EXORCISING THE DEMONS WITHIN

XENOPHOBIA, VIOLENCE AND STATECRAFT IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA
EXORCISING THE DEMONS WITHIN

Xenophobia, Violence and Statecraft in Contemporary South Africa

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INTRODUCING THE DEMONS
Loren B Landau

On 11 May 2008, residents of Alexandra Township turned on their neighbours. From this densely populated settlement located just beyond the shadows of Sandton, sub-Saharan Africa’s financial centre, violence spread quickly: first across Gauteng province then to informal settlements and townships around the country. In a fortnight, citizens murdered more than 60 people, raped dozens, wounded close to 700 and displaced more than 100 000.1

Along the way, perpetrators destroyed or redistributed millions of Rands worth of goods and hundreds of homes. Most victims were from beyond South Africa’s borders, but a third of those killed were South Africans who had married foreigners, refused to participate in the violent debauchery, or had the misfortune to belong to groups that could not justify claims to a patch of urban space. After offering unheeded appeals for calm, the government deployed the armed forces.2 When the army arrived most of the offending outsiders had already been cleansed from their hostile communities and the belligerents slipped silently back into the townships’ embrace.

Official responses to the attacks were confused, contradictory, and often overtly ideological. During the violence, the government first denied that there was a crisis,3 then blamed criminal elements, opposition parties and ‘sinister forces’. It occasionally credited a mysterious ‘third force’, evoking the hidden hand of pro-apartheid leaders in the violence that marked apartheid’s dying days.4 Ronnie Kasrils, then Minister of Intelligence, later admitted these accusations were ‘misguided’, although some within government continued to blame criminals, and even foreigners, for instigating the violence.5 Amid the confusion, statements from perpetrators and ordinary township residents made it clear that the impetus for the violence was their own.

These were not random acts of criminality or spontaneous protest but violence targeted at demons within; people whose presence came to be seen as an existential threat to South Africa’s collective transformation and renaissance. Government officials have since claimed that the foreigners are safe6 and that ‘... we have moved forward’.7 While officials may have shifted
their attention elsewhere, a second demon remains: a population ready to turn violently on itself.

Community leaders have continued to issue threats and draft ultimatums demanding that foreigners get out. Where words are not enough, business associations and gangsters kill foreign shopkeepers, residents and other purported competitors. Dozens have been killed since the violence ‘ended’. As this book was being finalised, the newspapers were again filled with reports of people packing their bags, selling their goods, and moving to safety in case the violence returns.

The 2008 attacks were neither the most severe nor will they be remembered as the most important in South Africa’s long and deadly political history. Although almost as many died during those two weeks in May as in the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, these recent deaths are destined for little more than a sidebar in South Africa’s popular imagination and historiography. Such exclusion itself reveals the degree to which migration, xenophobia, and non-racial forms of discrimination remain overlooked or are overtly silenced in scholarly, popular, and political discourse.

This is a mistake. No matter how much officials and citizens may overlook their significance, the 2008 attacks reflect an important point in the country’s post-apartheid, post-authoritarian existence: a moment when the government’s legitimacy and the post-apartheid order were called into question by a world watching horrific images of families fleeing from buildings and men who had been set alight. These episodes were not part of a civil war or a revolution, but they nonetheless revealed cracks in the country’s legal order and social compact. Behind them were a mix of deeply felt emotions, including anger and resentment. The essence of citizenship was at once revealed and subtly redefined. It is these configurations and re-orderings of power, population, and place that this book explores.

The following chapters make sense of recent anti-outsider violence by situating it within an extended history of South African statecraft; a history that both produced the conditions for the attacks and, to a lesser extent, has been reshaped by them. As a number of the authors make clear, decades of discursive and institutional efforts to control political and physical space have generated two demons. The first is an enemy within: an amorphously delimited group of outsiders that is inherently threatening, often indistinguishable from others, and effectively impossible to spatially exclude.

Current discourses and practices – buttressed by past dispensations and principles – have generated a second demon: a society capable of the horrific violence described in some detail in the chapters that follow. In this violence we see the imperative to exclude and the means of achieving that exclusion: hand-to-hand, street-level violence. For many of those behind the attacks,
and for those empathising with them, controlling the movement of certain people within the country or across its borders is essential to security, prosperity, and South Africa’s national self-realisation. In the weltanschauung of those committing and abetting the attacks, the seemingly irrational May violence is not only rational and legitimate, but necessary.

Reflecting the by-products of the South African state’s efforts to guide its citizens to salvation through economic transformation, outsiders have come to be understood as a threatening obstacle to achieving justice and retribution for decades of discrimination and indignity. When state institutions evidently failed to deliver on their promises to protect and promote a politically entitled but materially deprived citizenry, the population (or parts of it) took on the obligation to alienate and exclude those standing in its way.

From this perspective, the violence is neither a sign of chaos nor a threat to existing political institutions and subjectivities. While the attacks undermine efforts to establish a hegemonic order principled by the Constitution, the forms of legitimate (if illegal) violence seen across the townships serve to modify, extend, and entrench various forms of spatial control, political authority and sovereignty. Although the South African state has long sought to monopolise control over space in the interests of national self-realisation, the violence reveals a population that remains active in determining the boundaries and means of control.

Through its focus on the politics of statecraft, this book moves beyond the slew of hastily compiled reports, policy documents, and academic publications that emerged in the months following the attacks. Invaluable in documenting the events and immediate reactions to them, these accounts often better reveal the authors’ politics and ideological predilections than the causes or significance of the events.

Indeed, many of these explanations falter when faced with empirical or logical interrogation. Those rooted in negrophobia simply do not account for regular attacks on Chinese or South Asians. Nor do they help us understand why citizens of Swaziland and Lesotho were relatively unscathed while some South Africans were targeted. Secondary analysis – reflected here in Fauvelle-Aymar and Segatti’s chapter – also vitiates claims that the poorest and most disadvantaged were behind the rampage. As for arguments that the state was not doing enough to control the movement of people into South Africa, the 300,000 people it expelled in the year prior to the attacks rank it among the world’s leaders in deportations. That Johannesburg’s police officers spend thousands of hours a year questioning, arresting, and detaining foreigners also suggests more than a mild interest in immigration control.

In the minds of many, no amount of state action would be enough. Glaser’s argument that the attacks reflect a democratic uprising importantly captures the social legitimacy behind the mêlée, but naïvely ignores the elite political
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manipulation and precedents that informed and, to some degree, animated the violence.\textsuperscript{19}

Beyond interrogating the 2008 attacks, this book makes a broader, if implicit, statement about studying the state and politics in an era of human mobility and heightening social diversity. For almost two decades, social scientists have recognised the limits of analysis based on the modernist Weberian trifecta of state, population and territory.\textsuperscript{20} Subsequent work has helped us understand that while the nation-state is not always the most effective unit of analysis, ideas and practices associated with it continue to inform political mobilisation.\textsuperscript{21}

This text documents the reverberations of the modern state ideal, with a citizenry emerging and defining itself during a time in which the state is but one of many actors regulating production, place and people. It does this by treating migration and other movements as exogenous factors that help expose the inner workings of South Africa’s emerging political realities by generating events and performance visible to external observers.\textsuperscript{22}

However defined, the arrival and presence of outsiders is analogous to particles colliding with a stable mass in physicists’ experiments. Through the interactions of these bodies we gain new insights into their respective composition while witnessing the potential inception of new compounds formed from existing social matter. These compounds may ultimately form the stable and enduring basis of the post-Weberian era. As the remainder of this book demonstrates, they may also remain highly volatile and dangerous.

Precursors to violence: generating the demons within\textsuperscript{23}

This book is neither a South African history nor a holistic account of migration, violence, and authority in South Africa. Some have attempted to write those stories, or aspects of them.\textsuperscript{24} New perspectives, documents, and scholars will continue to add to our understanding of these formative processes. Nonetheless, to understand the significance of the 2008 attacks we must situate them and their reactions within attitudes and institutions bequeathed by earlier generations.

In doing so, this chapter outlines a set of regulatory reverberations: ideas and practices initiated by formal state institutions that have, through diffusion and decentralisation, become the largely acephalous language and mode of politics and social interaction. By labelling and governing reactions to others, these practices – now embedded and naturalised among segments of the South African population – act both to guide and to constrain contemporary office holders, social movements and residents, regardless of origin or destination.

Many of the processes that helped generate patterns of contemporary exclusion and violence share roots with patterns of colonial domination and
state formation elsewhere in the world. But while the ‘alien’ as a concept and set of enforcing practices has colonial roots, it achieved a more sophisticated, insidious status during the apartheid era. Turned against its own would-be citizens, the state categorised and excluded ‘surplus people’ from both politics and urban space.

Under its grandest machinations apartheid turned black South Africans into ‘foreign natives’ within the country, guests of the South African Republic should they stray beyond the homelands (that is, Bantustans) to which they ostensibly belonged. In law, if not always in practice, black South Africans were made temporary sojourners in the city; aliens whose usefulness lasted only for as long as they could build the city, care for gardens and pools, or nurture white children. As a 1921 Transvaal Province Commission argued, ‘[T]he Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man’s creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefore when he ceases to minister.’

The dual pre-apartheid concerns with protecting privileged insiders and ensuring the utility of selected outsiders culminated in apartheid-era spatial planning and regulation. Although the policy was never perfectly implemented, interlopers were officially and popularly seen as a drain on resources and a threat to the state’s realisation of its cultural and political order. Indeed, the motivation for alienating and spatially excluding citizens related not only to efficiency and health, it emerged from concerns that high population densities and acute deprivation would resist the state’s distorted, racist vision. As Posel argues, ‘In the state’s view, the larger the urban African proletariat, the greater the concomitant threats to the country’s political stability and industrial peace.’

The purpose here is not to decry an unjust dompas system, which was, after all, a logical extension of the bio-political technologies employed elsewhere in the colonial world and the more liberal states of Europe and North America. Rather, it is to highlight antecedents to contemporary socio-political configurations that shaped the 2008 attacks. In this regard, two particular features resonate throughout this book and the events of 2008. The first is the coding of unregulated (and even regulated) human mobility as a threat to insiders’ economic and physical wellbeing and national (or even sub-national) achievement. The second is the use of individuals’ immutable geographic or cultural points of origin to determine potential utility and the right to claim national or sub-national citizenship.

A deep suspicion of those who move – particularly those moving to urban areas – continues to infuse official and popular discourse. As Peberdy notes, ‘...the state’s restrictive and exclusionary immigration policies include all immigrants – black and white – in order to protect the new members of the
“new” South Africa.29 Indeed, throughout its post-colonial history South Africa has regularly spoken of the nation as a body that could be bolstered or, more regularly, contaminated by outsiders — native or foreign.30 Many government leaders, regardless of race or political affiliation, privately (and occasionally publicly) share a former Minister of Home Affairs’s sentiment that:

South Africa is faced with another threat, and that is the SADC ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where you live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country.31

Extending these fears into policy, the South African government has all but derailed plans to create a regional labour market through a Schengen-like system of visa-waivers and portable labour rights.32 Given the futility of official control measures, the fear and accusations remain: foreigners are the source of HIV/AIDS, the primary cause of crime, and a threat to South African jobs and cultural values.33

It comes as little surprise, then, that a national survey conducted by the Southern African Migration Project in 2006 revealed that 84 per cent of South Africans believed that the country was admitting too many foreigners. The same study reflected startlingly high levels of support for strong, citizen-led measures to get rid of them.34 Similarly, 65 per cent of South African respondents in a 2003 survey in cosmopolitan Johannesburg thought it would be good if most of them left.35 Of the 70 per cent of South African respondents who thought that crime had increased, three-quarters identified immigrants as a primary reason.36 Even scholars often succumb to the zero-sum logic that hosting non-citizens is necessarily harmful to poor South Africans.37

In 2010 Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa countered these claims in a nationally broadcast radio interview during which he argued that South Africans are not generally wary of people from beyond their communities or national borders. It is difficult to imagine which South Africans he had in mind.

At the boundaries of South African identity, the rudiments of the Weberian nation state reveal their analytical fragility. Much South African debate about xenophobia mistakenly equates it with an overzealous nationalism. While national boundaries serve as a powerful marker of difference, insider/outsider divisions almost equally apply to certain elements of the South African citizenry.

In the 2003 survey mentioned above respondents were similarly ill at ease with the uncontrolled mixing of people from different backgrounds. As in past eras, long-term residents see little justification for the newly urbanised and
mobile to be in cities. As long as they remain, they are a danger to themselves and others.

In his 2004 State of the City speech, Johannesburg’s mayor reflected widely-held sentiments when he reported that, ‘While migrancy contributes to the rich tapestry of the cosmopolitan city, it also places a severe strain on employment levels, housing, and public services.’ Such a statement speaks to more than technical planning challenges associated with rapid urbanisation; attitudes to new arrivals often characterise them as parasites more likely to infect than augment the lifeblood of those already rooted in the city. In private meetings and, occasionally, in public ones, officials pine for a return to influx control and stronger border policies.

Bekker’s 2002 report for the Western Cape Provincial Government suggesting that Xhosas from the Eastern Cape may be flooding Cape Town’s predominantly coloured and white city centre, shifting the demographics and draining resources, appears to have generated strong sentiments in that regard. President Jacob Zuma’s renewed emphasis on rural development reflects that familiar (if often implicit) political calculation. For municipalities, ward councillors, and local leaders, an old logic has been reborn: uncontrolled urbanisation is a financial, political, and security threat. For political and moral reasons people should remain where they belong and government and the people must work together to make sure they do so and to protect them from others.

The quest to divide privileged insiders and demonic outsiders is nowhere more evident than in post-apartheid immigration control. Through both design and by-product, the South African government has shaped cognitive and spatial divides between a deserving citizenry and outsiders who can be denied legal identities despite their proximity and utility. While the apartheid state sustained an onslaught on South African citizens’ residential rights, a campaign with legacies of spatio-ethnic discrimination, the post-apartheid state has employed similar techniques to alienate and isolate non-nationals. In both eras, outsiders have found ways of gaining a foothold in the city, but this has been done largely through fraud, dissimulation, or playing to the state’s instrumental logics.

At least three areas of political action illustrate the state’s legal and coercive efforts to exclude the threatening alien: legal status and documentation for refugees and migrants; arrest, detention, and deportation and a general lack of access to constitutional protection through the courts and political processes. Taken individually, none of these exclusions – apart from detention for deportation, which only occasionally affects citizens – is unique to non-nationals; many poor citizens are similarly marginalised and are popularly considered to be less than fully entitled members of the South African polity.
What separates non-nationals from citizens is the degree to which exclusion is both bureaucratically institutionalised and socially legitimate. In all cases it is not only the material acts of marginalisation that matter (that is, imprisonment, denial of services, or harassment) but also the nationalist discourse evoked to legitimise and explain them. Where certain South African groups are considered outsiders they, too, confront these exclusive practices and the socio-political imperatives behind them.

The diffuse and divisive social effects of migration and asylum policy in South Africa at first seem remarkable, given their inconsistency on paper and irregularity in practice. However, on closer examination it is the unknowability of state intentions and actions that has helped to legitimise popular responsibility for maintaining social boundaries. Much as the apartheid state recognised its need for the kind of labour only its disenfranchised black population could provide, the viability and legitimacy of the post-apartheid order depends on the skills and manual labour offered by an otherwise threatening foreign population.42

Although almost all South Africa politicians are publicly committed to tolerance and regional integration and nominally recognise the country’s humanitarian obligations, such objectives and responsibilities are not supported by the legal or administrative mechanisms. So, while the South African government actively promotes regional integration vis-à-vis foreign direct investment and highly skilled labour, it has actively discouraged the movement of migrants with low and moderate skills.43

For this reason it is almost impossible for non-nationals with temporary contracts, without contracts, or with refugee/asylum status to regularise their stay or claim the status of inalienable, inviolable insiders. Consequently, the majority of non-nationals, somewhere around 1.5 million, remains in South Africa with few practical legal protections and rights to residence.44 Even those with state-granted rights often struggle to convert their legal status into effective claims to services or protection from the police.45 Without substantive legal standing, non-nationals’ lives parallel those of apartheid-era black labourers: omnipresent and economically active but nonetheless stigmatised and vulnerable to the whims of neighbour and state.

The combination of stigma and vulnerability is well illustrated by the state’s continued efforts to expel purportedly parasitic aliens. Throughout the country foreigners are arrested and detained, based only on their physical appearance, their inability to speak the right language or for simply fitting an undocumented-migrant ‘profile’.46 In many instances South Africans who are too dark, undocumented, or belong to linguistic minorities are similarly harassed, arrested and, occasionally, deported.
Although mandated to respect non-nationals’ rights, police often refuse to recognise work permits or refugee identity cards. Some of this reluctance is rooted in illicit economies, where bribes are exchanged for freedom; a practice so common some police see foreigners as ‘mobile ATMs’. Beyond the corruption and violence the police often see even extra-legal forms of harassment and immigration control as central to crime prevention and protecting the South African social project. In addition to beat cops, the City of Johannesburg and other municipalities have deployed massive resources to rid the city of a presumably hostile alien presence. As counter-intuitive as it might seem, senior city officials proudly report on their successes as a way of combating social exclusion and helping the city to realise its potential.

Those arrested for immigration offences – at least those unable to buy their way out of police custody – are typically remanded to Lindela Repatriation Centre, a privately managed detention centre outside of Johannesburg. Here, too, we see evidence of the state denying outsiders the legal identities to which they are constitutionally guaranteed.

In The Centre for Child Law vs the Minister of Home Affairs (15 September 2004) Judge Annemarie de Vos accused Lindela’s operators of turning the Constitution’s lofty ideals into ‘hypocritical nonsense’ through their treatment of minors. Reports of sexual abuse, violence and bribery within Lindela are also common, and there is evidence that those who operate the centre extend inmates’ stays unduly in order to maximise the money they receive from the government for every person they house. Not only are inmates regularly denied access to legal representation, there are even reports that they must pay bribes to be deported.

Beyond the immediate human rights violations and legal infractions – infractions that continue despite repeated calls for reform – Lindela serves as a symbolic node, illustrating the ‘appropriate’ way to address outsiders. The slipperiness and extra-legality associated with arrest and detention at once convey the importance of excluding and the state’s inability consistently to do so.

For many (especially poor) foreigners living in South Africa, the state behaviour described above has created conditions where the ‘proof of a criminal charge is a redundant complication – at least as far as foreign refugees are concerned’. This is not a mistake but is officially (if not legally) mandated by urgent necessity. In 1997, then Defence Minister Joe Modise remarked:

As for crime, the army is helping the police get rid of crime and violence in the country. However, what can we do? We have one million illegal immigrants in our country who commit crimes and who are mistaken by some people for South African citizens. That is the real problem.
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In this quotation we not only see the equation of foreigners with crime but the fundamental fear that they may blend unnoticed in a vulnerable body politic. Five years later, a statement from then director-general of Home Affairs, Billy Masetlha, justified strong action by again speaking of the almost inherent threats aliens present:

Approximately 90 per cent of foreign persons who are in RSA with fraudulent documents, ie, either citizenship or migration documents, are involved in other crimes as well ... it is quicker to charge these criminals for their false documentation and then to deport them than to pursue the long route in respect of the other crimes that are committed.55

In reporting to a commission of inquiry in 1950 A B Xuma, who had been president of the African National Congress until 1949, made a statement that could equally describe policing practice in the years preceding the 2008 attacks:

... flying squads, pick-up vans, troop carriers, and mounted police are all abroad [sic] irritating and exasperating Africans by indiscriminately demanding passes, cause or no cause, often addressing and handling them in an insulting and humiliating manner.56

However ineffectual in ‘stemming the tide’, such actions only enforce the category of the threatening outsider who not only can be, but should be, alienated. Indeed, the security and welfare of the citizenry depend on it.

As much as it is official state policy to exclude and remove unwanted outsiders – non-nationals and slum-dwellers – local officials and quasi-governmental actors retain enormous discretion in how they fulfil such imperatives. In places this means police do little about the presence of aliens or develop informal protection rackets that allow them to stay.

As they did during the apartheid period police have tacitly endorsed gangs and others keen to eliminate business competition or secure non-nationals’ property to distribute to political supporters.57 Despite these arbitrary, localised mechanisms, efforts to exorcise the alien have been stymied by outsiders’ creativity, institutionalised corruption, and the general impracticality of the exercise.58 J Simons described apartheid-era enforcement as resembling ‘the labour of a man who tries to empty a barrel of water with a sieve’.59 Decades later, a Johannesburg city councillor echoed the sentiment: ‘as much as we might not want them here and whatever we do, we can not simply wish these people away’.60

The simultaneous demonisation of mobility and the practical impossibility of controlling it have elevated migration (and migrants) to an official and
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popular obsession in which they become a convenient scapegoat for poor service delivery, crime, and other social pathologies.

With migrants viewed as a demon at loose in the body politic, many citizens long for a form of exorcism and it comes as little surprise that calls for heightened border control and restrictions have been a frequent refrain. Although apartheid-era controls of space were never as absolute as many analysts and citizens remember, they have nevertheless entered the popular imagination as such.

Even groups who once chafed at restrictions on their own mobility now call for the kind of robust state controls seen in decades past. However fanciful they may be, memories of existential security have combined with a contemporary imperative to protect territory and opportunity driven policies and practices in powerful ways. Where officials are unwilling or unable to respond to this imperative, a socially empowered citizenry has shown itself up to the task.

The failed renaissance and the rage of a demonic society

The May 2008 attacks reflect the legacy of a political configuration that has continuously defined and demonised aliens, while subjecting them to arbitrary yet ineffective forms of coercion, harassment and removal. Where foreigners and other outsiders are concerned – as in many areas of socio-political life – a universally inclusive constitutional order has yet to be realised. Instead, the logic and practices of the chauvinist, spatially segmented past have been appropriated and adapted.

Having sustained a *doxa* in which outsiders are socially excluded and denied legal identity in order to promote the welfare of insiders, subsections of the citizenry have become enabled, empowered, and often compelled to resist the diffusely defined alien. Viewed from their perspective there is no irony in insisting on such overt exclusion as a means of overcoming past discrimination and injustice. With such logic in place, the post-apartheid state’s evident failure at rebirth has generated volatile conditions that initially gave off sparks and, in May 2008, ignited.

Following the first democratic elections, in 1994, many South Africans anticipated a share in the enormous wealth accrued by the country’s white minority. But instead of experiencing redistribution many residents are relatively poorer than they were during apartheid and South Africa remains the tenth-most unequal country in the world.

Those who have recently arrived in cities are among the most disadvantaged. Together with many long-term residents they experience levels of physical and economic insecurity comparable to those in war zones elsewhere in the world. Critically, economic differences are closely related
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to racial categories and the spatial distribution of populations. The result is relatively and absolutely poor groups of ‘blacks’ concentrated in townships on the physical margins of more prosperous and lighter skinned communities. This is a potentially explosive configuration. Given South Africa’s history of social violence, these divides can become easily inflamed, as they were in May 2008.64

Along with the racial and spatial aspects of South African poverty, apartheid left the country with a deep suspicion of the public institutions intended to govern the poor and relationships among groups. This includes both the police and local government. Following the 1994 multiparty elections the new administration did little to build effective and responsive forms of local government. Instead, true political power became increasingly centralised within the ruling African National Congress elite and popular participation was effectively limited.

In subsequent years – particularly during President Thabo Mbeki’s second term (2004-2008) – poor citizens increasingly saw this elite, and the government institutions behind it, as removed from their concerns about jobs, services and security.65 These frustrations fed the ruling African National Congress’s internal coup at the conference in Polokwane in April 2008, which replaced the apparently elitist Thabo Mbeki with the more populist Jacob Zuma.66 With Zuma’s ascendance came the sense that South Africa’s wealth would finally be redistributed to disadvantaged citizens rather than dedicated to continental, pan-Africanist fantasies. In the streets, refugees were told that they would soon need to trade in their ‘Mbeki papers’ for something else or, better yet, simply leave the country.67

The evident failures of the national rebirth were reinforced by skyrocketing fuel and food costs, an electricity crisis, the failure of the Zimbabwe elections and the ‘human tsunami’ of Zimbabweans purportedly flooding South Africa (the actual numbers were, of course, far lower than most imagined).68

These features combined to create both a sense of crisis in the new dispensation and a sense that the government was doing little to protect and promote its constituents. Given the underlying tensions within South African society it is not surprising that local political and economic leaders took advantage of this ‘opportunity window’ to mobilise the poor.69 Given the history of demonisation it was almost inevitable that outsiders would become at least one of the targets of mass action.

The words of those who witnessed or participated in the violence reverberate with the decades-long history of exclusion and the sense that, if leaders were unable to control the alien invasion, citizens had little choice but to take action. In an interview conducted ten days after a 2007 attack in Motherwell, a young man explained that:
The approach for the Somalis to come and just settle in our midst is a wrong one. Somalis should remain in their country. They shouldn’t come here to multiply and increase our population, and in future, we shall suffer. The more they come to South Africa to do business, the more the locals will continue killing them.

Similar sentiments were expressed soon after the May 2008 attacks. A South African man explained to a newspaper reporter that:

We are not trying to kill anyone but rather solving the problems of our own country. The government is not doing anything about this, so I support what the mob is doing to get rid of foreigners in our country.70

Drawing on a quotation that first appears in Misago’s chapter, let us now turn to Mr Mbatha, an induna (headman) and Inkatha Freedom Party leader in the Madala hostel in Alexandra, the centre of some of the most vicious violence in 2008. He justifies the attacks in terms that resonate deeply with decades of official discourse:

The government is now pampering them and taking care of them nicely. 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 because it means it’s not the government problem it is our problem.

Gugu, a Madala resident, adds: ‘These people come here to destroy. They come here and, as South Africans, we are deprived.’ Having internalised logic linking mobility, and outsiders to threat, the brutal honesty of an unemployed man outside Pretoria reflects a disturbing coherence and rationality: ‘... if the government is failing to stop them at the borders, we shall stop them here in Itireleng. We are not the police; we do not ask for passports, they are forged anyway.’71 Within this statement we see a segment of the citizenry reclaiming the right to establish and patrol its social and spatial boundaries. When the law and state agents are suspect only direct, popular action will achieve the promises of post-apartheid prosperity.

In the minds of those behind the attacks, unless they are controlled, alien demons – citizen and non-citizen – will jeopardise both the state and the greater South African renaissance. Unable bureaucratically to demarcate or isolate the alien, state agents and citizens have, instead, worked together in ad hoc but logically consistent ways to alleviate the threat within. This is not the result of a master plan but rather the continuation of institutionalised exclusion and internalised logic.

While specific incidents may be driven by competition or criminality the constructed social space within which the violence occurs functions according
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to a set of norms, values, and bureaucratic practices that has become all but invisible. This book is about exploring this ‘mentality of governance’ and the social standard operating procedures – the demons – to which they have given birth.

The book: themes, aspirations, and contributions

This book’s success can be measured against goals of varying ambition and scope. The first of these is to contribute to the historical record of the May 2008 attacks. Although the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA), and others have already sought to explain the events, none of these efforts nor other accounts from civil society and the academy provides an historically embedded, empirically driven explanation that can serve as the basis for future research and theorisation. By drawing on the experience of a team of researchers well versed in themes of migration, difference and civic violence, this book reflects the most comprehensive scholarly account of the attacks to date.

Beyond providing a grounded analysis of the events of 2008, the book addresses at least three areas of inquiry within the social sciences. The first and most obvious of these is studies of migration and, more specifically, the theorisation of difference and discrimination. Although migration in Southern Africa is an established theme in scholarly work, much contemporary literature on human mobility within the region overlooks important social and political transformations associated with human mobility. This book takes a step in that direction.

Many readers will be attracted by its focus on xenophobia and conflicts over difference. While the book does not attempt to theorise or explain – philosophically or empirically – identity formation, racism, or xenophobia more generally, it nevertheless contributes to debates that have largely been framed by the European and North American experience.

Authors like Taylor and Benhabib, borrowing from Kant and other late greats, have begun to make sense of various forms of political identities and subjectivities associated with living in new places among people of varied backgrounds and trajectories.

Work on diversity in Africa has been less concerned with the emergence of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism in rapidly transforming communities. The focus, instead, has been on ethnic conflict and the emergence of nativist sentiments in the face of globalisation. In some respects, this text extends those preoccupations by focusing largely on violent clashes over difference. However, the emerging forms of political subjectivity among citizens and migrants it describes problematise simple distinctions between outsider and
hosts. In so doing they raise broader questions of what belonging means among newly urbanised populations in a country where almost everyone has been geographically and socially displaced. Through its careful study of a bounded set of incidents the book is also able to speak to the micro-politics of difference, revealing a series of causal mechanisms that are often overlooked in theorising difference.

The book’s historically and empirically nested approach also draws attention to the peculiar role African cities play in generating new forms of belonging and difference. Scholars have long recognised the importance of European and North American cities in shaping their respective countries’ social formations. With few exceptions African cities have been excluded from these discussions.

Although few of the contributors frame their contribution in terms of ‘urban studies’ this book offers important insights into the kind of subjectivities being generated as citizens and non-national residents converge in previously ‘forbidden cities’ and confront each other and broader ‘deficits of belonging’. In this uncertain environment it is not surprising that tensions arise between those who see cities as national (or exclusively ethnic) spaces and those who are simply moving in or through them.

In some ways, as citizens find commonality within their diversity, the city becomes a critical incubator for building a modern South African nation. However, the visible presence of uprooted or unrooted aliens threatens to unmoor urban space, leaving it floating in reterritorialised transience – what Bauman terms a kind of ‘nowhereville’. We cannot yet know how these tensions will ultimately be resolved, or if, indeed, there will be an ultimate resolution. As this book and subsequent events have made clear, whatever solution emerges will be politically fraught and potentially violent.

Lastly, the book helps to inject human mobility (and reactions to it) into the scholarly analysis of African politics. When human mobility is considered in the work of political scientists, refugees, displaced populations, and other migrants are often portrayed as by-products of other processes, or as the subject for policy deliberations. This book goes some way towards recoding human mobility as a potent force for reshaping the exercise of state power through migrants’ activities and the reactions they excite. In this capacity, movement becomes a lens through which to reconsider the nature of sovereignty and regulation in urban Africa and elsewhere.

From this perspective the book makes at least three contributions to the study of politics. Firstly, it furthers arguments about disaggregating the state and the myths around it. The early chapters describing the violence and reactions to it illustrate clearly that the South African state – one of the strongest and most coherent on the continent – rarely operates as a unitary system capable
of exercising sovereignty through its laws and authorised agents. Secondly, it suggests that the practices of state actors are not necessarily bound by the state’s official policy, law and principles. Even the police, the essential element of state power, can operate on their own logics and in line with forms of social rather than constitutional legitimacy. Lastly, it demonstrates that, in many cases, the most significant practices of regulation and governance are not necessarily state-centred, state authored, or informed by clearly articulated and unified strategies of control.

As this introduction has made clear, many forms of ‘informal’ politics borrow language and imperatives from past and contemporary politics but retain a level of autonomy that, when exercised, constitutes a form of polity. Indeed, it is only through the exercise of authority – state-centred or otherwise – that the state, in its myriad forms, emerges as a social fact.

The observations outlined above – and illustrated in the following pages – confirm Gluckman’s assertions many years ago that power and politics are a series of nested spheres of action in which a diverse set of actors, intentions, and discourses overlap, enfold, and separate in ways driven by logics and imperatives that are not always visible to the distant gaze.

Whereas most of the work in this volume is informed by Foucauldian insights into decentralised and often acephalous regimes of governance, this text challenges the coherence Foucauldians (and structural-functionalists) often ascribe to political systems. The more empirically grounded view of the state and politics presented here – as ever-evolving interplays of population, place, and power – demands that we understand governance and regulation as something enacted through everyday practices (including norms and ideals).

Even in South Africa, the strongest of the African states – and in its commercial and political core, no less – there is a need to begin to speak about gradations, modes, and configurations of sovereignty and to search for the connective tissue (practices, tropes and logics) among them. Elsewhere in the literature we already see such discussions about international actors, other states, or occupying armies.

The vision of sovereignty we suggest is one that implicitly includes the spatial conditioning effects of history and recognises that sovereignty is something that is negotiated through ongoing interactions among actors with multiple intentions, resources, and strategies. Some of these actors are no longer active participants and their contributions may easily be overlooked. To do so, however, may lead to a vision of contemporary affairs that is overly determined by macro-historical and structural factors while naïvely optimistic about the possibilities for rapid transformation. Only by fusing the analysis of past and present priorities and practices can we reveal the complex, overlapping and ever-evolving spheres of legitimacy, power and sovereignty.
Origins and structure

The book is the product of a colloquium convened by the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) to commemorate the May 2008 attacks. Most of the presenting authors were, and remain, associated with the ACMS, or are close collaborators at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

The colloquium provided an opportunity to push our ongoing analysis of xenophobia and xenophobic violence in South Africa, opening it up to scrutiny and exposing what were, at least at the time, controversial perspectives. Among these were the role of local leaders, the frailty of structuralist accounts and the relationships between ‘progressive’ transformation and violent exclusion. Many of the insights that were surprising in May 2009 have already become central components of practitioners’ efforts to understand and address threats of violence. With this book we hope to extend that impact to the academy.

Part of this colloquium’s success – a success repeated in this book – stems from the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. Most of the authors included here were born and at least partially educated outside of South Africa. All have lived and worked in the country for extended periods. This positionality has allowed us to approach issues of xenophobia and xenophobic violence as ‘strangers’ in a Simmelian sense: as people at once deeply embedded in and partially removed from the politics of South Africa and the values that typically infuse political analysis.

Whereas many South African scholars align themselves with visible and long-standing ideological currents within the country’s politics – Marxism, Black Consciousness, human rights, or one of many feminisms – this book seeks a kind of ideological distance. We do not deny our collective outrage and deep disappointment about the May 2008 attacks and official responses to them. For the most part, we have found avenues outside of this text to express our frustrations and broadcast our calls for action. Without banishing the passions that energise our work, this text intentionally remains cool, dispassionate and scholarly. At some points this veneer may crack, but never at the cost of logic and analytic coherence.

The chapters included here have benefited from intense engagement among authors and with experts on many of the book’s sub-themes: democracy, law, violence, state power and the nature of difference. The first round of commentary came during the colloquium itself. The contributing team then read revised versions and met again to consider possible intersections, overlaps, and areas of further inquiry. Revised papers were circulated among the contributors, with each author receiving written and verbal comments from at least two peers. These comments, along with various other forms of editorial feedback, have shaped the chapters included in this text.
To provide a greater degree of coherence to this edited volume some original papers were eventually excluded. That the chapters included here speak to each other, while revealing starkly different perspectives and themes, is a testament not only to the contributors’ creativity and flexibility but to the intellectual curiosity and mutual respect that initially encouraged participation in the colloquium. The endeavour’s interdisciplinary nature is further evidence of the value of a more holistic approach to studying politics and the state.

To reveal these various and ever elaborating configurations of population, place, and power, the book relies on a methodological ecumenicalism that illustrates interdisciplinarity at its best. It works from the presumption that the potential disciplinary contributions we sacrifice will be forgiven in light of the empirical accounts, analytical depth and theoretical provocations the text provides. For the most part, the authors employ what might be considered inductive theorising or a grounded theory approach, bringing to a particular question or concern all the tools their training and experience make available.

The events driving this book have made this all but necessary: we were unable to select the case that would test our theory, for the case thrust itself on us. Because of this, some chapters will be more immediately legible to political scientists while others will undoubtedly appeal to human geographers, urban sociologists or anthropologists. Although authors have been encouraged to theorise their work in ways that are likely to impress their academic colleagues, we have worked to ensure that the chapters are both accessible and, with luck, interesting to a diverse audience. As is the case with most edited volumes, readers will typically choose those chapters that resonate most robustly with their own work and interests. Be that as it may, those who make the effort to read the book as a unified narrative filled with tensions, gaps and contradictions will find additional rewards.

The book is structured in three overlapping movements. The first, and shortest, describes the events of May 2008. Building on the short outline included in this introductory chapter, Tamlyn Monson and Rebecca Arian describe how the violence has come to be understood in the South African popular and political imagination: two weeks of violence, all targeted at immigrants from beyond the country’s borders; 62 dead; 100,000 or more displaced. While the chapter presents the empirical claims made by journalists during or soon after May 2008 it also historicises these ‘facts’ through a process of simultaneous construction and deconstruction.

In knitting together an account of the 2008 attacks from a purpose built media archive the authors unravel certain threads of the media discourse that produced this memory of events. This allows them to reconstruct a series of composite quasi-historical narratives. Treating these as artefacts
of the process by which truth of May 2008 was produced, they then reread them genealogically to make explicit the manner in which their ‘truth’ – what has become our memory – was produced. While presenting the facts preserved in ‘media memory’ about May 2008, they illustrate the politics of their production, in which categories of membership, belonging, and identity are naturalised; social conflict and popular justice are dehistoricised and depoliticised and individual agency is erased.

In this way, the chapter draws attention not only to the knowledge produced about the attacks, but also to the silences and amnesia that are by-products of this productive process.

The book then moves to a second movement, with a suite of chapters explaining the appearance of violence and highlighting the degree to which, for all the horror it engendered, the violence was exceptional and productive. The section begins with Christine Fauvelle-Aymar and Aurelia Segatti’s chapter explaining the expression of violence in 2008 through an analysis of socio-demographic and electoral data.

Building on a global literature on violent conflict they argue that the most significant factors correlated with the occurrence of the 2008 anti-foreigner violence are the proportion of black men and the high heterogeneity of the population. Counter-intuitively, the study dismisses the significance of unemployment rates and the impact of the presence of foreigners. Pushing further on issues of governance and politics the study shows that violence-affected wards tended to lean more towards the African National Congress.

Seen together, a profile of violence-affected wards comes into relief: where the residents are not the poorest of the poor but have accumulated frustrations around informal conditions of housing and high population heterogeneity in terms of language and income disparities. This does not entirely dismiss either the ‘relative deprivation’ or the ‘threshold of tolerance’ theories. Rather, it confirms that while these are broad structural factors explaining the violence, causal factors are rather a combination of structural and contextual elements.

Jean Pierre Misago’s chapter speaks explicitly to context in drawing attention to the role of the local leadership and micro-level politics. By showing that the May 2008 violence was orchestrated by local players to further their interests the chapter argues that its triggers are rooted in the micro-politics of township and informal settlement life. Along with local political and economic opportunism the chapter identifies the role feeble socio-legal controls and spatialised understanding of rights and belonging played in shaping the violence.

Considering the centrality and power of local politics to control, regulate and determine the criteria for social and political membership, the chapter urges analysts to consider the often overlooked micro-politics and sub-national
dynamics. This not only helps explain xenophobia and related violence but offers insights into conflict and solidarity where state institutions exist without complementary social formations.

By extending the analysis of the 2008 attacks beyond simple dichotomies of citizen-foreigner Noor Nieftagodien turns our gaze to one of the most puzzling facets of the attacks: the xenophobic murders and displacement of South African citizens.

He situates his analysis where the violence began: in Alexandra Township. Before the attacks it was a place renowned for producing ‘inclusionary’ politics—uniting the community against oppression and exploitation. The chapter shows that beneath Alexandra’s progressive politics is a history of tension between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, which has evolved within a framework of a politics of exclusion. The process of defining these categories has been integral to local politics for decades and has, on occasion, led to active attempts to exclude ‘outsiders’ from the township.

At the centre of this politics is the notion of a ‘bona fide’ resident. Rooted in historical legislation which identified Africans legally qualified for permanent urban residence, it also defines those consigned to a life of migrancy and impermanence. Property owners and other long-term residents of Alexandra appropriated the idea of being ‘bona fide’ to assert their credentials as the original inhabitants of the township. Moreover, Alexandra’s distinctive character as a freehold location added weight to their claims to be its ‘owners’.

Jonathan Klaaren’s chapter offers further historical precedents in the legal construction of South African citizenship by questioning the place of law in the violence. Whereas Tamlyn Monson’s single-authored chapter speaks about lawmaking and remaking, this chapter explores the question through the lens of citizenship. Klaaren argues that while the 2008 violence was largely directed against African (ie, black) outsiders, it has its origins in contests over the socially legitimate mobility of ‘Asians’ between the 1890s and the 1930s.

In early debates and legislation we see the foundations of South African citizenship vis-à-vis content, boundaries, and legal enforcement mechanisms. In this formative and significantly bureaucratic process the legal, colonial and demographic position of the Asian population proved particularly crucial to the development of a South African citizenship founded on principles of utility and community cohesion. Based on this identification of the shape and character of the legal cultural concept of South African citizenship through the 1930s, the chapter addresses and reflects upon the place of law in the xenophobic violence. The effects of the historical origins of South African citizenship in the regulation of the mobility of populations persist to the present day.
The book’s third movement is, at once, its most theoretically significant and its most incomplete. Vigneswaran’s chapter helps bridge the two final movements by seeking historical explanations not for the violence itself but for official responses to it. Basing his analysis on a ‘garbage can’ model of the state, he argues that understanding the police’s reluctance to protect non-nationals requires a sub-surface understanding of the rules, logics and justifications that produce various dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in policing practice.

While accepting that the behaviour of many government officials in key departments is shaped by xenophobic discourses, this chapter emphasises the role historical factors have played in forging recent outcomes. Legacies of the apartheid regime have determined, often indirectly, the manner in which contemporary government officials have responded to the xenophobic attacks.

More specifically, Vigneswaran argues that the tendency of officials tacitly to endorse acts of xenophobic exclusion, or to fail to protect, stems from the genesis of the South African bureaucracy. Within an institution that was designed to implement the racially defined segregation policies of the past, exclusionary practices remain deeply embedded in the formal procedures, everyday routines and unwritten codes of practice. When viewed from this perspective the actions of the state appear not as police ambivalence about the rights and welfare of ‘outsiders’ but as contested efforts of the post-apartheid government to redirect an immigration bureaucracy that has a momentum of its own.

The interest in law and law enforcement surfaces again in Tamlyn Monson’s exploration of the law as a set of practices enacted and transformed by the May attacks. Looking at three case studies she demonstrates the way ‘xenophobic violence’ can involve various levels of departure from the state-sanctioned social order as well as various degrees of trespass into state jurisdiction. These take on three sub-national sovereign forms, each distinguishable by the character of and relationship between its legitimacy and regulatory characteristics. Each bears testimony to the need to bring macro-scale analytical categories into an encounter with smaller-scale territories where sub-national bordering gives rise to unexpected socio-legal realities with unexpected categories of belonging and normative understandings of legality and legitimacy.

In doing so, she brings to the surface socio-spatial and political configurations that tend to be overlooked and overly compressed by analysts informed by conventional notions of ‘state sovereignty.’ These socio-legal realities fuel debate over the way state power is being transformed by embodied practices that may be obscured beneath the conceptual surface of ‘the state’.
In the final chapter, Tara Polzer and Aurelia Segatti shift the focus from the exercise of state and social power through violence to new forms of political subjectivity and engagement. By taking May 2008 as a ‘crisis’ or ‘moment’ with the potential to change opportunity structures for collective action, they argue that the violence opened up the scope of participation to a more diverse set of actors. Despite these evident shifts migrants and their advocates have yet to generate sustained institutional channels or platforms of communication. For this reason there has been no significant sedimentation of accountability structures among government, human rights non-governmental organisation and migrant organisations.

However, while the effect on ‘state-society’ relations may be negligible there have been significant new developments within organisations with regard to political subjectivities among leaders and members. These subjectivities are reshaping their strategic assessment of their situations in South Africa and their mid- to long-term identity claims on South African society.

A short postscript reflects on the book’s content in the context of threats that the demon of xenophobic violence is again stirring in South African society. In the wake of a successful football World Cup during which South Africa hosted hundreds of thousands of fans from around the world threatening pamphlets were distributed and people were told they must leave the communities and country in which they live.

With the memory of the 2008 attacks still with them, non-nationals and others made plans: leaving their homes and gathering in ethnic enclaves for what little protection they might find. These threats may have been, as a number of officials have suggested, merely rumours spread by ‘prophets of doom’. Even though the violent rampage never materialised, ongoing threats and the fear they instil are themselves forms of violence. Beyond disrupting people’s lives, they have helped harden the cognitive boundaries surrounding citizens and outsiders.

Recognising that the dual demons of migration and a violent citizenry remain alive in South Africa, the postscript speculates on the relationship between political liberation, positive political values and the possibility of an inclusive polity.

Notes
1 See Polzer & Igglesden 2009.
3 Then minister of safety and security Charles Nqakula initially responded to the attacks in Alexandra by claiming, ‘It is only a problem, but if it were a crisis, it would be happening right across the country’ Pretoria News, 14 May 2008.
4 Sowetan, 13 May 2008.
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5 Sunday Tribune Online [Durban], 25 May 2008.
7 Quoted in Majavu, 10 May 2009.
8 See, eg, News 24, 17 November 2009.
10 Kelly 2010.
11 This use of ‘demonic’ is informed by Mitchell Dean (2001, pp 41–64). For a detailed account of the violence see Tamlyn Monson’s contribution to this text or Misago, Landau & Monson 2009.
12 See Misago’s contribution in this volume.
13 This point is made most explicitly in Michael Neocosmos (2006).
14 This essay borrows from Foucault’s notion of pastoral power as outlined in Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982, pp 213–215.
17 See Misago, Landau & Monson 2008 and Fauvelle-Aymar and Segatti in this volume.
18 See Vigneswaran in this volume.
21 See, eg, Hansen & Stepputat 2006.
22 This approach draws much inspiration from Gluckman 1958 (1940).
23 This section draws heavily on Landau 2010, pp 213–230.
29 Peberdy 2009, p 178.
30 See Klaaren’s contribution for more details about the origins of this perspective.
32 See Wa Kabwe Segatti 2008.
34 Crush (ed) 2008.
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38 Bekker (2002, p 10) writes: ‘For the African population, the key migration streams originate from southern Transkei and the Eastern Cape cities and farms, and flow into Cape Town and the Districts in the east and south of the province … These streams are powerful and fast, probably representing the largest and most rapid demographic flow in South Africa. Going by the survey sample, just under three quarters of the present adult African population of the Western Cape would have been born in the Eastern Cape.’


42 The Republic of South Africa, White Paper on International Migration (1999), for example, recognises that one of its challenges is ‘to formulate policy that takes advantage of the positive aspects of globalization, including the unprecedented movement of people …’

43 Wa Kabwe-Segatti 2008.

44 The number of non-nationals in South Africa is hotly contested. The 2001 South African census identified 477 201 foreign-born residents of a total population of close to 45 million. This figure was later revised to between 500 000 and 850 000. The nationally representative 2007 Community Survey (by Statistics South Africa) estimated the total number of foreign-born residents at just over 1.2-million, or 2.79% of the total population. Of these, approximately 150 000 are recognised refugees or asylum seekers, while the majority remain undocumented. See CoRMSA 2009.

45 CoRMSA 2009; Belvedere 2003.


48 SAHRC 2004; Zvomuya 2005; Templeton & Maphumulo 2005. In the last article the authors quote a police officer referring to refugees as ‘mobile ATMs’.


51 Although people are often detained for extended periods at Lindela the facility has not been classed as a prison, or its occupants as prisoners. Consequently they are not entitled to the legal protections officially granted to those within the country’s correctional facilities. Ongoing research by Araia, Amit and Vigneswaran confirms the intrinsic and often intentional illegality of practices within Lindela (discussion with author, May 2009).

52 Amit 2010.

53 Bauman 2002, p 112. See also Arendt 1958, p 279.


55 Masetlha 2002.

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60 Personal Communication, 13 July 2005.


63 Mail & Guardian Online, 17 August 2005.

64 The conditions for racialised conflict in South Africa closely mirror those outlined in Chandra & Williams Foster 2005, pp 299–332. See also Korpi 1974, pp 1569–1578.


68 See Landau 2008.


70 Madondo 2008.

71 Interview, Itireleng, South Africa, 4 August 2008.

72 Misago, Landau & Monson 2009; Monson 2010.

73 See, eg, Kok, Gelderblom, Oucho & Van Zyl (eds). 2006. There are, of course, exceptions to this claim, including, Lubkemann 2007.


75 See Geschiere 2009); Mamdani 2010.


78 The term ‘deficits of belonging’ is taken from Götz & AbdouMaliq 2003, pp 123–47. See also Landau & Freemantle 2010, pp 375–390.


80 Mountz 2003.

81 cf Latham 2000, pp 1–18.


83 Gluckman 1958[1940].


86 The ACMS was formerly the Forced Migration Studies Programme (ACMS).

87 See Klaaren 2001, pp 304–325 for an overview of the post-apartheid debate over citizenship.

88 Underhill & Khumalo 2010.
On 11 May 2008, residents of Alexandra Township near Johannesburg turned violently on their neighbours, launching a string of attacks that, two weeks later, left 60 dead, dozens raped and over a hundred thousand displaced. Most of those killed were from beyond South Africa’s borders, but at least a third were citizens who, for reasons of ethnicity or political affiliation, failed to protect their space in the country’s urban core. Although not the most severe political violence in South Africa’s turbulent past, the 2008 attacks reflect an important moment in the country’s post-apartheid, post-authoritarian existence: a moment when the government’s legitimacy and the post-apartheid order were called into question. This xenophobic violence made evident cracks in the cohesion of law and society while helping to redefine both.

It is these events and subsequent consequences for the ordering of power, population and place that this book explores. *Exorcising the Demons Within* makes sense of recent anti-outsider violence by situating it within an extended history of South African statecraft that both produced the conditions for the attacks and has been reshaped by it. Drawing on an interdisciplinary team of expert scholars and on new research, this is the first academic text to fully theorise the events that made global headlines in 2008.

“By placing the demons within both migration and violent citizenship and in a longer historical perspective, this book succeeds in surpassing current interpretations of the 2008 violence against immigrants in the townships as just resulting from xenophobia. The authors masterfully show that the politics of statecraft – notably the African National Congress’ (ANC) language of multicultural dominance – inspired a fatal depolitisation of difference. The very coherence of this collection offers a challenging analysis of struggle over belonging and denial of difference that is of much broader relevance than South Africa alone.”

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