victim is accused of crimes that are beyond the ability of ordinary South Africans. The victim cannot defend him/herself against the accusations and because they are considered monstrous their defence only serves to reinforce the community's anger.

While immigrants can receive legal rights they are never truly considered part of the community; they never become as citizens. In being denied a community social identity victims cannot secure true membership. If a community does not grant or recognise these rights then foreigners remain different (Nyamnjoh 2007). The violence attacks are as a result of uncertainty but also to possess an identity and participate within the social cohesion of the community (Davison 2006:38). There is a need for vigilance to encourage an imagined sense of identity within the community. Residents, themselves dislocated and impoverished, seek to (re)create the community as a family and so determine who has membership. The violence reflects a particular development; the community offers identity but demands loyalty from members. Newcomers, in seeking acceptance, are most willing to demonstrate their loyalty and take violent action against the persecuted victims. The culmination of the four stereotypes results in the victims being murdered or expelled from the community. A catharsis is reached whereby the community convinces itself that the violence and the social crisis have passed. However the community considers the victims to be guilty and silences them so there can be a catharsis.

7. The Persecutors and the Victims in the Community

Central to understanding the role of the victim in the stereotypes of persecution is that firstly the victim takes responsibility for the crisis and violence by remaining silent. Secondly the victim does not receive any assistance from the community or any external intervention. Historical accounts relate of the persecution from the perspective 'naïve persecutors' portraying the victims as they see them, as the guilty person. There is no apology for their actions but rather that persecutors consider their actions a defence (Girard 1986:26). There is a real victim though but it is not the victim accused of all the crimes as a result of socio-political and economic complexities in the community. Rather the real victim comes about through the characteristics he possesses and the marks he displays that allow the community to project their paranoia on them.

Often the culmination of these actions lies with the elites who are concerned with cementing their power and elevating their status (Davison 2006:45). The intentions of the elites are noted (Nyamnjoh 2007:74) who have their own interests that does not extend to the community. The scapegoat mechanism clarifies the events that led to the victimisation of foreigners; there is tension within the ruling party structure as well the mechanisms of rival party factions (Steinberg 2008:4). The role of the elites and particularly their interests exacerbated violence against the foreigners that indicates it was not fuelled by xenophobia alone but that it included tension between South Africans. Members of the ANC claim that the violence was spontaneous, a sentiment equally shared by many victims who were surprised by the attacks. The elites never directly became persecutors but served as catalysts for the tensions. They share responsibility in marking and targeting victims for expulsion.

Girard asserts that in this scenario the reader does not consider the stereotypes in the same manner as a mythological yet reality has the same structure as myth (Girard 1986:29). What is definite is that while the persecutors, in a historical sense, concentrate on ethnicity or race but forget that the relevance of the scapegoat mechanism is to present and understanding that a foreigner must be expelled or murdered. Mythological victims are worshipped while modern victims are hated by entire communities that cloak themselves in illusions of their own victimage.

Victims are those who it is most criminal to attack such as the foreigner or the infirm. It is those who are peripheral or directly at the centre of the community that explains why South African citizens equally are targets, but to a lesser degree. The community attacks the foundation of the cultural order and as Girard stipulates, 'it is not enough for the social bond to be loosened; it must be totally destroyed' (Girard 1986:15; Williams 1996:152).

Young men joined the mob to participate in the violence that relates to accessing resources with regard to locals and foreigners as the zero-sum game. State officials and the media demonised the victims before they were attacked interpreting the vents as exchanges between groups. 'No sign of pity is shown to friends since every sign of pity is dangerous' (Girard 1986:14). Yet individuals within this paradigm refuse to take responsibility for these developments and inevitably blame society or other people who seem particularly harmful for easily identifiable reasons (Ushedo 1977:133).

The death of Mozambican national, Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, burning to death in front of residents, the police and the media was broadcast globally but it did not curtail the attacks. The violence continued after his death and such an event is reflected in Girard's theory that the violence had not yet reached its zenith so Nhamuave's death could not result in a cathartic release. Let us examine the figure of the Mozambican; where many commentators consider that foreigners bear some responsibility for the xenophobic attacks. Does Ernesto's torching lie outside our pattern? He bears several marks of a victim; he is poor as well as a foreigner. His Mozambican origin is a popular accusation against him, and others, and those who accuse him are heavily influenced by the crowd.

A 1998 national public opinion survey conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) sampled 3,200 participants found that the majority of South Africans are indeed xenophobic (HSRC 2008:20) yet other studies show that the majority of South Africans do not engage immigrants. Most South Africans are not concerned with the plight of foreigners yet they perpetuate negative stereotypes and beliefs of them. In a similar vein the response from

government has been very slow and uncoordinated; however this is not a uniquely South African response.

It should be considered that the xenophobic violence in South Africa will occur again in future as no catharsis was attained with regard to the violence. When attacks are thwarted by members of a community, as well as police and government departments it must be understood that this does not translate that the violence has ceased but rather its progress has stalled. After the chaos, calm returns to the community and many who were targeted will return to the community but if a scapegoat has not been found and vilified then the violence has not reached its zenith. It is not that government has not learnt anything (Steinberg, 2008:12) or should be addressing the issue but rather that with such uncertainty in society the likelihood is great for further violence.

The HSRC suggests that, 'Media, through film, advertising and music; political parties, churches and schools should be encouraged to generate symbolic depictions, memories and images of Africans from outside South Africa' (2008:13). This is problematic as it reduces the identity of South Africans within their communities and the suggestion of elevating the identity of other Africans over and above South Africans can only serve to reinforce the negative stereotypes. Anti-immigrant sentiment is a global phenomenon suggesting that it runs deeper than access to public services or of accumulating capital. If attacks have been documented since 1994 (Morris, 1998), then this goes against the argument that South Africans are frustrated with limited or no access to government services.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this article h*as* been to present an alternative approach in response to the South African xenophobic attacks in 2008 by applying the four stereotypes of persecution within the scapegoat mechanism. The stereotypes alleviate the confusion that is experienced by victims, persecutors and the socio-political institutions and offers an opportunity of foresight to those who wish to prevent such violence from happening in future. While the article is limited in explaining the intrinsic role of the community leadership, it reveals that their participation is

central to selecting individuals, perceived as vulnerable but also a threat to the community. These individuals are later victimised, persecuted and expelled from the community.

The author of this article has been informed by the Girardian scapegoat mechanism and influenced by the spontaneous violence in 2008. It is ironic that the freedoms accorded through democratic transition, as with any socio-political change, resulted in these attacks. The social crisis and the violence discussed in this article came about as a result of an environment that created a sense of entitlement amongst many South African coupled with a misunderstanding of socio-political changes that perpetuated violence. The dynamism of cosmopolitanism can lead to violence when the environment requires renewal of entrenched traditional social circumstances. While government officials utter that 'our country belongs to all Africans' it is wholly inaccurate as no society is absolutely tolerant of foreigners if the environment is fraught with political rivalry. It is short-sighted to simply accuse government of not recognising the victims as refugees. Acknowledging the persecuted as innocent victims goes beyond a commitment to financial assistance and the offer of reintegration into the communities that have expelled, and often murdered, them.

Government suggests that many foreigners must return to the communities from which they have been expelled. However this reflects a misunderstanding of how the violence and social crisis evolve to result in persecution, expulsion and often murder. If these victims are reintegrated into the communities they will always be outsiders and potential targets for future persecution if the social environment is conducive to the first two stereotypes of persecution. Thabo Mbeki himself stated that 'when I heard some accuse my people of xenophobia, of hatred of foreigners, I wondered what the accusers knew about my people' (Chilwane, 2008). What his words reveal to the author is that any population responds to violence, social crisis and political change.

The article has argued that in times of rapid socio-political change care must be taken in understanding the crisis before blame can be levelled at the South African government as to whether it was ill prepared for the xenophobic attacks. How would a state prevent spontaneous

eruption of violence assisted by the interests of influential community leaders who manipulate those who seek their advice?

The author is aware that there are limitations to applying the scapegoat mechanism to xenophobic violence but it does offer an explanation of foresight to how the persecutors reveal their victims to us. It is not because they want to inform us of their choice and how they have been wronged but rather because they are unaware of what their choice of victim reveals. Of the xenophobic attacks the mechanism reveals that the victims are innocent of the accusations that are levelled at them by the community. However everything marked them as an outlet for the community's frustration. We can better understand why a victims' expulsion or death is justified and how a sense of calm can return to the community. Yet in South Africa the crisis has not resulted in a catharsis so the violence will return to claim more victims.

This article offers a method on how to recognise the potential for xenophobic violence, as well as other forms of socio-political crises.. The four stereotypes of persecution unravel the stages that lead to persecution and murder. It reveals a process that can warn of potential violence and innocent victims that cannot be halted once violence and social crises eliminate the differences within communities and societies.

It is hoped that this article will engage a discussion within government and amongst concerned parties on how to prevent or prepare for a social crisis beforehand. It would be better than attempting to quell violence that has already claimed innocent victims, after it has erupted. By choosing to act once the victims are identified the community can never achieve catharsis.

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