Threat and the Logic of Target Selection:
Analyzing South Africa's Xenophobic Attacks

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Abstract

Reports of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, and globally, are on the rise. And yet, little is known about the logic behind this kind of violence. Meanwhile, the targets of attacks vary widely, with considerable variation in the victims, nature, and extent of violence. This paper therefore asks: what accounts for variation in the kinds of violence (indiscriminate, group-based, and selective)[1] used against foreign nationals?

While the civil and ethnic conflict literature examines target selection, the ways in which target selection varies for different types of violence and state contexts is under-theorized. This paper therefore puts forward a set of hypotheses based on the existing literature on target selection in ethnic and civil conflict. It tests these hypotheses against incidences of xenophobic violence against foreign nationals in South Africa, where the author conducted extensive fieldwork between May 2010 and July 2012. This paper finds that xenophobic violence is not random or uncalculated. Rather, two key mechanisms guide different forms of target selection: 1) whether the threat is existential or hierarchical; and 2) whether information is available about the target. These findings are based on four in-depth, typical case studies of settlements experiencing xenophobic violence. This paper concludes by briefly discussing the implications of these findings for theories of xenophobic violence writ large, and rational motivations for target selection in particular.

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[1] These three kinds of violence are defined further in the paper.

"As long the foreigners are here we will always have unemployment and poverty here in South Africa. There was no poverty and unemployment in South Africa before the influx of foreigners . . . there is too much of them now. If the government does not do something people will see what to do to solve the problem."

– Inkatha Freedom Party leader in Alexandra

1 Introduction

South Africa's Alexandra township erupted in violence on 11 May 2008. From Alex, the violence soon spread throughout Gauteng province, and then across South Africa. Within weeks, South Africans murdered 60 people, wounding hundreds more, and displacing over one hundred thousand (Polzer and Igglesden 2009). Beyond death and injuries, perpetrators destroyed thousands of homes and stole from countless foreigners. The May violence is portrayed as a spree of irrational and spontaneous attacks following years of prolonged, simmering tension (Hassim et al. 2008; Misago et al. 2009). Xenophobic violence is also often discussed in the past tense, as something that happened in May of 2008 and then stopped altogether. However, in reality attacks have persisted on a regular basis both before May 2008, and ever since. And, despite media portrayals of the frenzied mob, they appear to follow a logic – though the modes of this logic remain unexplored.

In South Africa the discourse against foreign nationals is decidedly undiscerning: attitudes are broadly anti-foreigner[2], and public announcements and casual conversations blame all foreign nationals for stealing South Africans' jobs, women, money, and homes (Landau 2011). If behavior followed attitudes, we would expect foreign nationals to always be targeted indiscriminately in xenophobic attacks. And yet, the targets of acts of xenophobic violence[3] vary widely. Attacks are sometimes selective, focusing on an individual person, and at other moments target a particular foreigner group. Some homicides are isolated; others become part of a broader region-wide spree of attacks. There is considerable variation in the victims, nature, and extent of violence, which has risen significantly over the past five years in South Africa. This paper therefore asks: what accounts for variation in the kinds of violence (indiscriminate, group-based, and selective)[4] used against foreign nationals?

Contributions

Xenophobic violence is increasingly common in largely stable states such as Kenya,

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[2] Xenophobia is broadly understood as the hatred or fear foreigners. "Foreign nationals" in the South African context are non-South African citizens. This paper's discussion of 'groups' refers to the different nationalities of foreign nationals. The most common foreign national groups are Zimbabwean, Somali, and Mozambican foreign nationals, but attacks have also been perpetrated against foreign nationals from Lesotho, Angola, Nigeria, the Congo, Pakistan, India and China.

[3] For the purposes of this study, I define xenophobic violence as physical violence perpetrated against foreign nationals. Common instances of such violence include the burning of shops and homes, looting, rape, murder, forced evictions, and other non-lethal physical attacks. Any instance of these actions, coupled with clear, precipitating events, is coded as an act of xenophobic violence.

[4] These three kinds of violence are defined as follows. There are three kinds of target selection processes that I focus on in this paper: indiscriminate (among foreigners), selective within-group discrimination, and group discrimination. Borrowing from the civil wars literature, I define indiscriminate violence as violence that is executed broadly, without concern for an individual's preferences or actions (Kalyvas 2006). I define selective within-group violence as aggression that is perpetrated against individuals based on information about their actions (Kalyvas 2006). I define 'group-discrimination as violence that is perpetrated against individuals based on identity-based cleavages (Stewart 2008). When I refer to "group targeted" violence, for the purposes of this paper it refers to particular foreign national groups, such as foreigners from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Somalia, or Pakistan.[4] However, in the broader literature the groups of interest are typically ethnic groups (Petersen 2002; Horowitz 2001).

South Africa, France, and Greece, among others. However, and beyond target selection, there is not an evidentiary base to explain how xenophobic violence might broadly relate with other kinds of ethnic or civil violence. As a result it is unclear how to theorize around this kind of violence, and how to apply what we know about other types of group violence to this context.

Given such ambiguity, this paper offers two key scholarly contributions. First, xenophobic violence merits further attention in the political violence literature overall. It is distinct from other forms of ethnic and civil violence, which receive significant attention in the literature. Foreign nationals who are targeted in xenophobic violence are not part of the same political community as citizens targeted in ethnic and civil violence; they do not have a legal right to representation in the same way that co-citizens do in other violent contexts. They cannot vote, take office, or, for the most part, benefit from state resources and services. Foreign nationals cannot broadly claim a legal right to political goods and they represent a unique kind of threat – only social and economic – than that posed by co-citizens. As a result, broader research on the extent to which xenophobic violence operates similarly or differently from ethnic violence and other civil conflicts offers new inroads into how violence works across contexts.

This paper then suggests that xenophobic violence more specifically presents a unique and important case for theories of target selection. The ways in which target selection varies for different types of violence is under-theorized. The most robust literature on target selection relates with the micro-dynamics of conflict within civil war, and many of its assumptions do not translate to the xenophobia context. Then, there is a growing literature on riots, protests, and other forms of violence within stable states, but

this scholarship rarely addresses target selection. As a result, identifying the particular mechanisms behind target selection is an important but neglected aspect of the micro-dynamics of conflict.

Roadmap

In this paper I first review the literature on ethnic conflict and civil violence such as hate crimes. I then briefly discuss if and how target selection is understood in these kinds of conflict. I combine insights on the nature of threat from the ethnic and civil conflict literature with insights about information and target selection from the civil wars literature. Next, I extend these existing theories to develop hypotheses on xenophobic target selection: they highlight the kinds of threat posed by foreign nationals, and how prevailing theories might translate to a context of xenophobic violence. I then propose a research design that seeks to further analyze determinants of target selection in acts of xenophobic violence. I empirically test my hypotheses on four in-depth, typical case studies of settlements experiencing xenophobic violence. I then discuss my findings, and conclude by considering the implications of these findings for theories of xenophobic violence writ large, and rational motivations for target selection in particular.

In brief, this paper finds that xenophobic violence follows a logic: in keeping with contemporary findings on the micro-dynamics of conflict, acts of violence are not random, uncalculated acts (Kalyvas 1999; 2006; others). Rather, targets are selected for violence based on the threats to security and hierarchy[5] posed by individuals or groups. They are further targeted based on the information available about these threats, which leads to a distinction between whether hierarchical threats are economic or social, or

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[5] Hierarchy is defined as: when one actor possesses authority over another (Lake 2009).

direct or diffuse. The hypotheses put forward in this paper are tentatively supported and

demand further scholarly attention and testing.

2.1 Ethnic and Civil Conflict

> Studies of ethnic violence are often vague about the psychological processes
> that underlie individual action. When tracing the causes of genocide or ethnic
> civil war, scholars tend to refer obliquely to longstanding hatreds, nationalist
> ideologies, or animus generated by propaganda campaigns. . . Rarely do these
> studies attempt to measure these constructs or demonstrate individual-level
> relationships between attitudes and actions (Green and Seher 2003, 510).

This paper seeks to demonstrate this under-addressed relationship between

individual-level attitude and action: it links modes of threats with strategies for target

selection. It does so by combining insights about threat from the ethnic and civil conflict

literature, with findings on the role of information in target selection from the civil wars

literature. These literatures are briefly reviewed in order to develop a theoretical

foundation for this paper's hypotheses on target selection in xenophobic violence.

Ethnic Conflict

Literature on the motivation for ethnic conflict[6] offers theories that either explicitly

or often implicitly addresses theories of target selection.[7] And yet, it is important to note

the stark conceptual and practical differences between xenophobic violence and ethnic

violence. Most obviously, foreign nationals are the broad target population rather than co-

nationals. The practical consequence of this distinction is that the most commonly cited

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[6] In this paper, 'ethnic conflict' refers to "confrontation between members of two or more ethnic groups"
(Green and Seher 2003, 511).

[7] Ethnic groups are distinguished based on a set of boundary markers, which are typically a set of historical,
political, and cultural attributes. Barth's discussion of ethnic 'boundary markers' --characteristics that are
said to be unique from a group and which sets it apart from other groups (Barth 1969; Horowitz 1985).
Wimmer (2012) suggests that an ethnic attribute can be nearly anything, whereas Weber (1996) discusses
the importance of language, ritual, and other common features for 'ethnicity'. A range of scholarship
argues that ethnic groups are not deterministic – they are malleable, are constructed over time, and can
often simply serve as an information shortcut for people. This is similarly the view adopted in this paper
(Birnir 2009; Christia 2013; Laitin 1998).

motivations for ethnic conflict do not apply – political inclusion, status, goods and resources are not the primary source of conflict. These issues hold little relevance to the xenophobia context: it is unranked; political legitimacy is not a factor, and issues of political representation and administration are not contested as grounds for either dominance or subordination.

As a result, the ethnic conflict helpfully theorizes around the role of relative gains and threats in motivating violence (discussed next), but these theories often are not directly applicable to a context where the target group is foreign and cannot vote[8], does not vie for status in the political hierarchy[9], and otherwise does not have access or benefit from political goods and resources[10]. The possible limitations of these differing assumptions are discussed further in the paper.

Motivation

Reviewing motivations for violence in the absence of explicit theories of target selection is useful if we assume that targets are intentionally selected. I suggest that motivations for ethnic conflict can roughly be divided into two broad categories: existential security threats on the one hand, and threats to group worth and hierarchy on the other (Horowitz 1985; Petersen 2002; Blumer 1958). Sullaway (2004) similarly defines existential threats as 'reactive aggression', where perpetrators act defensively against incoming threats, and 'instrumental' aggression', where perpetrators aim to prove

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[8] Dunning's (2011) influential work on ethnic violence and voting similarly depends on electoral participation.

[9] Horowitz's distinction between ranked and unranked groups rests on whether or not there is an overt, political determination of a subordinate class (Horowitz 1985). For instance, ethnic competition often centers on issues of political representation, and routine administration such as development plans, educational controversies, trade union affairs, land policy, business policy, tax policy hold little relevance to foreigners (Horowitz 1985, 6; Petersen 2002). Assertion of group legitimacy is also often tied to land ownership – a claim which foreigners rarely make.

[10] Stewart's (2008) work on horizontal inequalities[10] examines group target selection based on access to state resources or state recognition.

their dominance. Existential threats, termed by Horowitz as the 'fear of extinction', is most fundamental. A 'backwards' or subordinate group often perpetrates violence against an 'advanced' or dominant group for this very reason (Horowitz 1985, 166).[11] This fear of extinction can be real, exaggerated, or imagined. Horowitz notes how a subordinate group: "sometimes invents the existence of a powerful and threatening conspiracy aimed at his own well-being" (Horowitz 1985, 180).

Following the fear of extinction is the fear of domination (Horowitz 1985, 188). Among unranked groups[12] asserting dominance is essential, since relative group worth remains uncertain and contested (Horowitz 1985, 24). Without a political regime that explicitly subordinates a certain group or groups, social and economic dimensions to hierarchy become more central. The distribution of social and economic opportunities and benefits become the basis for relative group capacity, status and worth. For Petersen (2002) the emotions stirred by a shift in group capacity and status explains a shift in motivation and subsequent actions.[13] In this vein, the literature on civil conflict and hate crimes[14] finds that perceived to actual competition of scarce resources, and economic

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[11] The tension between South Africans and foreigners roughly overlays with notions of 'backwards' or 'advanced' – which is often an artifact of colonial rule. Rather, the foreign nationals are often and typically well-educated, with an advantage over black South Africans whose educational opportunities were limited under Apartheid.

[12] E.g. foreign nationals in relief to South Africans.

[13] Fear arises in response to the greatest security threat, and the target is the greatest threat. Hatred arises when a group has historically been attacked by another group, and the attacking group is then targeted. Resentment arises when there is a reversal in the social hierarchy of a state. The group highest up the hierarchy that can be subordinated through violence is targeted.

[14] Individual level theories of perpetrators tend to focus on their own traits and dispositions, rather than their motivations for target selection (Altemeyer 1996; Maaz 1991).[14] There are also a range of social mechanisms affect small group work, from peer pressure and conformity to 'extremefication' of attitudes' (Dancygier and Greene 2010). Essentially, community norms, and various pathways that end up legitimizing hate crimes. It matters whether or not bigoted behavior will be condemned (Rieder 1985; Sibbitt 1997; Suttles 1972). Karapin (2002) suggests that without formal channels for airing grievances and resolving conflict, perpetrators take matters into their own hands. Similarly, sense that the majority's political grievances are not being addressed – both in South Africa and more broadly (Dancygier and Green 2010).

dislocations are drivers of conflict (Dancygier and Greene 2010). Dancygier and Greene (2010) further note that hate crimes do not seem to be ideologically rooted – hate crimes emanate from conditions; from threats against or grievances of the in-group.

Ethnic and civil conflict is motivated by either the threat (real or perceived) of extinction, or the threat of domination. Motivation for conflict is rooted in relative group worth and status. Existing insights tell us about the motivation behind attacks, but do not offer guidance on how to think about variation in target selection. The literature's emphasis on group-based targeting elides the opportunity to examine different kinds of targeting – individuals over the group, or foreigners writ large over the group. This paper now turns to the existing literature on target selection in order to generate a theory of how threats to security and hierarchy lead to variation in target selection.

2.2 Theories of Target Selection

Research agendas with varying goals and theories address the issue of target selection during conflict (Petersen 2002; Horowitz 2001; Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2006; Lyall 2009; Downes 2007; Horowitz 2001; Gurr 1970). Most prominently, this literature emphasizes that what appears to be random violence is often highly structured, whereby perpetrators carefully differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate targets (Green and Seher 2003, 517; Horowitz's 1985; 2001; Kalyvas 1999; 2006).

In the ethnic conflict literature, discussions of target selection focus on group-based target selection, and do not address selective or indiscriminate targeting. For both existential and hierarchical threats, relative gains matter and groups are concerned with relative group worth (Gurr 1968; Horowitz 1985; Petersen 2002). For instance, Gurr

borrows from psychology's frustration-aggression theory [15] and suggests that the relatively deprived, when lacking opportunities, will attack those in society who are relatively more successful (Gurr 1968). This hypothesis dovetails with Horowitz (1985) and Petersen's (2002) theories on group-level target selection. Both Petersen and Horowitz hypothesize that a disadvantaged group will attack first, especially when they are in an unwarranted subordinate position (Petersen 2002; Horowitz 1985).[16]

Broader literature on the micro-dynamics of conflict addresses selective versus indiscriminate target selection strategies. However, the civil wars literature is typically more interested in whether and how indiscriminate violence "works" in order to fulfill the perpetrator's aims, rather than which kinds of selection processes are operationalized during conflict (Valentino 2004; Galula 1964; Downes 2007; Lyall 2009; Kocher and Kalyvas 2007).[17] Nonetheless, Kalyvas (2006) very usefully illuminates the way in which information operates in the target selection process. For Kalyvas, the type and extent of selective or indiscriminate violence is a function of territorial control. The

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[15] The 'frustration-aggression theory' suggests that aggression is the result of frustrating an individual from achieving their goals..

[16] Petersen's examples of an "unwarranted subordinate position" are very state-centric: country language, composition of bureaucracy, police, officer corps, street names, other symbols, distribution of land.

[17] For instance, Valentino (2004) suggests that while selective killing is ideal, it can be both difficult and costly in counter-guerilla campaigns. Galula (1964) argues that counterinsurgents should strive for selective violence, but an indiscriminate purge will still generate fear and fulfill its aims without targeting the correct individuals (Galula 1964). Downes (2007) finds that indiscriminate violence can be effective in restricted conditions: when the population the guerilla relies on for support is small, land area is constricted, and external sanctuary and supplies is not possible. Lyall's (2009) analysis of the Chechnya war concludes that indiscriminate violence is actually successful, and more lethal or destructive forms of violence are all the more effective. Kocher and Kalyvas (2007) find that selective killing campaigns can actually be quite indiscriminate in practice, which casts in doubt whether selective violence is even practiced at all. Each of these accounts is ultimately concerned with which strategies – indiscriminate or selective – are most effective. Several other authors theorize about target selection in ways that are relevant for, but not quite applicable to cases of xenophobic violence. This is largely because the theories are either based on rebel groups and territorial control in ways that do not apply to a stable state, or they are rooted in a role for the state and political legitimacy that is similarly absent in cases of xenophobic violence. For instance, Weinstein suggests that there are two different kinds of rebel groups: opportunists who deploy brutal and indiscriminate violence*; and ideologically motivated soldiers, who are disciplined and use selective violence (Weinstein 2006)..

mechanism at work is information: denunciations are provided by informants, and the extent to which they are credible informs the perpetrator's target selection strategy (Kalyvas 2006). Selective violence is ultimately used when there is credible information available about a target's past actions. Credible information leads to selective violence, whereas a lack of information leads to indiscriminate violence based on a collective, shortcut strategy: perhaps race, ethnicity, or geographic location.

I now seek to combine these theoretical insights – on modes of threat and the role of information – with the unique features of xenophobic conflict. In particular, I now evaluate whether or not the assumptions governing other kinds of conflict extend to the xenophobia case, and how any new assumptions might inform target selection approaches.

3 Explaining Xenophobic Violence

"The xenophobic discourse current in South Africa today represents the authentic effort of the subaltern classes to make sense of their condition: nor is their reading irrational. They *are* struggling for scarce urban resources and there can be little doubt that immigrants are competing for those resources"(Arian and Monson 2011).

3.1 Marking Difference

In South Africa, foreign nationals as a collective group have been rhetorically blamed for a range of society's ills – from crime to stealing wives, jobs, housing, and employment opportunities (Landau 2008; 2009; 2011). Copeland (1939) refers to this frame as a "contrast conception": a particular group embodies everything wrong in society. The most prominent attributes of difference in this context are non-South Africans, who speak a non-South African language. Victims are non-white, though there are no other physical shortcuts for designating the out-group: boundary markers in this context are complicated. As Horowitz notes, "where there are ambiguities of group

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membership, ways are found to make accurate identifications as fast as necessary" (Horowitz 1985, 45).[18] This process is fraught with error in practice. In the pivotal 2008 attacks, for instance, many South Africans were murdered who, in the shortcut process applied by perpetrators, spoke the "wrong" language, wore the "wrong" dress. Meanwhile, many Zimbabweans who speak Shona are able to 'pass' as Zulu speakers and therefore South Africans: many Zimbabweans subsequently develop strategies of "sameness" in order to remain undetected where they live (Hehenkamp 2010). Nonetheless, the articulated differences of a 'foreigner' are used to demarcate group boundaries, despite the inaccuracy of many shortcuts to do so (Horowitz 1985, 80).

3.2 Key differences: displacing politics

The primary distinction between xenophobia and ethnic conflict literature is the role of the state, and the set of assumptions that follow this role. The literature on ethnic conflict and nationalism assumes there is a desire for inclusion; a desire for political goods and resources; and, that the state can impose a hierarchy of groups.

Meanwhile, in the context of South Africa's xenophobia, inclusion is not a priority. Foreign nationals desire invisibility. Strategies of hiddenness are used by foreigners in order to avoid harassment, violence, deportation, and other forms of discrimination (Vearey 2010, 37-38; Vearey 2009; Landau 2006). Foreigners prefer to "hover above the soil and its native population" (Landau 2006, 127). There has been little theorizing or attention towards contexts in which a targeted group desires invisibility, and prefers to maintain exclusion.

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[18] Amongst these shortcuts, the official, and political, status of foreign nationals does not appear to matter to South Africans. In determining legitimate kinds of difference, international legitimacy appears to hold little sway: South Africans do not seek out information on if a foreign national is an asylum seeker or not.

There is similarly little attention to groups who are indifferent or ineligible for conventional modes of political voice. South Africans are not concerned about foreign nationals taking land, or running politics – among other reasons, because foreign nationals appear to have little to no interest in doing so. Foreigners are not a threat to political control, and their position in a political hierarchy is of little concern. Rather, the threat foreigners pose focuses on status and resources in a context of scarcity and hardship.

Horowitz notes how ethnic politics are at the center of politics (Horowitz 1985, 12). Meanwhile, xenophobic conflict is decentered; it ultimately is not political conflict, as we conventionally understand it. This distinction has implications for how to hypothesize around the kinds of roles these groups have in society, the kinds of threats they pose, and how they are targeted for violence.

3.3 Background – Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

When xenophobic attacks erupted across South Africa over two weeks in May 2008 it placed xenophobic violence prominently in the public eye – even though violent attacks against foreign nationals consistently occurred long before and after this wave of violence. The media and citizens alike were surprised that such violence could break out in a relatively stable state like South Africa (Monson and Arian 2011). In the aftermath of the attacks, journalists, human rights groups, and humanitarian agencies invested considerable effort in analyzing why the attacks occurred (CoRMSA 2009; IOM 2009; Lawyers for Human Rights 2009; South African Human Rights Commission 2011; among others).[19]   Despite a robust cataloguing of structural explanations, potential

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[19] Some media outlets hastily blamed 'negrophobia' -- the threat black South Africans feel against black foreign nationals. But this argument cannot account for attacks against Chinese and South Asian foreigners,

triggers, and perpetrator motives, none of this existing scholarship mentions the selection of targets for xenophobic violence (Hissan et al. 2008; Misago 2010; Landau 2011; Vearey 2009).

4 Threats and Target Selection

4.1 Hypotheses

This paper now tests two key hypotheses, derived from the literature summarized above, about the targets of xenophobic violence. The dependent variable in this paper is therefore variation in target selection in acts of xenophobic violence: indiscriminate, group-based, or selective. I develop and test two main hypotheses that predict which kinds of violence will arise from particular kinds of threats. I disaggregate threats into either existential or hierarchical threats.

Fig. 2 Variation in Target Selection

Hierarchical Threat → Diffuse (no info) → Group-based
Hierarchical Threat → Direct (info) → Selective
Existential Threat → Indiscriminate

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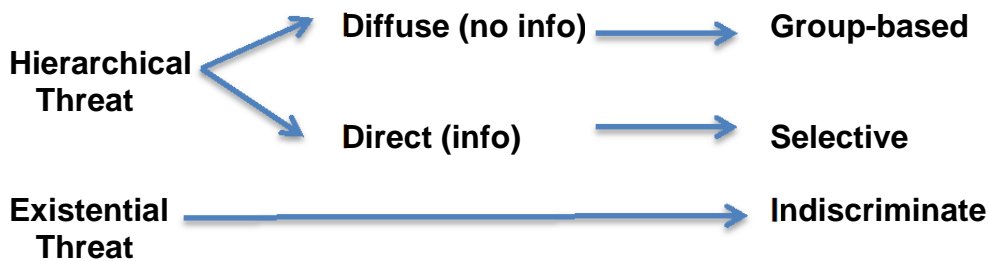
while Lesotho and Swazi citizens remained untouched (Landau 2011, 3). Others quickly claimed the reductivist argument that South Africans simply hate foreigners. But this cannot account for why violence only broke out in certain communities and against certain foreigners and not in others (Misago 2010). Misago has persuasively argued that violence occurs where and when it does as a result of institutional failure – and specifically the lack of conflict resolution mechanisms – coupled with the self-interest of local elites (Misago in Landau 2011, 106). Landau broadly discusses South Africans' imperative to exclude those who stand in the way of their well-earned post-Apartheid success (Landau 2011, 2). Bonner and Nieftagoodien make a historical argument about the legacy of Apartheid, and how South Africans have always determined social boundaries and mechanisms for control themselves (Bonner and Nieftagoodien 2008; Landau 2011). Fauvelle-Aymar and Segatti constructed a ward-level data set on predictors of xenophobic violence, and find that language heterogeneity increases the likelihood of violence (Fauvelle-Aymar and Segatti 2011). Each of the accounts mentioned here is helpful for better understanding South Africa's xenophobic attacks and why they occur when and where they do.

Security threats are existential, and concern the existence of the group (Horowitz 1985; Posen 1993; Fearon 1998). I suggest that an existential threat to South Africans will leads to indiscriminate target selection in the face of self-preservation. The observable implications of each hypothesis are organized by: 1) precipitating events[20]; and then 2) target selection.

Hypothesis 1: The perception of a security threat from foreign nationals leads to indiscriminate violence against foreigners.

Under this hypothesis, I define "security threat" as a threat to territorial control, physical safety, and possible extinction. Horowitz suggests that violence is indiscriminate within the target group, but that these groups are targeted based on a threat to overall security (Horowitz 2001). The groups fear extinction. Based on Kalyvas' (2006) work, an area in which there is partial foreigner control leads to indiscriminate violence against foreign nationals. Under this hypothesis, xenophobic sentiment is widespread and attacks in highly heterogeneous communities will target the most convenient foreign national targets. There is a fear of all foreigners, which matches the anti-foreigner rhetoric of South Africans (Landau 2011). The mechanisms at work under this hypothesis are the security threat posed by foreign nationals. The observable implications of this hypothesis are: 1) sentiments and mobilization against foreigners target all foreign nationals; and 2) all foreigner groups are targeted in attacks.

The second key threat is hierarchical: it concerns the dominance of one group over another, without the threat of extinction. I further disaggregate hierarchical threats as either diffuse or direct, and then social or economic. Building on Kalyvas' (2006) work, I suggest that when the perpetrator has credible information about a a specific individual (or small set of individuals), they pose a direct threat. Meanwhile,

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[20] In terms of the limitations to this design, coding xenophobic violence raises a range of challenges. It is difficult to determine whether or not an act of violence is xenophobic in nature. In this study, the observable implications of each hypothesis on xenophobic targeting necessitate that there were xenophobic precipitating events to each attack. These events could include anti-foreigner meetings, poster campaigns, verbal threats, and other kinds of precipitating events to attacks that specifically target and harass foreign nationals. However, there is a complicated interaction between acts of xenophobic violence and violence that might be motivated for personal gain. The difficulty of knowing intent, a problem for all kinds of violence motivated by social categories, is the main limitation of this study. It is challenging to research xenophobic violence since xenophobic motivations cannot be confirmed – as is the case in literature on race, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion, among other categories. In South Africa, there were consistent charges that young people carried out a xenophobic attack to legitimize their own opportunistic violence against foreign nationals (Anonymous, Personal Interviews 2010).[20] For these reasons, this paper proceeds with the knowledge that any approach to analyzing xenophobic motivations will be imperfect. An act of violence is therefore coded as xenophobic in this study if there are clear, precipitating events to physical violence against foreign nationals. The scope of 'violence' is discussed in the section below. By focusing on clear precipitating events in order to code an act of violence as xenophobic, this paper adopts a conservative approach, and likely undercounts episodes of xenophobic violence.

a diffuse threat arises when such information is not available for a given threat, and instead a shortcut is used to indiscriminately target within the selected group. I understand missing information as a two-fold process: South Africans do not have information available on 1) who to specifically target; and 2) the motives and intentions of the target group. In short, available information leads to a 'direct' threat, and therefore selective targeting. Missing information renders a threat diffuse, which leads to group targeting. These threats can either be economic or social threats. Ultimately, and as shown in figure 2, the kind of threat, and the information available about these threats) to South Africans leads to different kinds of target selection (indiscriminate, group-based or selective)

Fig. 3 Target selection based on threats to hierarchy

	Economic	**Social**
Direct	<u>Selective</u> targeting, ex. Somali shop owners that are very successful	<u>Selective</u> targeting, ex. Mozambicans in preferred housing
Diffuse	<u>Group</u> targeting, ex. Zimbabweans that do not pay tax, specific targets unknown	<u>Group</u> targeting, ex. Somalis that do not attend meetings

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): When an economic threat is direct, incidences of selective violence are perpetrated against foreign nationals.

Under this hypothesis, I define "economic threat" as a threat to economic livelihood. Factors relevant to these kinds of threats are foreclosed businesses and lost job opportunities. A robust literature on civil and ethnic conflict points to the role of economic threats, and opportunities, in instigating violence (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Ross 2006; 2012; Le Billon 2012). The mechanisms at work under this hypothesis are the direct economic threat posed by foreign nationals. The observable implications of this hypothesis are: 1) Sentiments and mobilization against foreigners targets those who are perceived as an economic threat; and 2) Foreigner groups that are perceived to pose an economic threat are targeted in attacks.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): When a social threat is direct, incidences of selective violence are perpetrated against foreign nationals

Under this hypothesis, a direct social threat includes: a specific foreigner, or specific sub-set of foreigners possessing ideal housing (a desirable area versus a less desirable area of a township), success of employment or small business, and purchasing power (cars, amenities, other forms of visual wealth). Petersen's work on ethnic violence is most helpful for this hypothesis. Petersen suggests that the highest hierarchical group is targeted when perpetrators are motivated by resentment. With resentment, the disadvantaged group attacks first, and based on what is an "unwarranted subordinate

position" [21](Petersen 2002). This finding relates with Gurr's "relative deprivation" theory (Gurr 1968; Pillay and Gelb 2008). In line with these theories, the targets of attacks should be foreign nationals for whom credible information is known about their success, in relation to their South African community members. The mechanisms at work under this hypothesis are direct social threats. The observable implications of this hypothesis are: 1) mobilization against foreigners target the most successful foreigners; and 2) Foreigner groups that are perceived to pose a threat are targeted in attacks.

Hypothesis 2c (H2c): Incidences of group discrimination are perpetrated against foreign nationals when there is a diffuse social threat.

Under this hypothesis, a diffuse social threat includes a range of ways in which foreign nationals violate 'community rules'. Resistance to 'community rules' typically refers to when foreigners refuse to attend meetings, cooperate with authorities, or abide by local informal protocols in ways that do not provide information about specific targets. Under this hypothesis, group violence occurs in the absence of credible information about selective targets, and when the entire foreign national group poses a diffuse threat to South Africans. The mechanisms at work under this hypothesis are diffuse social threats. The observable implications of this hypothesis are: 1) Lacking information for specific targets, mobilization against foreigners target the foreigner groups who might pose a social threat; and 2) Foreigner groups that are perceived to pose a threat are targeted in attacks.

Hypothesis 2d (H2d): Incidences of group discrimination are perpetrated against foreign nationals when there is a diffuse economic threat.

A diffuse economic threat most commonly includes a range of ways in which foreign nationals appear to gain an "unfair advantage" in business affairs, in ways that do not provide information about specific targets. For instance, South Africans might believe that foreign shops fixing their prices too low in Ramaphosa or Diepsloot, selected targets of violence often exhibited some kind of 'unfair advantage' that further excluded them from the community. Under this hypothesis, group violence occurs if the entire foreign national group poses a threat to South African groups in the absence of credible information about specific targets. The mechanisms at work under this hypothesis are diffuse economic threats. The observable implications of this hypothesis are: 1) Lacking information for specific targets, mobilization against foreigners target the foreigner groups who might pose a social threat; and 2) Foreigner groups that are perceived to pose a threat are targeted in attacks.

4.2 Case Selection and Design

I now seek to further test my hypotheses in four detailed case studies in South

Africa's Gauteng province: Ramaphosa, Diepsloot, Atteridgeville and Itereleng. Each

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[21] Petersen's examples of an "unwarranted subordinate position" are very state-centric and less relevant to xenophobic violence: country language, composition of bureaucracy, police, officer corps, street names, other symbols, distribution of land (Petersen 2001).

case study's experience with xenophobic violence in 2008, and then prior and subsequent to then, is discussed in depth. The observable implications of each hypothesis are analyzed at the end of each case location description. The fieldwork sites on which this paper is based were originally chosen based on a typical case selection strategy for a study I conducted with the African Centre for Migration and Society (Gerring and Seawright 2008). I selected four cases at random among the original fourteen research sites for this broader research study, I selected South Africa as a case study based on my long-term fieldwork in the country.

These hypotheses are evaluated against field data collected over two years, from May 2010-May 2012, in South Africa.[22] This data was collected by the African Centre for Migration and Society's social cohesion research project. For this project, the research team, for which the author was a lead researcher, selected eleven communities that experienced xenophobic violence around May 2008, and three negative cases across South Africa. The case selection for this paper, described next, focuses on a sub-set of influential case communities in which xenophobic violence took place. I selected one of the negative case sites (Itereleng), but it is important to note that it is not a negative case for the purposes of this study. Each of the three negative cases experienced xenophobic attacks at times other than May 2008. As a result their role as a 'negative case' is not analytically meaningful, and I will instead strive to conduct future research on possible negative cases in the future.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed and piloted by the research team

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[22] For this project I explored opportunities to include quantitative data on xenophobic attacks. However, as existing data currently stands, it is not possible to code attacks based on strategies of target selection in a way that would be meaningful for these hypotheses. This should be a prioritized component of any future work on this topic.

on a broader set of questions related to xenophobic violence and social cohesion. A significant section of the interview guide was dedicated to understanding the community context and cataloguing incidences of xenophobic violence in each research site, and this paper relies on that data. Interviews were conducted over the course of two years with local civil society groups, ward councilors, youth league members, community police forum members, and other political leaders. Focus group discussions and conflict mapping exercises were also conducted with both South African and foreign national community residents over eighteen months. Given the complex and fragmented nature of these research sites, all interviewees were recruited using snowball sampling techniques.

5 Case Communities

Ramaphosa

Ramaphosa, established in 1994, is a township bordering Reiger Park outside Johannesburg. It was in Ramaphosa that an infamous photo was taken in May 2008: Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, a young Mozambican father, was beaten, doused with gasoline, and lit on fire. The scene of his burning body came to define the 2008 attacks.

The May 2008 attacks were allegedly part of a 'war' between South Africans and Mozambicans in the township that had been an ongoing phenomenon over the previous years. According to the South Africans, Mozambicans were criminals. The Mozambicans organized a meeting in May in which it was determined they would attack South Africans living in Ramaphosa (Dube 2010; Monson and Arian 2011). A South African man was allegedly chased and murdered by a group of Mozambican men. Then, on the weekend of May 16th and just after violence broke out in Alexandra, South Africans organized street committee meetings to retaliate against the Mozambican attack. Mozambicans were

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killed, and their homes looted. Despite the broadly xenophobic tone of attacks, the targets were Mozambican (Dube 2010).

After the May attacks, there was a gradual reconciliation with Mozambicans in the area following the intervention of local governing bodies. In the most recent, 2010-2011 attacks against Somali shop owners, a field researcher asked why Mozambican shops were not targeted. According to a community development worker in Ramaphosa, they were "reintegrated into society" after the attacks and are no longer a threat: they even intermarry with South Africans. Instead, the new targets of violence are the Somalis (Bernadette, personal interview, 2011).

In 2009 the Rampahosa Business Forum (a group of South African business owners) formed and demanded the removal of Somali shops.[23] Shop owners were attacked, harassed, and intimidated, and for three to four weeks all Somali shops closed down. While the police held meetings with local business owners to explain that it is illegal to attack Somali shop owners, they continued intimidating them anyway (Bernadette, personal interview, 2011). The police colonel told Somalis they need to lodge a formal complaint, but they never did (Bernadette, personal interview, 2011). Bernadette argued that this is because the Somalis are not integrated: they live in their shops and do not attend community meetings. For instance, Somali shop owners failed to attend a meeting called in September 2009. Prior to this meeting, an agreement was allegedly reached that there could not be any new Somali shops. Eddie, a member of the business forum, argued that the Somali shop owners reneged on this agreement and opened more shops. The ongoing attacks and looting on Somalis writ large, and forced closure of Somali shops

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[23] Somali shop owners typically buy goods in bulk, and can sell their goods at a lower price than South African typically can. As a result, it is a common argument that Somali shop owners are taking South African business.

came after this reneged agreement and lack of Somali participation in meetings.

In Ramaphosa, there is no evidence that South Africans have ever indiscriminately attacked foreigners– Zimbabweans and other groups remained unscathed while meetings led to premeditated attacks on both Mozambicans and Somalis. The attacks responding to a security threat therefore appear to be intentional and group targeted, in contradiction to my first hypothesis. The Ramaphosa case finds evidence for two modes of hierarchical threats; instances of diffuse economic threats and direct social threats were not observed, and therefore neither supported or rejected. When information is available about the direct success of Somali shops, selective violence was carried out against shopowners. However, the ongoing violence with Somalis also clearly represents the diffuse social threat hypothesis, which I hypothesized leads to group-targeted violence. Somalis repeatedly failed to attend community meetings and isolated themselves from the rest of Ramaphosa: "they sleep in the homes and do not intermarry"(Eddie, Personal Interview, 2011). While Somali shops were targeted, seemingly because of their success, Somalis overall were targeted for violating community rules. Security threats and diffuse social threats lead to group-targeted violence in both sets of ongoing violence in Ramaphosa, while direct economic threats lead to selective violence.[24]

Atteridgeville

Atteridgeville is a township located to the west of Pretoria that is notorious for both ongoing xenophobic violence and resistance against local government. In February 2008

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[24] This initial case leads to two observations. First it will be important to note if one mode of targeting dominates when evidence is found for either both direct and diffuse social threats, or direct and diffuse economic threats. Secondly, it will be important to notice whether direct social or economic threats really do only lead to selective targeting in the absence of diffuse social or economic threats.

a group of people came into the GACO[25] office andblamed foreigners for cheap labor. They then orchestrated attacks in the Mchenguville area of the township (Ernest, personal interview, 2011). While there were only isolated attacks in May 2008, a series of major attacks against foreign nationals took place in the following years. In March 2010, Abdullah Asam reported threats against Somali businessmen. Ata community business meeting a group of South Africans demanded R1500[26] per Somali shop for their 'protection' (Alphonse, UNHCR, personal Interview, 2011). On another occasion in March 2010, Somalis and Zimbabweans were brought together at a funeral parlor by a group of South African business owners. The South African business owners claimed they wanted to carry out a march against xenophobia and needed the support of foreign business people for t-shirts and transport: they again requested 1500R from each foreign shop owner. When the foreigners refused to pay, the business owners started marching in Atteridgeville and attacking and burning down the foreign shops. The police ultimately responded and halted the attacks after about twenty shops were attacked and looted.

The attacks were characterized by respondents as both about legitimate frustration by the community about successful spaza shops and foreigners that take local jobs (Makola, personal interview, 2011). Several participants remarked that Angolans and Mozambicans, who came to the settlement earlier, were fine. According to one participant, "Mozambicans are industrious handiworkers who repair shoes and cars, or they are builders and carpenters. They are humble, they agree to register their business with SARS and employ South Africans"(anonymous personal interview, 2011). Meanwhile, Somali and Zimbabwean migrants have more recently come to the

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[25] The GACO is the Gauteng Atteridgeville Civic Organisation, a powerful civil society organization that is a parallel leadership structure in the Jeffsville area of Atteridgeville.

[26] Approximately 150 USD.

community. In a focus group discussion, one participant, echoed by several others, claimed that the Zimbabweans will take jobs at any pay, and the Somalis' shops are too successful (Focus group discussion 2011). One youth league member argued, "Wealth is the problem. We question how they get all the houses, stands and work without relevant papers that identify themselves, while residents of SA are struggling with accumulating all those things"(personal interview 2011). The focus group discussants similarly claimed that, "the only problem is when foreigners do not have legal papers" (Focus group discussion 2011).

Participants also argued that the foreigners hide themselves, they do not participate. Somali business owner Mr. Ali's uncle was attacked, and he resents that people target his innocent family members.At the same time, Mr. Ali said that he does not participate in business meetings because there are 'no results' (Mr. Ali, personal interview, 2011).

In Atteridvegille there is no evidence that South Africans attack foreigners indiscriminately –attacks have been premeditated, demonstrating clear community grievances. When information was not available about the economic threat posed by foreigners 'taking South African jobs', group-based targeting took place in the Mchengueville neighborhood, a predominantly Zimbabwean area. Meanwhile, the direct economic threat hypothesis for selective violence also holds: Somali shopkeepers are specifically and elaborately targeted by the South African business owners. However, based on the field data, Somalis also avoid community meetings and are perceived to violate local rules and formal paperwork, and were targeted accordingly, which supports the diffuse social threat hypothesis. The Mozambicans, in contrast, allegedly hire South Africans, have the proper paperwork, and are 'humble'. A diffuse, group-level threat

appears to be mitigated when the potentially targeted group takes measures to demonstrate that they are not a threat. The Mozambicans in this case provide information on their motives and intentions that seem to prevent attack.

Diepsloot

Diepsloot is a sprawling, informal settlement in northern Johannesburg. In May 2008 an angry mob blockaded the township entrance while Somali and Pakistani spaza shops and businesses were looted and burned down (Monson and Arian 2011, 34). However, according to a Mozambican man, "they seemed not to care about anything else besides looting, because I was in the tuck shop and they did nothing to me" (Monson and Arian 2011, 35). The attacks, on the heels of violence in Alexandra, broadly targeted all foreign nationals (Somali, Pakistani, Zimbabwean, Mozambican), but they also were not premeditated in any observable way. Monson and Arian (2011) suggest that the May 2008 attacks in Diepsloot were more opportunistic than a concerted effort to harm and remove foreigners from the township.

According to the community police forum chairperson, since the May 2008 attacks "[the community] still has hatred for the foreigners" (Jacob, CPF chairperson, personal interview, 2011). Several participants claimed that South Africans feel threatened by the presence of Somalis. A respondent also argued that Zimbabweans will take any job, pushing South African workers out (Anonymous, Personal Interview, 2011). There are general complaints that foreigners steal South African wives, jobs, homes, and business opportunities (Peggy, Personal Interview, 2011).

However, despite widespread xenophobic sentiments, only Somali business owners have been targeted for violence since the 2008 attacks. As early as 2006 the "South

African Business Forum of Diepsloot" issued letters demanding the immediate removal of Somali shops. According to a South African business owner, "Somali shops have mushroomed everywhere and seem to find a way to build their shops in residential yards . . . they are found on every corner"(Justice from NOWETO, personal interview, 2011). Somali shops were looted and one Somali owner was shot in 2010.

According to a member of the ANC Youth League, ""they have done a survey, according to this survey one has to give back to the community and the Somali have to do this by hiring South Africans. Somali are not hiring South Africans however, they are generating income from South Africans"(ANYCL member, personal interview, 2011). Another ANC Youth League member claimed that Somalis were invited to a business meeting, but then called the police instead because they thought it was an excuse to attack them (Jacob, ANC Youth League, personal interview 2011). Jacob made a point of noting that the Indians came but the Somalis did not. "Most recently they have attended, which is good", he claimed (Jacob, ANC Youth League, personal interview 2011). The business association is currently trying to ensure that Somali shops are tax-compliant, and the community has put an end to the culture of 'protection fees' to prevent attacks against them. Somalis are increasingly attending meetings but the community is now attacking the Ethiopian shops. According to community development worker, the Ethiopians keep valuable airtime stock and they do not participate in the community activities.

In Diepsloot there is some evidence that South Africans indiscriminately attack foreigners – the 2008 attacks, in addition to targeting Somali and Pakistani shops, broadly targeted Mozambican, Zimbabwean, and other foreigner homes. However, prior and subsequent attacks have been premeditated, demonstrating clear community grievances.

The Diepsloot case supports the direct economic threat, and diffuse social and economic threat hypotheses. Foreigners who represent a direct economic threat are targeted through selective violence, as seen with Somali business owners. However, the Somalis and then Ethiopians also experience group-based targeting based on their failure to attend community meetings and isolated themselves from the rest of Diepsloot; Somalis were group-targeted first, and then Ethiopians followed suit and became the next target of violence. Somalis no longer presented a diffuse social threat when they provided information about the motives and intentions of their group.

Itereleng

Itereleng was originally chosen as a negative case since it did not experience xenophobic violence in May 2008. However, further research in the community revealed that there were episodes of violence leading up to and after the May 2008 attacks. According to South African Police Services Colonel Brits, the reasons for violence are that "foreigners take locals' girlfriends, wives and jobs" (Colonel Brits, personal interview 2011). During attacks from 2008 and the completion of this fieldwork in 2011, South Africans allegedly go to foreigners' shops with masks and take everything they can.

During attacks in February 2008, foreigners' homes were destroyed, with many injured and several killed. AZAPO[27] promoted the idea that there were too many foreign nationals and that the government had failed to formally house people or provide resources. So the argument went, if there were fewer foreigners, it would be easier for government to deliver services. While seemingly an argument against all foreigners, further interviews revealed that the anti-foreigner violence in 2008 and 2010 was rooted

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[27] AZAPO is the Azanian People's Organisation.

in landlord-tenant issues. Forty percent of tenants are foreigners and primarily Zimbabwean, according to Councillor Essop (Councillor Essop, personal interview 2011). These foreigners pay money when there isn't supposed to be a landlord on public land. In 2008 the foreigners were forcibly evicted because they took the place of South Africans who were evicted from backyard shacks. Several participants identified the source of xenophobic conflict as fundamentally linked to landlord-tenant issue. Zimbabweans were willing to pay rent and South Africans were not: the disaffected tenants were pushed out and targeted Zimbabwean tenants in retaliation.

According to the CPF, community members started circulating pamphlets on 1 September 2010, claiming that xenophobia will start again. Then, South Africans began to write xenophobic signs on the backs of banana crates and place them around the community. At the time of writing this paper, further attacks were not known to have occurred.

In Itereleng there is no evidence that South Africans indiscriminately target foreign nationals – Although the most recent threats were towards foreign nationals writ large, these did not materialize into attacks against a broad range of foreign nationals. The longstanding tenant/landlord issue, seemingly leading to indiscriminate violence, was instead premeditated, demonstrating clear community grievances. The Itereleng case supports direct social threat hypothesis, in which foreigners are selectively targeted based on their housing. The diffuse social threat hypothesis is supported in the Itereleng case, even though violence selectively targeted Zimbabwean tenants of a particular housing unit: the foreigner tenants isolated themselves from the rest of Itereleng by refusing to engage on the issue, and remaining in housing against the community's will. In this case

perpetrators did know how to target, but they were unclear on the motives and intentions of the group being targeted, which led to broader attacks against Zimbaweans.

4 Findings

The findings of this paper lend tentative support to the hypotheses around hierarchical threat. It did not find any support for the hypothesis that an existential security threat will lead to indiscriminate violence. Beyond the 2008 attacks, indiscriminate violence did not take place in the four case study communities. As a result, the existential threat hypotheses in neither confirmed or rejected, and the nature and effects of existential threats as well as grounds for indiscriminate violence needs to be better understood.

An untested trend in the data could be that major events play a role in the likelihood of indiscriminate violence. For instance, communities experiencing violence around the May 2008 attacks were disproportionately indiscriminate compared to, for instance, the findings in these case studies. Other instances of seemingly indiscriminate violence against foreigners across South Africa stem from service delivery protests and other public events. Moments such as the May 2008 spree of violence, or community protests and town meetings that lead to anti-foreigner sentiments also appear to be precipitating events that are more likely to trigger indiscriminate violence. This phenomenon merits further research, and could draw on Horowitz's (2001) work in order to better understand the logic and perhaps exceptionalism of public events and mass riots for target selection.

This in-depth examination of four field sites nonetheless revealed that many attacks initially considered 'indiscriminate' were deliberate and targets were intentionally

selected, either against groups or individuals. The lack of support for indiscriminate violence stemming from security threats further indicates that xenophobic violence – rather than a rash, mob-driven set of attacks – follows a logic. The selection of targets by South African is part of a rational strategy in response to the threats posed by foreign nationals, as well as the information available to them.

With respect to the hypotheses on hierarchical threats, the hypothesis on selective violence resulting from direct social threats and economic threats held in each of the four case studies in which such kinds of threat were present. Similarly, the hypothesis on group-targeted violence resulting from diffuse social and economic threats was observed in each of the four case studies in which this kind of threat was present. These insights are based on limited data, and these findings therefore need to be tested more rigorously and broadly. However, this assessment of four township case studies in South Africa provides me with a nascent evidence base from which to further research the selection of targets for xenophobic violence.

5 Conclusions

I conclude by briefly discussing the implications of these findings for theories of xenophobic violence writ large, and rational motivations for target selection in particular. This paper revealed a rational logic for xenophobic targeting that demands further attention. In keeping with the trend of findings in literature on civil wars, these acts of violence are not random, uncalculated acts. The literature on violence puts forward a range of rationalist theories related to threat and the use of information that had not been stitched to together for non-civil war contexts. This paper revealed how the rational motivations for xenophobic target selection appear to be a function of threat and available

information.   In this context, targets are first selected for violence based on perceived threats to security or hierarchy. For hierarchical threats they are further selected based on whether or not information is available about them. Descriptively, these targets can be selected over either economic or social forms of threat. The hypotheses put forward in this paper are tentatively supported and demand further scholarly attention and testing.

This paper also draws attention to the need for greater theorizing and empirical research on xenophobic violence. Examining xenophobic violence further can include an assessment of whether or not these hypotheses apply to other violence contexts where political aims, goods, and hierarchy are not relevant as well. For instance, gang violence in ungoverned areas, or other forms of inter-communal violence in remote borderlands (such as the ongoing killing of white farmers and laborers in the periphery of many Southern African states) demonstrate forms of low-level violence in which the state is both uninvolved and not a site of control. Foreigners, gang members, and those in borderlands are often both illegitimate, and disinterested with gaining political legitimacy. The nuances of the South African case – an Apartheid legacy, and millions of foreigners entering the country over the past decade – might be unique, but the reality of a context for violence in which political legitimacy is absent or irrelevant is less so. New forms of micro-level violence are often are based on the rules and hierarchy of communities in which political structure play little role in determining or refereeing those rules. In addition to providing initial findings on target selection, this paper hopes to spark interest in how these mechanisms can be applied and further honed to these new contexts.

In the future, this research project seeks to take two key steps. First, I am interesting in how threats are understood in 'negative' cases, where violence does not

take place.[28] Second, I would like to analyze a broader set of cases both in South Africa and in other settings of xenophobic violence. And finally, this research project will further examine indiscriminate violence and public events – are there any instances of indiscriminate violence outside of public events, and do these instances fit into this project's existing hypotheses? Is seemingly indiscriminate violence simply based on limited analysis; is there perhaps a more specific selection criteria guiding all acts of xenophobic violence? I hope that my analysis of xenophobic violence – in both its forms of target selection and broader scholarly importance –can serve as a useful springboard to probe at least some of these questions more critically in the future.

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[28] Beyond the scope of this paper's research question, I am interested in if the same social, economic, and security threats exist in negative cases, and if so, what might account for the lack of violence. Misago suggests that the location of xenophobic attacks stems from weak governance structures, which aligns with Fearon's work on threats and third party commitments in ethnic conflict (Misago 2009; Fearon 1998). Do South Africans take action against foreign nationals because they believe no one else (i.e. government) is able to do so?

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