Theo-Political Challenges Concerning the Relations of Somali migration in Kenya: An exploration of the dynamics at the core of imagining "the Other"

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Abstract

This article focuses on the "theo-political" inner core of Somali-Kenya migration. The article has been motivated by the invasion of Somaliland by Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) claiming "Linda Inchi," that they are protecting their borders. This is a response to the socio-economic situation and the violence initiated by the Al-Shabaab militia group, both in Kenya and Somalia. The volatile situation has forced many Somalis to seek refuge in Kenya. With migration has come the "sacralization of migration" which means that the Somali refugee migration is imbued with a sacred character, that is, as well as the growth in population, more mosques are evident in the outskirts of the camps. The Somali refugees root for their true identity as Muslims. But the Kenyans equate the Muslim refugees with militia. Left unchallenged, this equation can lead to the scapegoating of Muslims. There has also been a "politicization of religion" in Kenya, where politicians court and count on the votes of refugees. Kenyans and Somalians each have their own cultures, and their own political ideologies; they imagine the other differently, and they fear the differences. They each fear greater economic instability, although the Kenyans want to give refuge to, and protect, vulnerable Somali refugees. Interestingly, what is concealed is at the heart of mimetic rivalry that has a double imperative with the demand of 'the other,' "imitate me." This rivalry can lead to group violence against individual victims, who become surrogates for all refugee victims. It is important to address this imagining of the other, and its impact on immigrants.

1 Somali Refugees in Kenya and their Purported Danger

Kenya hosts two classes of refugees: statutory and prima facie refugees.[1] The Somali refugees are hosted in Dadaab refugee camp[2] in Garissa County, Kenya. The influx of Somali refugees started in 1991 after the fall of the Siad Barre regime[3] and the onset of civil war. This was followed by the seceding of Somaliland (May 1991) from the rest of Somalia and consequently led to the formation of the Puntland Federal State of Somalia (August 1998). Because of the unstable government with a prevalent civil war, it was not until 2012, when Somalia underwent an elaborate electoral process whereby Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected President, that the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was created.

Since March 2016, the Government of Kenya has hosted 597,683 refugees in Dadaab camp.[4] A large number of Somali refugees have moved out of the camp and are living illegally in Eastleigh estate in Nairobi, where the majority of the Kenyan-Somali tribe resides. They have moved to Eastleigh in search of better opportunities, such as economic opportunity, education, and medical services. However, they are increasingly challenged by the country's encampment policy; for example, Kenya's policy of encampment does not allow refugees to leave the camps[5]

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1   Statutory refugee applies to an individual who has "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, sex, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Prima facie refugee applies to an individual who "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in any part or whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place habitual residence." Law of Kenya. *Refugee Act No 13 of 2006*. (National Council for Law Reporting, revised edition 2012): www.kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/RefugeeAct_No13of2006.pdf (accessed on December 01.2022).

2   Dadaab refugee camp consists of five camps: Dagahaley, Ifo,Ifo II, Hagadera and Kambios. When I use the word Dadaab camp I refer to the five camps. This Camp was founded by the Government of Kenya in 1991.

3   Iaon Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland: Culture, History, Society* (Hurst Published Ltd, 2008), preface.

4   *Kenya Country Profile Reliefweb* Kenyaupdate.pdf (reliefweb.int), (accessed on June 15, 2019); cf. *UNHCR. Kenya Fact sheet*, March 2016: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/30731 (accessed on December 01, 2022).

5   The Kenya Gazette Notice No. 1927 (March 28, 2014):
    https://www.kenyalaw.org/kenya_gazette/download/VolCXVINo39.pdf (accessed on June 2, 2019).

– refugees are required to report back to the camp regularly for population counts and registration.[6]

In Eastleigh, the refugees feel a sense of belonging, as they can find employment in hotels, shops, and as casual workers among their own tribe mates. The refugees can repatriate the money to support the families in the camp. As a result, the refugees intermingle and interact with other Kenyans in doing business. However, according to Sara Pavanello, the refugees do not want to integrate; they are not interested in joining cultural traditional practices, and are not ready to learn any ethnic Kenyan languages.[7] This lack of integration and secretiveness creates perceptions among the locals, whose "image of the other" is negative. They imagine the refugees being linked to crime and insecurity in the country. In 2004, Vice-President Mood Awuori blamed refugees for the proliferation of arms and small weapons. This negative attitude has been passed on from one year to the next, and the media has persistently reinforced it, vilifying the refugees with articles that engender fear of them, e.g. *The Standard* printed: "it is conceivable that if the Government continues to pursue its open-door policy, rival Somali gangs will soon be settling their differences on Kenyatta Avenue."[8] This was a warning that Somali gangs (Al-Shabaab)[9] could attack Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. This attitude causes the Kenyan public to view Somali refugees as a threat to their "local economy and creating social pressures."[10] Thus, the citizens begin to wonder about the legitimacy of Eastleigh's economic prosperity and to

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6   Idil Lambo, "In the Shelter of Each Other: Notions of Home and Belonging amongst Somali Refugees in Nairobi," *UNHCR: New Issues In Refugee Research, Research Paper* no. 233 (May 14, 2012): https://www.unhcr.org/reseach/working/4face3d09/shelter-other-notions-home-belonging-amongst-somali-refugees-nairobi-idil.html (accessed on December 01, 2022).

7   Sara Pavanello, S. Elhawary and S. Pantuliano, *Hidden and exposed: urban refugees in Nairobi* (London: ODI, Overseas Development Institute, 2010): https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/114094/2010-03_Hidden.pdf (accessed on December 01, 2022).

8   Austine Okande, "Superpower Spread Terror in Eastleigh," *The Standard,* July 2011: www.standard-media.co.ke/article/2000088737/superpower-spreads-terror-in-eastlleigh (accessed on December 01, 2022).

9   Al-Shabaab is an Al Qaeda affiliate; they have received ideological support, funding and training.

10 Oliver Bakewell, "Returning Refugees or Migrating Villagers? Voluntary Repatriation Programs in Africa Reconsidered," *UNHCR*: *New Issues In Refugee Research, Research Paper* no. 27 (December 15, 1999): https://www.unhcr.org/research/working/3ae6a0c40/returning-refugees-migrating-villagers-voluntary-repatriation-programmes.html?query=Bakwell%20Oliver(accessedonDecember01.2022).

speculate about refugees' links with piracy and terrorism. The result of such distrust is that the refugees' potential is curtailed. Their increased empowerment through participation in the national economy causes hostility, as citizens feel that the refugees have close links to the terrorist group: "it is not acceptable to us that a space that is supposed to provide safety and assistance, is transformed to facilitate agents of terror and destruction,"[11] says President Kenyatta. In this sense it is believed that the refugees are causing instability and insecurity in the country; the sprawling Dadaab camp has become a haven through which the Al-Shabaab,[12] terrorist group receives information and is using it for planning attacks.

2 Somali refugees' security threat in Kenya

The series of terror attacks by the Al-Shabaab militia, especially on the Nairobi Westgate Mall on 21 September 2013[13] in which 67 people were killed, caused the government to take several serious steps: the government ordered the closure of the camp. This was followed by the development of a tripartite agreement, which was signed on 10th November 2013 by the Somali Government, the Kenyan Government, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This tripartite agreement is what we may call "a non-aggression pact with the other."[14] In this sense, the mimetic desire aims to extinct the differences among rivals, which is connected to "a serious worsening of conflict between the selves."[15] The mimetic conflict turns antagonists into doubles. At the core of mimetic rivalry, then, is a double imperative: the mediator's demand is the command "imitate me," but this command comes with a warning "do not imitate

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11 President Uhuru Kenyatta, "Press-Statement: Meeting with H.E. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General" March 8, 2017: http://www.president.go.ke (accessed on June 8, 2019).

12 AMISIOM Article http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_shabaab.html (accessed on June 9, 2019).

13 John Ngirachu and others, "Security forces move to end Westgate mall siege as death toll rises to 62," Nation, September 23, 2013: https://nation.africa/kenya/news/security-forces-move-to-end-westgate-mall-siege-as-death-toll-rises-to-62--897260 (accessed on December 01, 2022).

14 René Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 44.

15 Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground,* 44.

me." Interestingly, the paradox of negative imitation, which is entangled with "the other" now works to transfigure the other.[16] In this perspective, the Kenyan and the Somali government developed a framework on how to repatriate[17] the refugees. The Kenyan President had stated: "our policy has been clear for some time, the events that led to the establishment of Dadaab are terribly tragic and the best response to that tragedy is to help refugees to return and rebuild their nation and that is Kenya's policy and our efforts to hasten the repatriation and resettlement of refugees."[18] Here it sounds as though repatriating refugees is the best way to prevent future attacks by Al-Shabaab.

The Westgate Mall attack not only initiated the signing of the tripartite agreement, it also triggered Operation Usalama[19] Watch (Linda Inchi), which was launched on 5th April 2014. The task of the Operation Usalama Watch was to search for all undocumented Somalis in the Eastleigh suburb; and to respond to several explosions which were witnessed in the country. The government also needed to form a Parliamentary Committee which was to establish the circumstances that led to the terror attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi.[20] Since this committee was made up of politicians who were guided by history, they reflected on how a similar situation was dealt with in the past, as was reported:

> "[F]oreign spies and criminals masquerading as refugees had invaded Nairobi. President Moi revealed that some of these criminals were engaged in incitement at the behest of local collaborators. Emphasizing that the government will not allow foreigners to abuse the peace and stability in the country, President Moi said many of them were engaged in business as a cover-up for their evil activities."[21]

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16 Cf. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* trans. Patrick Gregory (John Hopkins University Press Baltimore, 1977), 147.

17 Repatriate here is used to mean the right to return an individual to his or her native country.

18 Kenyatta, "Press-Statement: Meeting with H.E. Antonio Guterres."

19 Usalama is Swahili word for security, there was a need for a security response on the Kenyan boarders, and in urban centres.

20 Kenya National Assembly, "Report of the Joint Committee on Administration and National Security; and Defence and Foreign Relations, on the Inquiry into the Westgate Mall terror attack, and other terrorist attacks in Mandera in North Eastern and Kilifi in the Coastal region: September 27, December 5, 2013" Eleventh Parliament, first session. December 2013.

21 *The Standard: East African Newspaper*, Nairobi, July 22, 1997.

President Moi's sentiment led to the arrest of many refugees; most were taken to the camp. Thus, the committee recommended that Dadaab and "Kakuma[22] Refugee Camps be closed and resident refugees repatriated to their country of origin."[23] The committee also recommended that Kenyan troops should continue pursuing the Al-Shabaab.

The Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) troops joined the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISIOM) in the war against Al-Shabaab – after the kidnapping of two Spanish doctors from Dadaab camp. The KDF were to support the Federal Republic of Somalia in neutralizing the threat posed by Al-Shabaab terrorists. At the same time, they were to defend and protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kenyan Republic, in the midst of the insecurity and fear that followed the sending of KDF troops to Somaliland. This violence had caused tension with regard to Kenyan sovereignty; the ruling party and opposition parties united under the African philosophy of "Ubuntu" to defend the Kenya boarders; demonstrating the spirit of "I am because we are; since we are, therefore, I am."[24] Thus, the rivalry between the government and the opposition political parties was set aside to unite "all against one" (terror group – jihadist rebel movement Al-Shabaab). A series of attacks by the terrorists threatened the peace and stability in both countries (Somalia and Kenya). Despite the Kenyan government sending its troops to Somalia in search of Al-Shabaab, the terror group continued to launch several attacks on civilian and military targets in Kenya, and the areas controlled by the Kenya Defence Forces in Somalia. Attacks on Garissa University on 2nd April 2015, left 147 people dead, on Mpeketoni left 48 people dead, a bus attack in Gamba Mandera left 28 people dead. Al-Shabaab always claims responsibility for the attacks. These attacks resulted in a public outcry over the links between the attacks and the refugees. Politicians called for the closure of the Dadaab camp.

Following a recommendation from the parliamentary committee and the outcry on 6th May 2016, the Kenyan Government planned to close Dadaab refugee

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22 Kakuma are mostly refugees from South Sudan and other countries. The influx of refugees from Sudan started after the civil war from 2005 to 2011.

23 Kenya National Assembly, 30th September 2013; cf. Anon., "Kenya to repatriate Somali refugees," *BBC news,* November 11, 2013: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20819462 (accessed on December 01, 2022).

24 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 215.

camp, because they felt it was contributing to the Country's national security threat[25]: "the Government of the Republic of Kenya, having taken into consideration its national security interests, has decided that hosting of refugees has to come to an end."[26] The initial plan of the government was to repatriate all refugees in the country (both Dadaab and Kakuma camps). In their attempt to solve the problem of violent attacks and provide security for their own people, they have targeted Somali refugees who are vulnerable and have no one to defend them. The Kenyan government had to construct sentiments of security through which these refugees are seen as a real security threat. In echoing Girard's insights, it is precisely when "the secret behind this reciprocity is kept hidden that violence can reach its highest intensity. It is when violence speaks not its name, but rather becomes framed as 'security', that we can see the mimeticism of desire assuming the most terrifying forms."[27] Here the Kenyan Government's reaction appears to align with the scapegoat mechanism, whereby security is an opportunistic way to scapegoat Somali refugees, and the will to lie is at work in casting blame for any terror attack, and other social problems, on the people from another country.

Today, amid politicized austerity and global terror, the perception[28] and scapegoating of refugees is seemingly noticed. The influx of refugees and a series of terrorist attacks has increased the publics' entangled sentiments. In the grip of anxiety, it is easy to view refugees as conduits of terrorism. Kenya, for example, the Television media giant *NTV* (Nation Television Station), has termed Dadaab refugees camp as "Womb of Terror."[29] Kenyan Government officials, in trying to

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25 Security apart from military, it may also entail: political, societal, economic, and environment security.

26 Kibicho Karanja, "Government Statement on Refugees and Closure of Refugee Camps," *Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government*. May 6, 2016: http://refugee-rights.org/rights-in-exile-newsletter/short-pieces/government-of-kenya-statement-on-the-closure-of-refugee-camps (accessed on December 01, 2022).

27 Elisabeth Brighi, "Terrorism and Religion," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion*, ed. James Alison and Wolfgang Palaver (New York: Springer Nature, 2017), 397.

28 The perception that Al-Shabaab describes itself as waging war against enemies of Islam: cf. Ayeshea Perera, "Who are al Shabab the Islamist terror group that attacked," *Firstpost,* September 23, 2013: https://www.firstpost.com/word/who-are-al-shabaab-the-islamist-terror-group-that-attacked-1125963.html (accessed on December 01, 2022).

29 Broadcasted on 25th September 2016 on NTV. The document can also be found in other broadcasting channels.

justify the need to close the camp, claim that "for the last two years the refugee camp has posed an existential threat to Kenya," and that the camp is a "centre for radicalisation."[30] In using the word "national security threat" the Kenyan Government officials are employing rousing sentiments that portray all Somali refugees as security threats. The government is aware that their decision will be legitimized and supported globally. It, therefore, continues to use many methods to misconstrue reality and to justify their sentiments.

3 Violence and the sacred in Kenya-Somali migration

There has never been loss of life because of political tension between the Kenyan and Somali governments. Nevertheless, the numerous terrorists' and abduction attacks led by the Al-Shabaab, caused a fear that the Kenya government would retaliate. Lind., Mutahi, and Oosterom, argue that "growing insecurity stems from long-standing ethnic and geographical tensions, and the heavy-handed security responses targeting Somalis and Muslims play directly to Al-Shabaab's aim to deepen insurgency in Kenya's peripheral regions."[31] Because of this insecurity, the Kenyan government tries to control the fear among its citizens and to curb the influx of refugees through a series of legislative measures.

The public fear is brought on by the influx of Somali refugees. The disorder caused by such an influx results in an endemic insecurity, and the public search for ways to restore stability. On many occasions Somali refugees have been victimized, accused of aiding the terrorists; however, such accusations have never borne fruit in bringing about the desired solution of ending the terrorist attack crisis. Instead, it has led to a perpetual mimetic crisis. Mimetic theory "can solve the riddle of the slippery slope of counterterrorism and counter – insurgency because it reveals that imitation is the engine of rivalry. Despite entering conflict

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30 Anon., "Decision to shut refugee camp final, Dp William Ruto, tells leaders at the global summit," *The Standard*, May 24, 2016: https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/counties/article/2000202851/decision-to-shut-refugee-camp-final-dp-ruto-tells-leaders-at-global-summit (accessed on December 01, 2022).

31 J. Lind, P. Mutahi, and M. Oosterom, *Tangled Ties:Al-Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya*, IDS Evidence Report 130 (Brighton: IDS, 2015): https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/6018 (accessed on December 01, 2022).

as sworn enemies and continuing to profess unreconstructed political, ideological and even religious differences, a violent reciprocity between government and terrorists is often created in and by the process."[32] Attributing terrorism to the Somali refugees is an attempt to single out the guilty ones who are held responsible for this social crisis, and to solve this crisis by scapegoating a certain victim.

The public had been indoctrinated to believe that refugees provide hideouts for the terrorists, so that they cannot distinguish between a terrorist and a Muslim. The narrative that Al-Shabaab is a military populist jihad group supported by foreign Islamists, especially those linked to Al Qaida, has spread all over the country. Al-Shabaab also receives support sympathetic from business people, who believe that Al-Shabaab is connected to global jihadists, and whose main aim is to fight global jihad inside Somali. The AMISIOM and even Kenyan KDF are termed as "foreigners" invading their land, which accelerates the local Somali refugees uniting to promote jihad. Because of the narrative, Somalis see the AMISIOM as foreigners who are killing Arabs, and who should be fought by all means. For example, one of the Kenyan Muslim clerics affiliated to Al-Shabaab, Sheikh Shariff Abubakar, visited Tanzania frequently, seeking recruits and cultivating ties with local militants. On hearing such news from the media, public sentiments have escalated to the point that they imagine "the Other" – refugees, Muslims, to be the conduit of terrorist recruits. They view Somali refugees and Muslims as an evil to be driven away from the Republic of Kenya. Brighi points out that the:

> "terrain of 'sacred violence' is possibly the one most extensively explored by mimetic theory. It is not a coincidence that the literature on terrorism and mimetic theory has most often been mediated by and imbued with a concern with religion. Girard's hypothesis that religion and politics may have their roots in the 'immense effort to keep the peace', by ritualizing and thus containing violence, seems to resonate with a form of violence whose *modus operandi* is the creation of a scapegoat."[33]

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32   Brighi, "Terrorism and Religion," 397.
33   Brighi, "Terrorism and Religion," 397.

Whenever the Al-Shabaab terrorist launch an attack, the Somali immigrants become the target on whom the government projects their aggression. The Kenyan government does not want to take responsibility for the laxity of her borders, especially with respect to how the Al-Shabaab enter the country. According to Girard, rather than blaming "themselves, people inevitably blame either society as a whole, which costs them nothing, or other people who seem particularly harmful for easily identifiable reasons."[34] Here all Muslims are branded as terrorists, which is a "will to lie." While in truth by far not all Muslims support terrorism!

Terrorists seek to reenact the archaic religious structure of sacrificial scapegoating, and in this process offer themselves as victims through suicide missions, by blowing themselves up with grenades in the belief that those killed go to paradise. Without external mediation in such situations, and because of the common belief of the *jihadi*, the mimetic pressure to concur with the scapegoat pattern is eminent, causing more suffering among the refugees. Thus, they (refugees) become the primary victims, based on a collective responsibility.[35] Refugees who are born in the refugee camps and live within this system of perpetual poverty, are therefore vulnerable to rivalry, insecurity and persuasion to join the mimetic movement of the terrorist gang. They have been in camps where the sound of grenades is the order of the day. They have been brought up where people must be ready to undertake difficult and risky tasks.

4 Imagining Us and Them

Garissa County, where the Dadaab camp is built, has for a long time suffered from marginalization, local political rivalries in Kenya, and the ebb and flow of conflict in Somalia. The refugees were able to co-exist peacefully with the local people. However, when two refugees and two Spanish doctors were kidnapped

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34 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 4.
35 Cf. Anon., "Eastleigh: Kenya's global Somali hub," *The East African*, May 06, 2017: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/Eastleigh-Kenya-globalSomali-hub-/434746-3916370-jr36nn/index.html (accessed on December 01, 2022).

from Dadaab camp, the relationship turned sour.[36] The abduction called for the attention of "the Other." When co-existence is peaceful there is no inflammation of imagination and suspicion. Human beings are mimetic or interdividual beings who associate reality with the other, the model. That is, human beings are not autonomous individual beings. We are constituted by the other, whom we internalize a model, which eventually becomes the unconscious basis of our desires. The attention of the other (Somali refugees) springs from the fact that there is insecurity, when peace is marred with violence; then "the Other" is exposed and vulnerable to scapegoating. Somali refugees are scapegoated because of tribal affiliation, religion, and socio-economic status.

In dark moments "the Other" is measured in terms of public insecurity. This vulnerability of the Somali refugees to scapegoating contradicts the African philosophy of Ubuntu:[37] "I am because we are; since we are therefore I am." This philosophy points to the unity that is expected to exist among Africans with each other, without segregating. Here is a non-Western philosophy that looks similar to interdividuality. We consider the African philosophy of "Ubuntu" as the concept that the individual sense of self is shaped by his or her relationships with the other, and with other people. It is a way of living that commences with "I am" only because "we are." This concept of "Ubuntu" originated from the relational form of personhood, which basically implies that you are because of "the other." That is, human being-personhood is fostered in one's relation to other people. An individual who is endowed with Ubuntu is open and available to the other. According to Ubuntu, there is a common union between all of us. It is through this union that our interaction with others, that we can discover our personal human qualities. Some authors, such as Michael Battle, says Ubuntu is the interdependence of an individual person for development, exercise, and the fulfilment of their potentiality to be individual and society.[38] That is the reason that, during election periods, politicians court and count on the refugee votes.

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36 Cf. Osman Mohamed Osman, "Nation, Garissa was once a safe haven but now heaves under weight of terror," *Nation,* May 26, 2015: https://www.nation.africa/kenya/counties/garissa/garissa-was-once-a-safe-haven-but-now-heaves-under-weight-of-terror-1097494 (accessed on December 01, 2022).

37 The word Ubuntu originates from one of the Bantu dialects of Africa.

38 Cf. Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seasbury Publishing, 2000), 2.

It is at this time of campaigns and with various political manifestos promising to protect the refugees' interest, the refugees become vulnerable and allow themselves to be misused by politicians. The way Kenyans react toward "the Other" refugees is shaped by the way they imagine refugees – with suspicion and hostility;[39] and not according to Ubuntu philosophy. Kenyans tend to identify coordinators of terrorist attacks with assistants to those attacks. These fears are founded on: "the sense, the belief, and awareness that at some fundamental level, everyone and everything is related to everyone and everything else."[40] The Kenyan public may now be characterized, not so much by violence, but by its endemic fear of terror attack, mostly in public places: restaurants, bus stations, churches etc. This imagining portrays refugees as so dangerous that their positive traits and positive potential cannot be seen. The hatred, and depiction of them as dangerous, denies them the chance of intermingling with others. Kenyans who might include Somali refugees in their friendship group fear the judgment of other Kenyans.

5 Imagining the Other / Somali refugees

The way Kenyans react toward "the Other," is shaped by the way they imagine refugees, especially in relation to insecurity risk and also donations given to the camps. For example, when refugees receive donations, the locals do not. The locals, in desiring to acquire the same donation, increase the desirability of the object (donation), and intensify the effort to possess it as well as the resistance from the refugees. The physical value of donation becomes more and more 'imagined', until all connections to its original value are lost. What is left is rivalry and fighting, calling for repatriation, and the accusation that they are hiding Al-Shabaab in the camp. The yielding rivalry is used by the terrorists themselves. That is, Al-Shabaab strategically creates conflict, or uses an existing conflict in a community,

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39 Cedric Barnes, "Losing Hearts and Minds in Kenya: The Crackdown on Somalis will Probably Backfire," *International Crisis Group Commentary*, April 16, 2014: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/losing-hearts-and-minds-kenya (accessed on December 01, 2022).

40 Maria Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 15.

by creating a narrative of a fast-deteriorating situation. The conflictual situation is then used to bring about the killing of opponents. With this strategy the terror group wins a political process, and the wholescale implementation and enforcement of Shari'a, causing everybody to pay attention to the Quran.

To understand this strategy, we employ Girard's mimetic theory as a significant tool in understanding the dynamic between the refugees and the Kenyans "imagining Somali refugees." Girard's central theme concerning the mediated nature of desire engages in the "debunking of subjectivity"[41] which gives preference to the self. According to Girard, "the self is not an object alongside other selves, for it is constituted by its relation to "the Other" and cannot be considered outside of this relation."[42] This justifies Girard's assumption where he says elsewhere that all human being is characterized by a lack of being, and thus imitate "the Other", in order to possess something that he or she feels deprived of, and with which the "other seems endowed." From this, Girard develops an "interdividual" conception of the self, considering the formation of personal identity as originating from mimetic relationships. Therefore, "the Other" is never altruistic, that is, it is stimulated "by an innate impulse to 'be a self,' which (paradoxically) can exclusively be realized through the imitation of models."[43] That is the self is persistently an "interdividual" self, because it consists of mimetic relationships.

The "Other", like the "self", can be best understood from the perspective of an interdividual psychology centred on desire, not on the subject of "individual" psychology. Girard's insight into desire is, thus, that it is constantly shaped by models, invariably acquired by imitation, and always "according to the Other."[44] According to Girard, the fundamental structure of human relationship is triangular – bridging subjects, models, and their mimetic object of desire, which is often violence.

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41 Andrew O'Shea, *Selfhood and Sacrifice: René Girard and Charles Taylor on the Crisis of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 6.

42 Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground,* 43.

43 René Girard, *To Double Business Bound: Essay on Literature, Mimesis and Anthropology* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 39; Paolo Diego Bubbio, "The Development of the Self," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion* (New York: Springer Nature, 2017), 311.

44 Bubbio, "The Development of the Self," 311.

6 Conclusion

The "other" springs from each of us, which can only be comprehended within this relation to other selves. The perception of refugees as "the other" leads to condemnation and banishment. The most striking character of an immigrant is their ability to evolve and adapt to a new environment, despite being vulnerable as scapegoat. As "others" are mostly marginalized; being a minority they are easily identified, and their presence among natives makes them convenient for scapegoats. They are susceptible to blame for the threat of insecurity in the country of domicile, for the desire has become the reflection of "the other." Since refugees are the model of the host country, they trigger desire, and with the intensity of wanting to acquire what the model has, by fighting or competing over it, "the other" comes to be accused of being a conduit of the terror group. Therefore, an individual self is an object constituted by its relation to "the Other", and can only be considered in its imitation of the other, in trying to possess something with which "the other" seems endowed.

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