Crime in Post Apartheid South Africa: Communities under Threat

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The Story of South Africa

- A story of more of less organised brutality and disastrous social divisions from the time of the hunting down of the San & Khoikhoi to the time of the creation of the ‘homelands’ & the establishment of patterns of forced migration with at least one parent being away from the family home for extended periods of time. (Craig Higson-Smith)
A Response to an Implicitly Violent Social Structure

- ‘The state has given us no alternative to violence. Our people are subjected to armed attacks by the state. People have begun to take up arms. Violence is inevitable whether we initiate it or not. Would it not be better to guide this violence ourselves according to principles where we save lives by attacking symbols of oppression, and not people.’ (Mandela, 1994)
‘The world of the township child is extremely violence. It is a world of teargas, bullets, whippings, detention and death on the streets … a world where parents and friends get carried away in the night to be interrogated, where people simply disappear, where parents are assassinated and homes are bombed.’ (Chikane, 1986)
Social Consequences of Violence

- ‘Biosocial degeneration’ as evidenced by the extraordinarily high levels of violent crime in the country, and especially crimes committed against the society’s most vulnerable citizens - its children.
- In 2005, 1,200 children were murdered; 1,500 cases of attempted murder of children were opened, 24,000 assaults of children and 22,000 cases of child rape were reported.
Biosocial Degeneration: Professor Vamik Volkan

- Biosocial degeneration is the consequence of massive trauma.
- If trauma is not dealt with & in the absence of appropriate mourning processes, the stage is set for a re-enactment of a violent past at some time in the future through the transgenerational transmission of the trauma.
Civil society in South Africa has remained highly militarised, chiefly manifesting in the form of violent crime and private justice and security, simply because, in the final analysis, gross poverty and inequity - the structural underpinnings of marginalisation and violence in South Africa - have not yet been ameliorated. (Nathan, 1998)
Healing a Deeply Fractured Society

- In the re-building of fractured societies, attempts at reconstruction and reconciliation have to come to terms with the changing nature of conflict and violence. (Simpson, 2000)
- Certain sustained features of marginalisation, impoverishment and relative deprivation, remain at the root of ongoing criminal violence in South African society in the post-apartheid era.
- There is no clear or rigid dividing line between political, criminal and social violence.
South Africa’s Most Pressing Challenge

- More than fifteen years after the creation of a democratic society and a decade after the promulgation of the South African population policy, poverty remains the single most pressing socio-economic challenge facing South Africa. Poverty frustrates development efforts, and is often accompanied by unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy, a low status of women, environmental risks and inadequate access to social and health services.
A Highly Unequal Society

- The wealthiest 10% of the population earn more than 50% of household income in the country.
- The poorest 40% of the population accounts for less than 7% of household income.
- The poorest 20% accounts for less than 1.5% of income (based on income from work and social grants).
- Income inequality increased between 1995 and 2005 & the Gini coefficient increased from 0.64 to 0.69 during this time.

A Link between Democracy & Violence

- Democracy has the opposite effect in poor countries to that in rich countries. (Collier, 2009). In low income countries, democracy makes the society more dangerous. But it makes societies that are not poor, safer.

- The threshold is $7 per person per day.

- The reason is that in poor societies, democracy does not deliver accountability nor legitimacy.
Violent Sub-Economies

- The circumstances of civil war in apartheid South Africa - not surprisingly - breathed life into a resilient violence-based sub-economy rooted in the trade in arms, assassination and protection … and in which there were extensive vested material - rather than merely political – interests. (Simpson, 2000)
Reframing political violence as criminal violence

- South Africans were rather pre-disposed to interpreting most of the violence which occurred before the election as political, whilst selectively re-framing such violence in the post-election phase as criminal in nature.

- The challenge to translate a crime prevention programme into effective practice, was on the retreat under the onslaught of a "war on crime"
Law Enforcement vs Participatory Community Safety Enhancement

- The law-enforcement approach is reactive and fails to address the root causes of crime.
- The formulation of the NCPS – as a new paradigm for dealing with crime in South Africa, was hopeful.
- Crime Prevention was defined as "all activities which reduce, deter or prevent the occurrence of specific crimes firstly, by altering the environment in which they occur, secondly by changing the conditions which are thought to cause them, and thirdly by providing a strong deterrent in the form of an effective criminal justice system."
The Views of People are Important in Enhancing Community Safety

Community safety audits engage citizens to identify:

- The main types of crimes
- The causes of these crimes
- How they are committed
- Where they occur
- Who the victims & the offenders are
- What the obstacles to prevention are
A Community Safety Audit in Bolobedu, former Lebowa

Main Crime Problems:

- 24% house breaking – insecure informal homes
- 23% rape – mainly of minors by persons known to the victim
- 20% theft – stealing from neighbours
- 13% assault – associated with alcohol abuse
- 11% domestic violence – considered a private matter of “disciplining a wife”
- 9% child abuse
Profiles of Offenders

- Male youths between 19 and 25 years of age are the main perpetrators of crimes (46%) in rural communities,
- followed by 26 – 35 year olds (27%)
- with 10 – 18 year olds committing 19% of crimes
Factors predisposing youth to commit crime

“Youth who are exposed to any of all of the following conditions are more likely to commit delinquent acts than those who are not (Waller and Sansfacon, 2000):

- Relative poverty and inadequate housing;
- Inconsistent or insufficient parental or guardian guidance;
- Limited social and cognitive abilities;
- Exclusion from school;
- Family violence;
- Few opportunities for employment and economic exclusion;
- A culture of violence.
Crime in the Context of Being Poor

Being poor is characterised by an ‘absence of power’ - the power to influence change.

“Poverty is characterised not only by a lack of assets and inability to accumulate them, but also by an inability to devise an appropriate coping or management strategy in the face of shocks and crises.”

This is compounded for poor people in rural areas where the lack of infrastructural services — like communication and transportation — makes access to limited social services like health, welfare and policing extremely difficult.

Lacking access to such support, the rural poor are the least able to deal with the impact of crime.
Creating Alternatives for Young People

A young person will not engage in crime if he/she:
- Has positive associations & connections
- Is motivated to avoid substance abuse & anti-social behaviour
- Has a sense of purpose
- Feels included
- Is busy
- Has positive self-esteem
- Has developed resilience
- Is a positive role-model to others
Dramatic inequality
High levels of unemployment and poverty
Unstable families
High rates of alcohol abuse
Inadequate education
Cultures of interpersonal and group violence
A State Approach to Crime Prevention

The 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security detailed the role & function of local government in crime prevention & focused on some strategic areas for consideration:

- Design out crime;
- Provide education;
- Promote local cohesion;
- Support youth, families and groups at risk;
- Break cycles of violence;
- Promote individual responsibility;
- Make socio-economic interventions.
All crimes require victims, offenders and locations.

- Primary prevention focuses on environmental factors that can lead to crime occurring.
- Secondary crime prevention focuses on groups of people who are at risk of offending or becoming victims of crime.
- Tertiary crime prevention focuses on those who have already committed crime or have embarked on criminal career with the intention of intervening so as to prevent further incidents.
An Unsafe Community is One Where There Are ..

- Inadequate or no protective layers of social support;
- Low or no opportunities for advancement;
- Poor levels of education;
- Inadequate health care;
- Inadequate or indifferent delivery of basic services;
- Inaccessible or inequitable criminal justice;
- High rates of victimisation;
- High rates of offending behaviour;
- High numbers of current or ex-prisoners;
Security or Safety?

- Crime reduction is a tension between crime prevention (crime is caused by socio economic and environmental flaws & must be addressed by changing these) and law enforcement (arrest criminals, convict and incarcerate).
- Security is protection against known risks
- Safety focuses on the elimination of risks
- This is the job jointly of the whole of government & the whole of society (Holtmann)
In a Safe Society,

- People live peacefully
- They have opportunities to contribute
- They have productive family lives
- Access to basic health services
- Adequate nutrition so that children are fed
- Children are immunized against preventable diseases
- Everyone has a role and is busy
- Children are in school
- School is centre of the community
- There are no security fences or armed guards
- Police treat communities with respect
2010 State of the Nation Address by President Zuma

2010 A Year of Action: Ensuring That All People In South Africa Are and Feel Safe
Stutterheim Farmer Murdered
November 2, 1010

Stutterheim, a small town with a population of less than 50 000 situated in the Border region of the Eastern Cape province, was rocked on Tuesday by the news that a 76-year-old man was assaulted and killed on his farm. The man's body was found at his home which had been ransacked. His body was bruised all over.

Information brought forward to the police by members of the community helped the police make a breakthrough in the case and arrest two men aged 18 and 21. The news of the speedy arrest will no doubt ease the apprehension of the local farming community and help restore faith in the police’s attitude towards farm murders. That the community played a role in the arrest will only serve to boost relations between local farmers and police and the general law abiding community.
Man, 91, murdered for sweets

- The small Eastern Cape village of Bongweni Toise in Stutterheim has been rocked by the brutal murder of a 91-year-old man, whose killers stabbed him several times, locked him in his cooking hut and left him for dead, before making away with a handful of loose sweets. Two suspects, aged 27 and 24, were arrested on Sunday evening, Community members in the close-knit neighbourhood on Monday told of the shock that had followed news of Dinisile Daweti’s murder on Sunday morning, saying the sprightly old man had been very kind, and had loved the little children to ran through his yard everyday to buy the Cadbury sweets he sold.

- Daweni was found murdered in a hut on his property on Sunday morning after a child, who had gone there to buy sweets, found the door to his house open and spotted blood on the floor.
Conclusion

- The answer is not just a ‘beefed up’ criminal justice system.
- As prison populations increase, sentences lengthen and mandatory minimum penalties are imposed, safety does not increase.
- As more police are hired and more prisons are built, people still do not feel safe.
- If the 'get tough' strategy worked, the results would be apparent by now. They are not.