# THE STATE, NON-STATE COMMUNITY SECURITY ACTORS, AND VIOLENCE IN SWAZILAND, 2000-2011

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*Abstract*

*Research and analysis of the Swaziland security sector have, up to now, escaped the attention of scholars. This is in spite of developments that show that different segments of the Swazi population have voiced security concerns that range from insecurity of property to economic security concerns that undermine their efforts for economic well-being and reproduction. It is also in spite of the fact that rural communities have constructed community security frameworks that go beyond state-centric approaches to security. This article shows that rural Swazi communities have established non-state community security frameworks that operate outside the realm of the state and in the process contribute to the revision of the concept of security by emphasizing economic threats instead of military ones and focusing on community and individual security rather than regime security. However, the author argues that this transition should not be romanticized, because in Swaziland the development of non-state community security actors has been accompanied by violence and a general disregard for people's rights. The researcher argues that this is because non-state community security actors developed in the context of a non-democratic state that has entrenched a culture of disrespect for human rights.*

## 1.    INTRODUCTION

African rural communities have experienced numerous challenges as their countries have failed to bring about meaningful economic growth and development. Poverty is widespread and this has elevated economic security to be a major concern for rural communities. In 1994 the United Nations Development Programme argued that: "For most people today, a feeling of uncertainty arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime, these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world" (UNDP 1994:3). From this, it is clear that the major threats for most people today are

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localized economic security concerns threatening the economic well-being of individuals and communities. This is not a new development, as historical evidence indicates that even in their indigenous settings, African rural communities had to deal with such concerns. In the process of juggling different forms of economic security concerns, African communities, as has been the case in other developing regions of the world, have not been passive but have demonstrated agency through constructing frameworks to address the situation. One of these frameworks has been the introduction of non-state community security actors (NSCSAs), generally referred to as community police, a nomenclature that can be very misleading and inappropriate in the context of some Southern African countries. These emergent non-state security actors have received very little academic attention in spite of the fact that their development provokes a re-conceptualization of the concept of security and the general terrain of national security architecture.

Some scholars have attempted to give names to such non-state security actors, but none of the names catch the context or crux of these local forms of security provisioning. In the case of the United States they have dubbed community policing (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1994), and the same nomenclature has been adopted for South Africa by Cherita Morrison and Herman Conradie (2001). It should be noted however that in the case of South Africa the aforementioned writers are not the only ones who use this nomenclature as it had already been widely used in the country's safe and security documents long before their publication. The problem with the concept of community policing is that it denotes "a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solve community problems" (Bureau of Justice 1994:vii). However, some of these forms of local security provisioning operate outside the framework of the state and are to a large extent a rejection of the operations of the state police, so, a nomenclature that denotes cooperation with state police may not be reflective of the actual situation. Some scholars have referred to local forms of security provisioning as vigilantism (Buur 2008). Again here concerns can be raised because many of the non-state community security actors are not self-appointed, but established largely through democratic community meetings open to all. If they are described as vigilantism, we run the danger of criminalizing them and in the process fail to bring out the real essence of their formation. The position taken in this article is that these are local forms of security provisioning that can take different shapes depending on local circumstances and dynamics. As Roy Smith has noted, these, "non-state actors do have significant degrees of agency and, therefore, can impact upon security issues" (Smith 2011:195), and do deserve academic attention. For purposes of this article, and to avoid conceptual confusion, non-state security actors at rural community level in Swaziland shall be referred to as non-state community security actors.

Swaziland is one of the African countries in which there has been a proliferation of non-state forms of security provisioning constructed to deal with different forms of community crimes that are perceived to be a security threat to the economic well-being of the residents (Simelane 2008). This research project is based on the experiences of a community in northeast Swaziland, where local forms of security provisioning have taken centre stage to provide residents with the security they require from cattle rustlers and other forms of property theft. The author argues that non-state security actors emerged as a result of mounting economic security threats that undermined the economic reproductive strategies of rural communities, and the failure of the Swazi state to effectively address these threats. The article also proofs that while the establishment of non-state community security actors was initially a positive development that contributed to a welcome shift from the state as a referral object of security to individuals and community, they soon lost their way and became a threat to the security of individuals and communities just as the state sometimes does. This study shows that the failure of the Swazi state to regulate the functioning of non-state community security actors has made the agents counterproductive as they perpetuate the violation of people's rights through violence. The author acknowledges the fact that the emergence of non-state community security actors in Swaziland and elsewhere is a major transformation rooted in people's experiences, but raises the concern that there is the danger of romanticizing them and neglecting their negative impacts on communities and basic tenets of democracy.

## 2.   METHODOLOGY

This research project is not grounded on theoretical robustness but is concerned with bringing out the experiences of rural communities in Swaziland in constructing a security framework against the background of economic hardships, and the failure of the state to provide them with needed economic security. These experiences are centered on the narratives of members of the community, especially those who have been victims of non-state community security actors. Methodologically, the article is constructed on views of members of rural communities and therefore completely qualitative in approach. The identification of respondents was based on non-probability sampling, especially a combination of purposive and snowballing sampling. This was the case because the author concluded that the main characteristic of individual rural dwellers, shared by the whole population, is their relevant experience in the community security phenomenon (Singleton *et al.* 1988) and that the so-called man-in-the-street interviews (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Delport 2010) would be appropriate for creating a picture of the different dimensions of community security in Swazi rural areas. There was therefore no

attempt at a representative sample, but an intention to depict the views that provide a snap-view of the construction of security agendas and how they have impacted on individuals in the communities.

## 3.     THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY SECURITY ANALYSIS

The concept of security is contested, especially in its application beyond the state and military threats. One of the reasons for this is that after World War 2 the concept became closely associated with the military and ideological dynamics of the Cold War (Haynes *et al.* 2011). For a better understanding of the manner in which community security is conceptualized and for the purpose of locating community security within the broader context of security, it is important to go through the maze of theoretical constructions that have emerged overtime attempting to give meaning to the concept of security. It has been pointed out that: "Security generally implies a sense of protection, safety from harm or indeed even survival in the face of some kind of threat" (Haynes 2011:493). In addition to an understanding of this broad general notion, the analysis of security issues becomes even more rewarding if we can locate them in a specific conceptual framework.

Theoretically, and even operationally, the concept of security has evolved over time to include actors who were traditionally not considered to be agents of change. Traditionally, and more among analysts of international relations, security was analyzed within the context of the state because it was assumed that the state was the only agent for ensuring security. In the apogee of mercantilism, it was believed that the maximization of the military power of the state was the only thing that could guarantee the security of nations. This was derived from the narrow view that insecurity emanated from military conflict and nothing else. Theoretically, such views were grounded on realism which put the state at the centre of both power and economic matters. Deriving from this conceptualization is the fact that individuals and communities were not considered as referent objects in the arena of security. The study and analysis of the actions of non-state actors as agents of security provision was not accommodated.

The narrow state-centric interpretation of security was dominant for a long time, but in the 1980s there was a conceptual shift to a much broader conceptualization. The work of Richard Ullman was path-breaking in that he integrated non-military sectors in the study of security (Ullman 1983). He argued that nations were facing several security threats that had nothing to do with the military. It was, however, the work of Barry Buzan that made this conceptual shift even more pronounced as he provided more insight into the relevance and the importance of non-military issues in the analysis of security (Buzan 1991). He

included political security, economic security, societal security and environmental security into the nexus of security concerns. This was quite seminal as it allowed the integration of individual experiences into the analysis of security threats and security concerns (Sheehan 2005). Significantly, this welcome broadening was not seriously ground breaking as state centrism was not shed-off by both Ullman and Buzan. This produced a contradiction or tension in their analysis as the concept of non-military sectors was not extended to non-state actors. It became an issue of the inclusion of more sectors but unchanged centrality or agency of the state. In the context of this theoretical construction there was no room for understanding the engagement of non-state actors as referent objects, when in reality they were and are still active in most societies.

A much deeper conceptual shift came from analysts looking at the issue of security from different perspectives. They included scholars in fields such as critical security studies, feminist security and human security (Haynes *et al.* 2011). There is no doubt that individually and collectively their thinking was shaped by the work of Buzan, and their conviction that there was less to gain by sticking to a state-centric approach defined in terms of military security. A common thread in their work is the argument that security should be defined in a manner that allows individuals and communities to be referent objects. This approach stemmed from the realization that as much as the state is assumed to be the guarantor of security, it can also be a threat to the security of individuals and communities. This was a very important broadening of the concept of security, as it allows for an analysis of the security, concerns of individuals and communities outside the agency of the state. This is part of the context within which the present article is written.

An even more fundamental shift in conceptualizing security came with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) when it began to advocate for a people-centred approach to security. The UNDP report published in 1994 introduced the concept of human security when it emphasized that it was to the best interests of governments to promote the security of people by protecting them from a range of threats (UNDP 1994:508). While this is a much broader conceptualization of security and provides for a shift from the state to people as referent objects, some scholars have expressed discomfort with it. For instance, Robert Cox has pointed out that the main weakness of the human security approach is that it is a problem-solving theory that accepts the world as it is and is happy to work within the parameters of existing national and international institutions (Cox 1986). There is no doubt that the concept of human security is surrounded by considerable ambiguity, but the approach allows for an analysis of security threats people face in their daily lives and how they are compelled to react in certain ways. It recognizes the fact that insecurity does not only arise from a cataclysmic world event, but also from everyday occurrences revolving around a large range of issues.

This shift further underscores the fact that security is a development issue. It is at the foundation of people's capabilities to meet basic needs (International Labour Organization (hereafter referred to as ILO 1976), self-esteem (Goulet 1971), and freedom (the ability to choose) (UNDP 1992).

The subject of this study and the manner in which security issues are conceptualized are informed by this people-centred approach to security. Instead of pre-occupation with the state as a referent object, the analysis focuses on no-state community security actors as agents of security provision at rural community level. The state is integrated into the analysis only through how its failure to provide security to rural communities promotes the formation of non-state community security actors.

## 4.    DRIVERS FOR THE GROWTH OF NON-STATE COMMUNITY SECURITY ACTORS IN SWAZILAND

From a general perspective, it has been argued that the growth of non-state security actors, whether they be private security companies, militias, vigilante groups or community forms of security provision, is linked to the failure of the state. Augustine Ikelegbe has argued that the weakness or fragility of the African state results in, among other things, "the proliferation of non-state institutions of violence and arms" (Ikelegbe 2010:122). Arguing along the same lines, Holmqvist pointed out that the growth of non-state actors in the African security sector is "symptomatic of state weakness and the failure of the state to provide physical security for its citizens through the establishment of functioning law-and-order institutions" (Holmqvist 2005:11). Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni has also argued that the weakness of some African states has resulted in the growth of non-state actors such as private security companies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007). Relevant to Swaziland, Hamilton Sipho Simelane has argued that the high increase in the number of private security companies in the country is due to the weakness of the Swazi state and the fact that "security demands have dwarfed state security institutions" (Simelane 2007:160). In a differently constructed argument Reno has pointed out that non-state actors in the security sector tend to grow under situations of the existence of parallel structures of power or authority (Reno 1999).

What is common about these postulations is the conclusion that the security sector has become more complex, as actors in the sector can be identified outside the framework of the state. This is in line with the fact that globally, the intellectual terrain nourishes a construction that emphasizes local dynamics and people preferences. It is therefore more rewarding to explain the emergence of non-state security actors within the context of the experiences of individual countries, regions or communities and individuals. The research conducted in Swaziland for this

article, anchored on the responses of rural dwellers and has also not completely shaken off the importance of the state in such issues, but revises its prominence by emphasizing community agency and community members defining their own security interests. What is more prominent here is not just the reaction to state failure, but the development of a new community security architecture that symbolizes how people think their economic security needs could best be addressed.

The emergence of non-state community security actors in Swaziland has come in the form of what is misleadingly referred to as "community police". These are community members entrusted by the community to look after the security problems of the community. The manner in which they are appointed, is somehow democratic because it is done in community meetings where every member of society has a say and can raise an objection over the nomination and eventual selection of any member of the committee. It is argued that before people are selected to be members, they should be deemed to be law abiding citizens with no previous criminal record. The power given to these people is very wide, because there are no guidelines on how they should operate, except that they are required to uproot criminal activity, especially that pertaining to stock-theft. They design their own methods of investigation and these need not be in line with the country's constitution or legal system. This makes these non-state community security actors very dangerous, because they are almost empowered to employ any form of violence in discharging their duties. The flip-side of this situation is that they are potentially perpetrators of violence in the name of guaranteeing security. The manner in which they are formed and operate makes them different from what is generally conceptualized as community policing. In Swaziland the "community police" are not in partnership with state police, nor are they a network constructed by state police in transforming their methods of policing. They are actually at loggerheads with state police and this was shown in 2008 when, "A police officer was injured when he, together with other officers, were assaulted by two Mhlane community policemen inside the police station" (*The Swazi Observer*, 29 December 2008). They are independent community actors who have grown out of the economic realities deriving from the economic history of rural communities, their needs and geographies, and they are not vigilantes. The fact that they do not conform to mainstream community policing postulation, is that, as Bruce Baker has argued: "The world of local forms of policing is complex, diverse and dynamic, making a common strategy problematic" (Barker 2008:568).

The first community police committee in Swaziland appeared in 1996 at Lamgabhiin Dlangeni, but after some time had spread to all rural areas of the country, where non-state community security actors, developed as independent community based security agencies, operated outside the operational framework of

the state. The main aim was to maintain community order and to provide security and peace for the residents. Although this aim can cover several dimensions of community security, the focus was against crime deemed to be a threat to economic well-being. The formation of these non-state community security committees was, in part, a critique of the state as an institution assumed to have the monopoly of force. It was also a rejection of the notion that the state is the only institution that can effectively provide security. This critique of the state was largely expressed as a protest against the failure of the state police to deal with the problem of crime that was undermining community attempts to improve individual economic conditions.

This is not peculiar to Swaziland, because even at the international level there is a convergence of opinion about the deficiencies of traditional police operations and organization (McElroy, Cosgrove and Sadd 1993). Such deficiencies are understandable because state police usually do not command adequate resources to offer rural communities protection from crime as needed. In Swaziland, the state police do not have the capacity in terms of resources, numbers and skills to provide rural communities with the security they need. The situation is aggravated by the country's poor infrastructure that makes most rural areas inaccessible. The failure of the state police therefore is, to a large measure, a state structural failure. Somizi Ngwenya argued along these lines when he said:

> "It was inevitable that the communities would take their security into their own hands. While the rate of crime was going up, the state police were not able to provide us with the necessary security. This is not surprising because over the years the Swaziland Government has been too pre-occupied with the security of those in power and the urban areas. The state does not seem concerned with the security of the poor in the rural areas. We cannot sit down and fold our arms while our stock is stolen on a daily basis. We decided to be responsible for our own security and we formed community policing committees" (Interview Malindza, 23 May 2011).

Some of the commentators on the failure of the state blamed the country's governance structure. Magayiza Thabede said:

> "Our communities are doing well by trying to put into place structures that can provide security to the residents because if they do not, nobody will. Over the years we have been looking upon the state to provide us with the needed security so that we can try to improve our lives. It has become clear over the years that the manner in which this country is governed does not include the interests of the poor. If you attend meetings in the chief's kraal, all you hear is what the king wants and how we should contribute to the upkeep of the royal family and chiefs, and also raise money for national functions. Very little attention is given to the day to day struggles the poor are engaged in to make a living. This country is the mother of the royal family and the rich, and a stepmother of the poor in the rural communities" (Interview Maphopheni, 24 May 2011).

The failure of the state and state police is at times explained in terms of perceptions of corruption. Swaziland as a country has high levels of corruption which threaten the economic viability of the country (Simelane 2011). According to Transparency International (TI), in 2006 Swaziland had a score of 2,5 in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), in terms of being free of corruption (*The*

*Swazi Observer*, 20 June 2007), and the situation has gone worse. According to rural communities the state police are too intertwined in the web of corruption to be trusted with the security of rural areas. There is a general belief that state police are often in cahoots with the criminals. In northeast Swaziland the state police are suspected to be involved in goat and cattle rustling and therefore cannot be entrusted with community security. Ndolo Nyawo said:

> "It is extremely difficult to trust members of the Royal Swaziland Police. In this area our observation is that state police work together with criminals. When cases of stolen cattle are reported to the state police, the stolen cattle are not recovered. If the community uses its own structures, there is some success in recovering the cattle. It therefore appears that our security can best be served if we work outside the structures of the Royal Swaziland Police. Forming local community policing committees in our rural area has been the best response to our security concerns. You should remember that when the thieves come they do not just steal one beast, they take everything they can find" (Interview Njojane, 24 May 2011).

The picture of corruption by the state police derives from perceptions of the state and the manner in which it has managed the economy. Melusi Shongwe brought out this perception very well:

> "I also think that the state police are corrupt. In fact this is no longer a perception but an established fact because so many cases have been reported but nothing has been done. I am however, worried by the fact that we seem to be paying too much attention to the police and how they are corrupt. The state police are actually a product of a corrupt governance structure and as we know 'an apple does not fall away from the tree'. This country will eventually collapse because of corruption and because even high institutions of the state are corrupt and in fact nourish corruption. If I were to be direct, I do not think this country can effectively combat corruption if the institution of monarchy remains as corrupt as it is. To come back to your question, the state police in this country are corrupt because the whole leadership is corrupt" (Interview Hlane, 24 May 2011).

Evidence indicates that the decision of communities to take their security into their own hands is driven by the failure of the state. According to the testimonies of some members of rural communities the state has withdrawn from providing security to rural communities. What is not certain, is whether this is by design or default, but what is clear is that it has resulted in what others have called the "responsibilisation of the citizenry" (Institute of Security Studies (hereafter referred to as ISS) 2010:35). Some have argued that the retreat of the state in such matters has been informed by the neo-liberal discourse that has come to dominate the analysis of the state in developing countries in the 1980s (Olukoshi 2004). This calls for the location of state withdrawal in the context of neo-liberal capitalism which has resulted in the marginalization of large sections of the population in developing countries from the economic operation of the state. This is the context of the dynamics of privatization that has shrunk the public sphere in which the majority of citizens engage. One of the important results of this has been the opening up of space for non-state actors such as non-state community security actors to operate. These are spaces that have previously been assumed to be the

reserve of the state. What is not clear at the moment is the extent to which such developments create stability at both the community and national levels.

Another important driver for the emergence of non-state community security actors in rural Swaziland is poverty. The United Nations Complementary Country Analysis shows that about 759 000 people (about 69%) in a population of about 1,1 million are living below the poverty line of R7,50 per day (*Sunday Times of Swaziland,* 13 June 2010). This is attributed to the fact that: "Income distribution remains skewed with 56% of the wealth held by the richest 20% of the population, while the poorest 20% of the population owns less than 4,3%. Swaziland has recorded a coefficient of 0,51 reflecting a high level of inequality by international standards" (*Ibid.*:7*)*. The situation is complicated by the fact that the 2007 Population and Housing Census Report shows that the country's unemployment rate is 40,6% (*Times of Swaziland*, 12 November 2010).

This is partly a product of the failure of the Swazi economy to grow, as evidence shows that it has been growing at a rate of less than 3% per annum for more than a decade. This has resulted in budget constraints that forced the Minister of Finance in 2006 to say: "Mr. Speaker, the budget I present here today has been prepared under very hard economic conditions with barely a 2% GDP growth rate" (Mabuza 2011:28). This has had a negative impact on the economic conditions of rural communities as the state has failed to invest in public goods. The economic reproduction of rural communities has increasingly revolved around local dependence. While such local dependence can neither be classified as "traditional" or "modern" (Cox and Mair 1988), it is constructed around dependence on local economic asserts that have market linkages with the non local.

Consequently, rural communities in Swaziland define their economic well-being through the availability and security of local resources. Crime, and security against crime, are therefore perceived within the context of local resources, especially those resources that play an important role in the generation of revenue for households. The main form of crime that became an important driver for the formation of non-state community security actors was loss of livestock, especially cattle, through internal and cross-border cattle rustling (Simelane 2005). Cross-border cattle rustling along the border with South Africa was undermining the economies of rural communities, and, because the state had withdrawn, these communities were compelled to substitute the state with locally developed forms of policing to combat this and other crimes.

In rural Swaziland cattle plays a very important economic role as they "are a store of wealth or savings account from which withdrawals are made only for special social or ceremonial occasions or for emergency needs such as payments for education" (Low, Kemp and Doran 1980:22). Research has shown that cattle are driven from rural areas along the border with South Africa by syndicates, involving

both Swazi and South African citizens. Many rural families have lost all their cattle and this resulted in failure to pay school fees and to meet family financial needs. Some members of the rural communities have been forced into labour migration because of loss of cattle. The state police have failed to deal with the problem of cattle rustling in rural Swaziland and are accused of continuing with their traditional methods of policing, such as randomized patrolling, even though it is clear that such strategies are not yielding positive results. The residents of the different rural areas became increasingly impatient with the inefficiency and bureaucracy of state security institutions (Khumalo 2004). Thoko Dlomo pointed out that: "We soon became disappointed because the police were failing to come up with positive results. It became a waste of time and money to report crime matters to the police because nothing would come out of such reporting" (Interview Sikhuphe, 13 May 2011).

According to some informants, the formation of non-state community security actors was a survival strategy on the backdrop of increasing stock theft and failure of state police to provide the needed security. Hebert Sangweni related the relevance of security to the economic interests of communities:

> "Lack of security at community level has undermined people's efforts to redeem themselves from poverty. The majority of the people in the rural areas are not in formal employment and they are largely dependent on their livestock for providing themselves with part of their financial needs. They sell their goats, sheep, and cattle to feed their families, and loss of these assets is a huge economic blow to them. Since the state has failed to protect their property it is only logical that they should provide themselves with such security. Failure to do so, would plunge them deeper into poverty" (Interview Sikhuphe, 17 May 2011).

The problem of general crime has been very important in the formation of non-state community security actors in rural Swaziland. From the beginning of the 1990s crime has escalated in Swazi rural communities. For many this has been associated with the rising rate of unemployment among the youth, and the rising levels of poverty. Idle school leavers, who are increasingly not absorbed into the local job market, have been blamed for the occurrence of different forms of criminal activity. Sebentile Ndlovu expressed her opinion on this matter:

> "In previous years crime in Swaziland was associated with urban areas. However, this has grammatically changed as the crimes that were taking place in urban areas are now being committed in the rural areas. I think the country's economy is failing to create more jobs for the increasing number of young people. These young people are loitering in their communities with nothing to do. Most of them turn to crime and that creates insecurity at community level. For us in the rural areas it is clear that the state does not have the resolve to protect us and our property, so we are forced to build security structures as permitted by the resources available to us. The easiest to us, is to form groups that do night patrols and are observant during the day to do the policing" (Interview Ngogola, 4 April 2011).

It is unrealistic to explain the escalation of crime in the rural areas only in terms of youth unemployment. As noted above, the rate of unemployment in Swaziland is above 40% for the general population. Admittedly, it is the highest among the youth, but even the adult population is severely affected. The Swazi

economy has never been strong enough to create a large demand for labour, especially at the level of industrial employment. It has been the South African labour market, especially the mines, that has absorbed thousands of Swazi workers in both the colonial and post-colonial periods (Booth 1983; Crush 1987). However, with changes in the labour intake of the South African mines, thousands of Swazi men increased the ranks of the unemployed. This had a damaging effect on the economy of rural Swaziland. Although no authoritative study has been undertaken, this must have contributed to the crime rate in rural Swaziland.

Crime against women and children contributed significantly to the drive for the formation of non-state community security actors. This usually comes in the form of rape of women, especially those left behind by husbands working away, and robbing children on family errands. Mzwandile Gwebu stated:

> "In my community we have been insecure for a long time and the government of this country was doing nothing despite members of the community reporting the incidences. Almost on a daily basis children sent to the shops were robbed of the money they were carrying. Some of them were robbed of the change on their way back from the shops. This crime was committed by young boys who are usually found in groups next to the shops. I suspect that these boys also smoke dagga. This was bothering us for a long time until we established community police who beat up these loitering boys and for once after a long time our children freely buy items from the shops without being robbed by these criminals" (Interview Malindza, 10 January 2011).

Explaining the rape of women whose husbands were away in the mines or other forms of employment, Nokwazi Ngozo said:

> "Our rural area has a large number of men who are working away from home. Some of these men are working in the mines in South Africa, while others are working in the urban areas of the country. These men left their wives and children behind and the security of these women has been compromised by criminals who attack their homes at night and rape them together with their grown girls if there are any. A recent case was very painful because these young criminals broke into the house where the woman was sleeping with her children and raped her in front of her children. There were three of them and they took turns on her until she fainted. Can you imagine such a horrible experience. Now that will not happen and if anyone does it the community safety group will deal with them accordingly. They will be paraded before a gathering of the whole community and beaten thoroughly, even if they die in the process it does not matter" (Interview Malindza, 14 January 2011).

Communities have formed local policing committees that are entrusted with their security. They are provided with torches and whistles and they are always on patrol during the night and alert to happenings in the community during the day. All the members are volunteers who depend on information given by community members and derive their strength from the communities. The attitude of "us versus them" prevails between the state police and the communities. The emergence of no-state actors is an indication that there is an urgent need for the aims of policing, the services it delivers, and the assessment of its adequacy, to be formulated and developed with full cognizance of the distinctive experiences, needs and norms of local communities.

## 5.  NON-STATE COMMUNITY SECURITY ACTORS AND VIOLENCE: NARRATIVES OF THE VICTIMS

In other parts of Africa research has shown that corporal punishment is not the main method of dealing with criminals at community level. For instance, Bruce Baker, analyzing the operations of local forms of policing in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, has argued: "Corporal punishment does not play a large part in the local government of Rwanda, though it is not totally absent" (Baker 2008:564). He continues to state that, "corporal punishment…is not the only or even the main punishment used in local forms of policing in Sierra Leone and Rwanda. Conflict resolution is preferred…" (*Ibid.*). The situation in Swaziland is the exact opposite, and there are no established structures for conflict resolution. Non-state community security actors have taken it upon themselves to investigate, interrogate and pass judgment. Through all these processes, corporal punishment is the only mode of operation and it does not matter whether the culprit pleads guilty or is denying wrong-doing. In fact, the intensity of corporal punishment increases with denial of wrong-doing. Most of their victims only escape punishment on the recovery of stolen items, demonstrating a belief in some kind of restorative justice. While it appears that in Sierra Leone and Rwanda culprits are paraded in the streets just to shame them, in Swaziland they are subjected to public flogging or any other dehumanizing treatment. Community police hope to curb crime through instilling fear on community members. Surprisingly, cabinet ministers and other prominent government officials continue to encourage communities to combat crime through the structure of non-state community security actors. Consequently, Swazi non-state community security actors are frequently accused of human rights abuses, especially because of the punishment of people even at the level of being suspected of having committed a crime.

One of the major challenges facing non-state community security actors in Swaziland is investigation. The first challenge in this area is that community security actors are not trained in the art of investigating crime, subsequently they do not conduct formal investigation and the suspects are considered guilty until they are proven innocent. Due to lack of investigation skills their *modus operandi* is violence. Dealing with criminal cases becomes an issue of trying to get the truth through instilling fear in the people and subjecting them to violent abuse. Non-state community security actors rely on information from community members who secretly inform them about suspects. Just as is the case in other parts of Africa (Baker 2008), neighbours and family members keep their eyes open for strangers and occurrences that are perceived to be out of the norm. Consequently, people become suspects through information from the grapevine rather than thorough, proper investigation. This is very problematic, because such a procedure becomes

entangled in community dynamics that integrate intra- and inter-family conflicts and jealousies.

The testimonies of some of the victims indicate the manner in which non-state community actors work and the scale of violence they have unleashed upon rural communities. Samkeliso Masilela narrated how community police works:

> "There is a problem with the manner in which those appointed as community police investigate cases in our area. The main problem is that once you are considered to be a suspect, you are taken as guilty and you are not expected to deny wrong-doing. They expect you to tell them how you committed the crime even if you did not. If you deny committing the crime you are severely beaten. In order for the victims to relieve themselves from the beating, they have to agree that they committed the crime. In many instances people end up incriminating innocent people" (Interview Njojane, 14 January 2011).

He also continued to relate how he was physically abused on suspicion of stealing his employer's cattle:

> "I was employed as cattle herder for a certain family. In this area we do not follow the cattle every day. At one point four of the cattle strayed and I could not find them. When the matter was reported to the community council, community police were instructed to interrogate me. When I denied knowledge of the cattle, they started torturing me. In fear of continued torture, I told them I sold the cattle to an owner of a butchery. I was then taken to the owner of the butchery who denied knowledge of the cattle. I apologized to him in front of the community police and I stated that I mentioned his name to relieve myself from torture. After that the beating and the torture became more intense and I was saved by the owner of the cattle who told them to spare me because he thought I had learnt my lesson. A month later, the state police came to report that the cattle had been found in one of the adjacent areas. These people nearly killed me for a crime I did not commit" (Masilela Njojane, 14 January 2011).

Another victim told the story of how he was sjamboked by non-state community actors for a crime he did not commit:

> "I am one of the people who suffered at the hands of the community police for something I did not do. This was a case involving the theft of nine goats in one of the homesteads. I am not sure how I came to be a suspect but they collected me from my home. I was taken to a gravel road and I was forced to roll along the road while members of the community police were taking turns in beating me up with their sjamboks, sticks, and plastic pipes. I was rescued by members of the Royal Swaziland Police who took me to the police station and carried out their own investigation. While this investigation was going on I could not return to my home because these people would have killed me. After two weeks of moving from relative to relative the state police informed me that the real thief had been caught and I was free to go back home. When I got to my home area, no one came forward to apologize for subjecting me to this unnecessary abuse. Even today, I still carry the stigma of having been publicly humiliated" (Muzi Shabangu. Interview Njojane, 8 February 2011).

In some instances the violence perpetrated by the community police was near fatal as shown by the experience of Sandile Nkonyane:

> "Community police use violence when carrying out their criminal investigations. In September 2008 I was a victim when I was subjected to degrading treatment over a matter concerning the theft of a 5,000litre water tank in one of the homesteads. They told me I was a suspect because I was seen by a young girl passing by the homestead on the evening of the theft. I was taken to a secluded place in the forest which they called Bagdad. I was handcuffed and hanged with the handcuffs from a tree branch. This was a terrible

experience because the handcuffs were cutting into my flesh and damaging my wrists. As I was hanging from the tree, I was being beaten all over the body. These men were so cruel that at times they sat and enjoyed their traditional beer while I was enduring excruciating pain. I was told that the only way to save myself was to lead them to where the tank was. After some time I fainted and I woke up in hospital the following day" (Interview Hlane, 12 December 2010).

In some instances the violence by non-state community security actors resulted in loss of life. For instance, in October 2004 community police brutally killed a 22 year-old man at KaKhoza on allegations of stealing a cellphone. It was reported that:

"Philani was dragged all over the two notorious locations, KaKhoza and New Village, where he was moved from home to home in search of the alleged stolen items. He was subjected to huge frightening and unbearable torture for the whole night. He cried until his voice could not come out of his mouth. Residents who had a chance of seeing him in this state have revealed that they tried to talk to the community police officers into releasing him but they did not bulge claiming that they wanted to teach him one or two lessons and these lessons qualified him to his death" (*Sunday Times of Swaziland*, 17 October 2004).

The violence of the non-state community security actors has grown like a cancer in rural Swaziland, whereby communities are now somehow devouring themselves as community members engage in mob justice in complete disregard of the laws of the land. In one of such cases a man was brutally killed by a mob on suspicion of cattle rustling:

"An angry mob poisoned and murdered a man after he was suspected to be part of a cattle rustling syndicate. Gideon Gamedze was forced to drink a syrup of weevil tablets and later strangled to death. The 53 year old's murder has left 14 children fatherless. It comes at the height of a bitter feud over stolen cattle in the area that has also seen at least two others killed in recent weeks. He was beaten and dragged to the forest by the over 200 mobsters, who were armed with an assortment of weapons. It is alleged that they also had with them a bag filled with weevil tablets, and other poisonous farm inputs" (*The Times of Swaziland*, 12 February 2008).

The whole rural community security dynamic has grown very unstable in rural Swaziland. The institution that was meant to guarantee community security has turned into a security threat, and the communities are engaging in violence all in the name of combating crime that is perceived to be a threat to economic security. This shows that the issue of rural community security in Swaziland is a contested issue and much of the developments are premised on the failure of the state to reconceptualize the terrain of security. The Swazi state has made several attempts to bring community police under the arm of the state police, but this has had very little success as most rural communities are showing preference for community police. Maybe the solution lies in adopting a genuine community policing philosophy that will forge partnerships between all the concerned parties.

What has made the situation more complex is that non-state community security actors have become integrated into the traditional governance structure of the communities. The immediate representatives of the monarchy at community

level are the traditional chiefs. Recently, traditional chiefs began utilizing non-state community security actors to intimidate and subject residents to different forms of violence. For instance, traditional chiefs now use them to collect fines imposed by traditional local tribunals. Such collections have been attended by violence and in the process turning around people's understanding of the purpose and mandate of non-state community security actors. They are used to evict people from their land for not being loyal to the traditional political system.

The *modus operandi* for non-state community security actors has been a subject of debate. This is the case because they operate outside the framework of the state and therefore do not conform to established ways of doing things. Suspects are flogged in public, forced to run along streets naked, and forced to eat raw meat in view of other members of the community. Senzo Manana narrated his ordeal when he was suspected to have stolen a goat:

> "In 2008 I was suspected to have stolen a goat belonging to my cousin and the matter was taken over by the community police. Members of the community were called to witness my punishment even though nobody had established that I had actually stolen the goat. They started beating me up in front of everybody and they stripped me naked in the presence of children. All the time I was told to agree that I had stolen the goat. At some point I was so exhausted that I could not stand on my feet. They then killed a goat and said because I like goat meat I should start eating it raw. For me it became a choice between death and eating the raw meat. As I was eating the meat and being beaten at the same time, two state police officers arrived. Members of the community police told them to leave because they were still busy and they did not want to be disturbed, and to my surprise they left" (Interview Njojane, 16 January 2011).

Such violence committed in the name of guaranteeing security to communities has attracted attention from different commentators. Non-state community security actors in Swaziland are constantly in violation of the country's constitution that guarantees people's rights (Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland 2005). On 26 July 2005 King Mswati III assented to a new constitution that became the supreme law of the land in 2006. The Constitution protects a number of fundamental human rights and freedoms including freedom from torture, inhuman treatment or punishment. In the functioning of non-state community security actors people's rights are not respected at all, and in fact no reference is made to them when they are being physically abused.

The violence of the non-state community security actors should, however, not be analyzed out of context or in isolation. Violence is a culture that does not develop overnight but derived from the existing governance or social system. The violence of non-state community security actors in Swaziland is informed by the texture of the whole security sector in the country. The state police perpetuate violence on the citizens almost on a daily basis and they generally have a poor human rights record (African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum 2008). There are reports of state police abuse of power and use of excessive force, torture and

mistreatment of detainees and a failure to prosecute for human rights violations. This is in spite of the fact that there is comprehensive legislation such as the Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act (2002) that refers to state police discipline, powers and duties. In recent years some Swazi citizens have died in police cells under very questionable circumstances. Of particular importance has been violence against critics of the monarchy and the government. The violence of the security sector is, therefore, a governance issue largely informed by regime security and not anchored on human security. This creates a culture of violence that permeates all the layers of the security sector even if the security architecture has taken strong community dimensions. It is therefore very difficult for the Swazi state police to deal with issues of human rights violation within the ranks of non-state community security actors.

The high handedness of the Swazi non-state community security actors has been a concern for different sections of the Swazi population. A number of non-governmental organizations have been active in addressing human rights violations by the country's security sector. They include the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS), the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA), Lawyers for Human Rights – Swaziland (LHR-S), the Council of Swaziland Churches, and Women and the Law in Southern Africa – Swaziland. The effectiveness of these groups has been compromised by a non-committal state which is also constantly guilty of human rights violations.

The violence of non-state community security actors points to a fundamental problem of a non reformed security sector. The whole Swazi security sector has failed to transform over the years due to the failure of the state to democratize. The military, the state police and prison services have failed to reform along democratic lines to draw a line between politically informed actions and providing security to the citizens for purposes of better economic performance and self-reproduction. It appears that the best strategy for moving forward is for the country to undergo a process of security sector reform that will engage all the actors in the security sector. This would blow in a fresh breath of air through all actors, even at the level of community.

The manner in which non-state community security actors operate at the moment does not seem to have provided communities any gains in the shift in the concept of security from the state as a referent object to the community and individual security. What has instead emerged is another monster that is preying on the people that need security. This is in spite of the fact that community members in some rural areas still consider the entrance of non-state community security actors as a positive development that has reduced crime and led to better enjoyment of the products of their economic activities. For instance, Zenani Masuku stated:

"Before we established community police in this area there was no peace because the very few assets we had could be taken away from you overnight. Some people in this area had cattle which they sold from time to time to pay for the education of their children and meet the economic needs of their families, but they were deprived of these by thieves and family heads, were forced to leave their homes in search of jobs inside and outside the country. Once we established our own structures of security this was reduced drastically. Now our cattle are safe we sell them when we have needs, and no woman feels unsafe under the roof of her house. I have heard that some group of educated people in town are saying our security methods are bad and should be stopped. This is because they have not experienced what we have gone through, in any case the state is always ready to protect them in the city" (Interview Ngogola, 18 January 2011).

Another respondent, Mzikayifani Jele, pointed out:

"For our area there is no doubt that community police have been a success story. These days you cannot find these young boys loitering on the streets at night because each time they are found there they are beaten up thoroughly. Those who want to continue being thieves have left this area for the urban areas. The community police pursue thieves right into the South African side and recover stolen cattle. This is a very peaceful community now and only thieves and rapists are not happy. The whole thing about state laws does not help us at all because the state police catch thieves and within a few days they are back with us stealing our property again. I strongly believe that with community police our lives will be better and our property and families will continue to be protected" (Interview Kalanga, 18 January 2011).

In spite of this support, evidence also indicates that community police are a destabilizing factor in the communities where they operate. They create a huge sense of insecurity amongst the residents, because everybody runs the risk of being declared a criminal, even if they are not. As long as non-state community security actors are not trained in the science of investigation, they remain a danger to their fellow community members. This is especially the case because they do not live above local networks and influences. They are easily manipulated by some community members who may have something against others. The power of violence they wield in their communities is not checked in any way because the state has failed to protect the fundamental rights of individuals.

Non-state community security actors started as a good idea as they were perceived as a mechanism for safeguarding the security interests of communities. However, it started to lose its way when it became completely divorced from the controls of the state, especially the laws that are meant to maintain peace and stability in the community and in the country in general. They degenerated into anarchy in which the communities are now devouring themselves. These are the dangers of non-state community security actors in the context of a weak state because the whole situation nourishes anarchy and creates insecurity that undermines the well-being of people. It undermines the important notion that security is ultimately about the absence of threats to life and freedom of individuals. It is about "the freeing of people (as individuals or groups) from those physical constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do"

(Booth 1991:319). The concern raised by the Swaziland experience is that the evolution of the concept of security has empowered non-state security actors, but it has not emancipated the people from fear. Non-state community security actors perpetuate the condition of fear, coercion and violence. For peace and stability to prevail in rural Swaziland, and for the security of all to be guaranteed, non-state community security actors should respect the laws of the country and should be held accountable for acts of violence they perpetrate in the communities. As it was indicated in a report of the United Nations Development Programme, "The world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives" (UNDP 1994:219).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Sub-Saharan Africa faces numerous challenges that derive from the poor performance of the states in their development agenda. The majority of them have experienced very low growth rates, and failure to achieve sustainable economic development. This means that their citizens face numerous threats of a non-military, but largely economic nature. Lack of positive achievement in economic growth has raised the concerns over the security of these populations and how they can best engineer an environment for better production and improvement of the quality of life of the majority. Evidence points to the fact that prospects for peace, economic growth, and general stability will remain a dream if the security architecture is not well constructed. Research on security matters in Sub-Saharan Africa remains paramount and should be extended to interrogate security dynamics at all levels of society.

The conceptualization of security has changed overtime to provide an opportunity for integrating the experiences and preferences of people at all levels. There is no doubt that the traditional state-centric approach yielded useful insights into state concerns on security, and how the security interests of the rest of the citizens were assumed to be accommodated in state concerns. It, however, remains important that the concept should integrate all forms of threat that engender a condition of insecurity, even if not military. The article has gone through such theoretical transformation and located the space for analyzing community security within the context of broader theoretical construction in the conceptualization of security. Through this broader contextualization we are able to learn about the security concerns of individuals, their definition of their own security architecture, and showing their preferences.

The security architecture of rural communities has been transformed over the years as the provision of security has devolved to communities which have taken it into their own hands. The article has shown that there are many drivers of this development, ranging from community economic concerns to the general failure

of the state to provide rural communities with the security they need. Evidence shows that the Swazi state has abdicated its responsibility of providing security to rural communities. This happened at a time when rural communities face numerous economic challenges revolving around the escalation in the crime rate. The reasons behind such state failure are not clear, but it appears that the lack of necessary resources has played an important role. The argument of the article is that the failure of the state to meet the security needs of rural communities pushed them to utilize locally resources to establish structures for protecting themselves and their economic assets. This gave birth to non-state community security actors who are completely locally based and are directly formed by the communities. This raises concerns of some kind of a disconnection between what is national and that which is local. This also raises the importance of the concept of local dependence that has shaped business decisions in the United States.

The study has shown that non-state community security actors use violence to handle the security concerns of the communities. There is comprehensive evidence showing the scale of violence perpetrated by these non-state actors. Through narratives of the victims, the research has shown how people have been abused and subjected to degrading treatment. The level of corporal punishment applied by the community police has been excessive and tantamount to creating a condition of insecurity in the rural areas. One of the concerns around the issues of corporal punishment is the silence of the state. The Swaziland government has made no attempt to check the excesses of non-state community security actors allowing them to develop and act outside the legal framework of the country. The culture of violence against those assumed to be guilty has degenerated to mob justice which is also fast growing into being another form of local policing. Unlike in other African states where similar studies have been conducted, the main characteristic of local forms of policing in Swaziland is violence.

The author has argued that the above characteristic of non-state community security police should be analyzed in the context of the general characteristics of the whole Swazi security sector. As a result of bad governance, the Swazi security sector operates through violence which then affects all other structures. The state police have built a culture of violence that serves the interests of the leaders. The state police have physically abused, and at times killed the opponents of the monarchy in the name of national security. Consequently, the state has failed to check the human rights abuses committed by non-state community security police.

The fact that there has been a shift from the interests of the state to community agency is positive. It allows for giving prominence to the security interests of impoverished members of society. It allows us to bring in the human factor in security and highlight individual responses to security threats. However, the research has shown that the Swaziland situation demonstrates that

if the transformation goes unchecked it can become counter-productive. It leads to community instability and reproduces conditions that generate insecurity and reduce capacity for development. The operation of non-state community security actors should be regulated and should be confined to the dictates of the law, especially that which guarantee fundamental people's rights. If this does not happen, as is the case in Swaziland, states run the danger of nourishing conflict and disrespect for the law.

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