

# CONTEMPLATING THE IMPACT OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION ON THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Large numbers of illegal aliens are flocking to South Africa's relatively tranquil shores from the southern African region and even further afield - fleeing from environmental catastrophe, economic decline and political instability. Amongst policy-makers, however, there is a debate as to how to shape an appropriate response. This is not so easy as it may at first appear. Academics and policy-makers appear divided as to whether illegal immigration holds positive or negative consequences for the country. Clearly, this is an important point. If illegal immigration holds beneficial consequences for South Africa, there is no need to curb this inflow. Conversely, should it adversely impact on political stability, economic growth and the social sphere, then it has to be curbed.

What this article attempts to do is to explore this debate on the impact of illegal immigration on the Republic of South Africa and to conclude with some policy-relevant conclusions.

## 2. PLAYING THE NUMBERS GAME - HOW MANY ARE THERE?

Before any assessment of the impact of illegal immigrants on South Africa can be made, it would be necessary to make some kind of estimate of the numbers of illegal immigrants in the country. In this regard, however, researchers are confronted by the central problem in any study of illegal immigration: the illegal and clandestine nature of this form of population movement provides an inadequate basis for its quantification. Reitzes<sup>2</sup> notes further that, "given that foreigners whose presence here is either illegal or undocumented devote much time to evading the authorities, any attempt to count them is speculative..." As a result, the figures offered in this chapter should be seen as tentative rather than definitive. Despite this,

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<sup>2</sup> M Reitzes, "Strangers truer than fiction: The social and economic impact of migrants in the Johannesburg inner city", *Social policy research report*, 60 (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1997), p. 7.

it is contended that certain educated guesses can be made about the accuracy of numbers of foreigners residing illegally in South Africa. These rough estimates - as in the United States and the United Kingdom - can be based on figures for those who entered the country legally, but who overstayed the validity of their visas (currently in the region of 900 000), those who have been forcibly repatriated (currently approximately 170 000-190 000 per annum),<sup>3</sup> as well as information provided by the Alien Investigation Units of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the various field offices of the Department of Home Affairs. In addition, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) has done some sterling survey work. On the basis of these estimates in combination with the results of various qualitative studies, an assessment can be made of the impact of illegal immigration on South Africa's social services, employment opportunities, and so forth.

As indicated above, estimates of the numbers of illegal immigrants in the country are numerous. According to *The Citizen* - quoting figures supplied by the HSRC - there are between 2,5 and 4,1 million illegal immigrants in South Africa.<sup>4</sup> *The Independent on Saturday* claimed there were two million illegal immigrants in South Africa.<sup>5</sup> However, the source of this claim could not be established.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, stated that there were between 2,5 and 5 million illegal aliens currently residing in South Africa.<sup>7</sup> These figures were based on the number of repatriations, numbers of illegal border crossings, numbers of people who overstayed their tourist and study visas, as well as information supplied by the various field offices of the Department of Home Affairs, the SAPS and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

On the other hand, an independent French researcher, Marc-Antoine Perouse de Monteclos, researched the problem of illegal immigration in South Africa for two years, utilising both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. He estimated that one in five of the inhabitants of townships surrounding Johannesburg was an illegal alien. In addition, he noted that up to seventy per cent of Berea and Hillbrow were now populated by foreigners, three-quarters of whom were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They were mainly illegally in the country. His

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel L. Boshoff of the South African National Defence Force, 5 May 1998. Also see table of deportations and repatriations in the appendices.

<sup>4</sup> *The Citizen*, 5 January 1998, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> M Peters, "Refugees struggling to survive in Durban", *The Independent on Saturday*, 13 February 1999, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> An attempt was made by the author to elicit a telephonic response from the paper that would verify the basis for this claim.

<sup>7</sup> Reitzes, p. 6.

research has also identified a small but rapidly growing illegal Rwandese community in George Street in Durban.<sup>8</sup>

In 1989, the South African Institute of International Affairs estimated that there were 1,2 million illegal immigrants in the country. By 1994, they estimated the number of illegal immigrants in the country at approximately 5 million.<sup>9</sup> Over the same period, however, the SAPS put the number of illegal immigrants in South Africa at between 2 and 3,5 million or between five and eight per cent of the total population. According to Minnaar, Pretorius and Wentzel,<sup>10</sup> this was regarded as a conservative estimate. During the same period, Senator Carl Werth of the Freedom Front, during a Home Affairs debate in the Senate in August 1994, announced that the number of illegal immigrants in the country were 8 million.<sup>11</sup> A month later, Dr Frederik van Zyl Slabbert announced at an HSRC symposium that the number of illegal aliens in the country might be as high as 12 million.<sup>12</sup> Once again, it is not certain how such a figure was calculated. Moreover, the figure of 12 million might be an over-estimation, since this would imply that one in four South Africans is an illegal alien!

Probably one of the best estimates of the numbers of illegal immigrants in the country derives from an HSRC Omnibus door-to-door survey of 2 250 people conducted in December 1994. The questions that were posed, related to the presence of foreigners living in houses around the respondent's property. On the basis of clearly defined weighting techniques, foreigners were separated from illegal aliens and on this basis the number of between 2,5 million and 4,1 million illegal immigrants residing inside South Africa was reached.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever the exact numbers of illegal immigrants in the country, even using two million as the best estimate, it is clear that illegal immigration poses serious challenges to the country and its citizens. Assessing the exact number of illegal immigrants is not the only problem faced by researchers when trying to come to terms with their impact on South Africa. One of the major challenges lies in the dearth of available and accurate information. The SAPS has ceased its collection of statistics on the involvement of illegal immigrants in crime since 1995. However, certain police stations (such as Hillbrow) have maintained records and these have

<sup>8</sup> MAP de Monteclos, "The Mozambican border: From rigid to porous: New challenges to immigration to South Africa", Mimeo, 1996, pp. 105.

<sup>9</sup> A Minnaar, S Pretorius and M Wentzel, "Who goes there? Illegals in South Africa", *Indicator South Africa*, 12(3), 1995, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> A Minnaar and M Hough, *Who goes there? Perspectives on clandestine and illegal aliens in Southern Africa*, Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1996, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

been reported. In other instances, the excellent work by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and its affiliates in monitoring the presence of illegal aliens in the various sectors of the economy in 1994, has ceased and has not been followed up. These factors contribute to certain information being outdated and in some instances almost anecdotal. However, all attempts were made to present relevant information as comprehensively as possible in this article by utilising primary and secondary sources, as well as newspaper articles and the internet to provide an analysis which is as extensive as possible under the circumstances.

### 3. XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

One of the first of the challenges with regard to illegal immigration is how South Africans should deal with the growing phenomenon of xenophobia. There is growing evidence that South Africans as a whole are becoming more xenophobic in their attitudes towards migrants generally, and illegal immigrants in particular. During the course of 1996 and 1997, a joint project was undertaken by the HSRC and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) to assess South African attitudes to a wide range of security issues, among them the question of illegal immigration into the Republic. The questionnaire, methodology and design were the responsibility of the HSRC. The ISS's responsibility was to interpret the data supplied by HSRC fieldworkers. What follows below is drawn from the results of the project.<sup>14</sup>

#### 3.1 A brief note on methodology

Before proceeding with the results of the survey, a brief note on methodology is in order. The HSRC Omnibus survey is conducted quarterly and its purpose is to give clients an opportunity to participate in a national survey at a low cost. The questions relating to the security services which were included in this survey were the result of two workshops between staff members of the HSRC and the ISS that were held during August/September 1996. Two separate questionnaires were administered during the period to two probability samples of 2 200 respondents each. Every effort was made to ensure that the data was representative of the South African population.

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<sup>14</sup> The author was employed by the ISS at the time and was responsible for the interpretive part of the project. The results of this survey were distributed in two papers. The first was C Schutte, M Shaw and H Solomon, "Public attitudes regarding migration and policing/crime", *African Security Review*, 6(4), 1997, pp. 4-15. The second was H Solomon and C Schutte, "Of myths and migration: Xenophobia in the New South Africa", paper read at the Forty-Eighth Pubwash Conference on science and word affairs: The long roads to peace, Jurica, Mexico, 1 October 1998.

The fieldwork for the survey was undertaken nationally from 7 to 28 October 1996. The data was collected by specially trained interviewers using structured questionnaires during some 2 200 personal, face-to-face interviews. Interviews were often conducted after hours to ensure that the chosen respondent was available. If the specific individual was not at home during the first visit, but was available during the fieldwork period, an appointment was made and the person was revisited. If nobody in the household qualified, or was available during the fieldwork period, the household was substituted. Interviews were furthermore conducted in the respondents' choice of language.

Trained co-ordinators, appointed by MarkData, were allocated to different regions in order to co-ordinate the fieldwork (data collection). Each co-ordinator was responsible for a group of interviewers who were recruited under close supervision and subsequently briefed according to specific instructions by MarkData. The sample design was initiated by Professor Laurence Schlemmer, Ms Tertia van der Walt and Dr Mathilda du Toit, and formalised by Mr B Vukasovic. The capturing, processing and verification of the data were undertaken by the Computer Centre of the HSRC.

The sample allocation for the survey was conducted proportionally to the adjusted 1991 population census figures with a few exceptions. The visiting points were drawn by means of a multiple stage cluster probability sample design. The households and respondents were selected with a random grid from qualifying household members.

The universe for this sample design was all South African residents of 18 years and older. All nine provinces were included in the survey, with care to include both rural and urban areas. An additional subsample was introduced for live-in domestic and other workers, based on the incidence of households employing domestic workers as found in previous Omnibus surveys. Domestic workers who formed part of the main sample (e.g. those living at home) were interviewed as such. Disproportion was introduced to give a minimum number of 120 respondents per province. The sample realisation for this Omnibus survey was one hundred per cent and no major obstacles were encountered during the fieldwork.

### 3.2 Survey results

Xenophobia is viewed world-wide as a sentiment generally confined to individuals at the lower end of the socio-economic and the educational spectrum.<sup>15</sup> Various reasons have been put forward to account for this phenomenon. It has been argued that individuals at the lower end of the spectrum have less of a worldview due to the fact that international travel opportunities are limited. In addition, the development of a worldview will also be proscribed by a lack of access to literature on exotic places and foreign cultures.<sup>16</sup> Others have argued that anti-illegal immigrant sentiments among this section of the population can be accounted for on economic grounds. It is argued that illegal immigrants - who are hired at low wages, work long hours and are resistant to unionisation - are a threat to the job security of unskilled or low-skilled nationals of any country.<sup>17</sup>

While this analysis might be true for Jean-Marie le Pen's National Front in France, Germany's neo-Nazis, Britain's skinheads or the United States' right-wing militias, this survey has cast doubt on its utility in the South African context. As Table I indicates, anti-illegal immigrant sentiments increase concomitant to increase in educational qualifications.

Two reasons could possibly account for this inversion. In the first instance, it could be argued that, as people are better educated, they are more conscious of the perceived threat that illegal immigration holds for the country. Secondly, it could be argued that white South Africans, because of the legacy of apartheid, are better educated than their non-white counterparts. As such, they are better represented among the more educated sector of South African society. Therefore, the survey would largely represent their xenophobic attitudes towards illegal aliens. As Table 2 indicates, 93 per cent of all white South Africans believe that the influx of illegal immigrants is bad.

It has often been assumed that Zulu speakers are more xenophobic than other groups, while Xhosa speakers are seen to be less xenophobic. This perception is closely related to the fact that Zulu speakers are seen to be largely associated with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Its hard-line stance towards illegal immigrants was clearly illustrated in September 1994, when the Inkatha Youth Brigade

<sup>15</sup> S Collinson, *Europe and international migration*, London: Pinter Publishers for the Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1994; W Dumon, "Effects of undocumented migration for individuals concerned", *International Migration*, 21(2), 1983, pp. 218-23.

<sup>16</sup> These views were expressed by some of the participants at the Salzburg Seminar on *Involuntary migration*, Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg, Austria, 8-15 July 1995.

<sup>17</sup> H Toolo and L Bethlehem, "Labour migration to South Africa", paper read at the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALED) Workshop on labour migration to South Africa, Johannesburg, 31 August 1994.

threatened that, if the government failed to take strong action against illegal aliens, it would do so itself.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, Xhosa speakers are seen to be largely associated with the African National Congress (ANC), which are perceived to be more liberal in terms of its approach. This is perhaps best encapsulated by the ANC's former Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Pemuel Maduna, who was quoted as saying: "History has shown us time and time again that hunger and fear are driving forces which are much stronger than even the most sophisticated alien control measures. South Africa has become the country of survival for many."<sup>19</sup>

However, the survey results have challenged these traditional assumptions. Table 3 indicates that Xhosa speakers are more xenophobic than Zulu speakers - seventy per cent of Xhosa speakers thought illegal immigration is bad, as opposed to fifty per cent of Zulu speakers.

In addition, Table 4 also underlines this fact: ANC supporters are more xenophobic than their IFP counterparts, with sixty per cent of ANC supporters believing illegal immigration is bad as opposed to the IFP's 51 per cent. This clearly illustrates that the leadership in both parties are not in tune with the aspirations of grassroots supporters.

How does one account for the difference in perceptions among Zulu and Xhosa speakers on the issue of illegal immigration? One of the reasons that could explain this seems to be the nature of the centripetal and centrifugal patterns of migration of the last century - the mfecane, the Great Trek and the emergence of contract labour migration for South African mines. This has resulted in the emergence of a transnational ethnic consciousness in the southern African region.

This transnational ethnic consciousness is clearly to be seen in Table 5, with those provinces more isolated in regional terms, such as the Eastern, Western and Northern Cape being more xenophobic than those provinces that share borders with the country's regional neighbours, and whose host populations share a common cultural heritage.

This could possibly explain why Zulu respondents are less xenophobic than their Xhosa counterparts. The Zulu, after all, share a common identity with the Swazi in Swaziland, and the Ndebele in southern Zimbabwe. This provides them with such a transnational ethnic consciousness that sees illegal immigrants more as

<sup>18</sup> H Solomon, Strategic perspectives on illegal immigration into South Africa, *African Security Review*, 5(4), 1996d, p. 11; Minnaar and Hough, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> M Reitzes, "Divided on the 'demon': Immigration policy since the election", *Policy Review Series*, 8(9), 1995, p. 15.

kinsfolk than as aliens. The same cannot be said of the Xhosa, largely concentrated in their Eastern Cape hinterland with the Indian Ocean at their backs. Their geographic position prevents such a regional consciousness from developing. Such an interpretation would be supported by the results in Table 5 that indicate that those provinces that share a common border with a neighbouring state are less xenophobic than those provinces that do not, such as the Western and Eastern Cape. Coupled with this is the fact that the Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in the country, further resulting in fears over the "alien bogeyman" stealing jobs from South African workers.

On the issue of undocumented migrants, these survey results have debunked certain myths surrounding illegal aliens and xenophobia. At other levels, it has confirmed that South Africans are generally parochial, and look upon undocumented migration with suspicion, if not open hostility. This is underscored by the fact that almost two-thirds of respondents (65 per cent) indicated that illegal immigration was "bad" or "very bad" for the country. In addition, eighty per cent of respondents were in favour of the government trying to curb a further influx of illegal migrants by strengthening border patrols, 65 per cent were in favour of enforced repatriation and 73 per cent were in favour of penalising employers who hire illegal immigrants. In mid-1999, the HSRC conducted another survey to assess public perceptions of South African citizens on the thorny question of illegal immigration. The research methodology pursued in this survey was the same as the previous one. As in the previous survey, it indicated that South Africans were extremely unhappy with the country becoming a refuge for illegal immigrants. As indicated in Table 6, 73,6 per cent of South Africans felt that illegal immigrants were either unwelcome or very unwelcome in the country.<sup>20</sup> These findings in the HSRC surveys have been reinforced by other recent surveys conducted by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA). According to the IDASA survey: "the majority of South Africans are resoundingly negative towards any immigration policy that might welcome newcomers. Twenty-five per cent of South Africans want a total ban on immigration and 45 per cent support strict limits on the numbers of immigrants allowed in. Only 17 per cent would support a more flexible policy tied to the availability of jobs, and only six per cent support a totally open policy of immigration. This is the highest level of opposition to immigration recorded by any country in the world where comparable questions have been asked."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Letter to the author from Ms Marie Wentzels, Senior Researcher, Human Sciences Research Council, 19 July 1999.

<sup>21</sup> R Mattes, DM Taylor, DA McDonald, A Poore and W Richmond, "Still waiting for the barbarians: South Africans' attitudes to immigrants and immigration", *Migration Policy Series 14*, Cape Town: IDASA, 1999.



These findings hold deeper significance for more than just the issue of undocumented migrants. They add an element of caution on grandiose designs of regional integration, as South Africans are thinking nationally, subnationally or in ethnic terms, rather than regionally. For the purpose of this article, however, the next section will examine how xenophobia adversely affects the human security of individual illegal immigrants.

#### 4. XENOPHOBIA AND HUMAN SECURITY: THE PERSPECTIVE OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

The rising tide of xenophobia in the country has had the most direct impact on illegal immigrants in the form of violence directed against them. One of the earliest of such events occurred in March 1990, in Hlaphekani, near Giyani, the capital of the former Gazankulu homeland when locals burned almost 300 huts belonging to Mozambicans.<sup>22</sup> In October 1994, fighting erupted in the Imizamo Yethu Squatter Camp in Hout Bay between Xhosa fishermen and illegal Ovambos from Namibia. In late December 1994 and January 1995, a campaign dubbed Operation "Buyelekhyaya" (go back home) began in Alexandra township. This campaign of intimidation and terror was aimed at ridding the township of illegal aliens.<sup>23</sup>

But, xenophobia did not always take the form of popular violence. More worrying, perhaps, is that criminal elements view illegal immigrants as "soft" targets. Knowing that illegal aliens are unwilling to report their being victimised by crime as a result of their fear of being deported, there is increasing evidence that they become the victims of choice for certain criminal gangs.<sup>24</sup>

Minnaar and Hough<sup>25</sup> also found that the illegal and undocumented status of these aliens is exploited in other ways. For instance, they note that in Kangwane aliens were killed for muti (magic potion to ward off evil spirits) purposes. Since they have no identification and no family to report them missing, such killings are difficult to resolve. Minnaar and Hough also reported cases where certain farmers employed illegal aliens, just to inform the local police of their presence at the end of the month when they were supposed to pay them. These aliens were then deported after having worked for nothing.

In an interview with an illegal Zimbabwean woman by the name of Louise,<sup>26</sup> other dimensions of the plight of illegal aliens in South Africa became clear. Ac-

<sup>22</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 185, 188.

<sup>24</sup> Reitzes, p. 42.

<sup>25</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 111.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Louise, illegal Zimbabwean alien in Point Road, Durban, 7 June 1998.

According to Louise, her parents are dirt-poor subsistence farmers in Zimbabwe. They were approached by a gentleman who offered to take their daughter to South Africa where she was to be given employment as a waitress in a fast food outlet. After a year, she could return home with all the money she had earned. As a "good faith" deposit, they offered the parents R1 000 which they gratefully accepted. The following night, Louise found herself together with other girls entering South Africa illegally. For two days they were kept in a flat in Hillbrow with girls from Mozambique and Swaziland. All expected to be waitresses. These hopes were not to be realised, however, as they were then placed in a brothel and forced to have unprotected sex with clients for no remuneration. On numerous occasions, they were beaten, but because of their illegal status, the girls were too afraid to go to the police. One evening, Louise and two other girls managed to escape. They went to Durban where they worked as prostitutes in the notorious Point Road of Durban. In a subsequent interview with Lieutenant-Colonel Boshoff of the SANDF, it was confirmed that organised crime syndicates were operating in the southern African region and were trafficking in human beings in the manner Louise indicated.

## 5. XENOPHOBIA AND REALISM: A STATE-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

In 1997, a fierce debate was ignited among South African scholars regarding the impact of illegal immigration after the publication of an article by Reitzes entitled "Strangers truer than fiction: The social and economic impact of migrants on the Johannesburg inner city".<sup>27</sup> In her article, Reitzes challenged the traditional view that illegal immigrants were a socio-economic burden to South Africa, that they lacked formal schooling and were illiterate, and argued that they had vast entrepreneurial skills which were a boon to the country. Far from engaging in criminal activities, she argues that these illegal immigrants were often the victims of crime for the reasons described above. On the question of education, Reitzes further argues that all her respondents had at least two years of secondary education, while others had tertiary qualifications.

Many of Reitzes points regarding the exploitation of illegal immigrants and their being targets of criminals, as elucidated in the above section, are uncontested, but the intention here is to prove conclusively that the traditional view of illegal immigrants is largely correct: that they hold severe socio-economic and political costs to the Republic of South Africa. This will be done in three ways: by illustrating certain methodological weaknesses in the study conducted by Reitzes; by briefly examining the international experience regarding the impact of illegal immi-

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<sup>27</sup> Reitzes, *op. cit.*

grants on specific countries; and by critically analysing the impact of illegal immigrants on the South African state.

In the beginning of her article, Reitzes notes that "[w]hat is presented here, therefore, are the results of a qualitative micro study. As such, no quantitatively definitive conclusions can be reached."<sup>28</sup> Despite this cautionary note, Reitzes time and again challenges all the qualitative and quantitative studies published under the broad mantle of the traditional approach.<sup>29</sup> The problem with using this study as the basis to negate all other work on the issue, however, is that her methodology, as indicated above, is fundamentally flawed.

This flawed methodology can be seen in three ways. Firstly, Reitzes claims that, while the study aimed to evaluate the economic and social impact of illegal immigrants on South African society, only 13 of the 44 foreigners interviewed were illegal immigrants. The remaining respondents (by far the majority) were refugees and legal migrants.<sup>30</sup> However, this did not stop Reitzes from making general observations and drawing conclusions. As such, her results as they relate to the impact of illegal immigrants on South Africa must be regarded as suspect.

Secondly, Reitzes notes that the sampling was as broadly representative of different nationalities as possible. However, the breakdown of respondents interviewed per country of origin indicates an overwhelming number of Zimbabweans:

- Zimbabwe - 24
- Malawi - 6
- Ghana - 2
- Democratic Republic of Congo - 2
- Zambia - 2
- Nigeria - 3
- Kenya - 2
- Jamaica - 1
- Mozambique - 1
- Rwanda - 1<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the sample fails to be as broadly representative as possible. However, such sampling needs to be more than just representative. It needs to be weighted to reflect the demographic reality of illegal population flows into South Africa. Thus,

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> These studies will be introduced to the reader over the following two sections.

<sup>30</sup> Reitzes, pp. 10, 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

on the basis of repatriation figures, it is known that Mozambicans constitute the bulk of illegal aliens residing in South Africa, followed by citizens of Zimbabwe and Lesotho. By implication, therefore, the sample size for Mozambique (currently one) needs to be considerably increased, while Lesotho also needs to find a place in the sample size.

Thirdly, Reitzes notes throughout the article that illegal immigrants are not so much involved in crime, as they are victims of crime. However, the article contains the reason for this omission: Reitzes could not interview illegal immigrants involved in crime. But, important though this fact may be, it is merely given a passing mention. Thus, Reitzes states: "Working in a crime-ridden context such as Johannesburg's inner city exacerbated the problems encountered by the fieldworkers and often placed them in dangerous situations. They encountered illegal immigrants who are members of drug syndicates, and who indicated that the researchers were not welcome in some areas unless they were there on 'business'. Such persons were unwilling to be interviewed, as they considered this to be a waste of time. On one occasion, the fieldworkers narrowly missed a shoot-out in which a police informer who had been helping to uncover a drug ring was allegedly killed by Nigerian dealers."<sup>32</sup>

This, once more, calls Reitzes' conclusions into question. Instead of merely dismissing the problem of access to illegal immigrants engaged in criminal activities and portraying illegal immigrants as mere victims of criminals, Reitzes should have made use of the wealth of secondary information on the topic to supplement her interviews.

### 5.1 Illegal immigration and the international experience

Stewart<sup>33</sup> clearly illustrates that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 - which was accompanied by the freer movement of people from Eastern to Western Europe - there has been a marked increase in the number of illegal immigrants engaged in organised crime in Germany. These organised crime syndicates also have a specific ethnic identity. Thus, according to Stewart, Yugoslavs have begun to control the nightlife in the Frankfurt area; Poles are involved in the black market in Hamburg; while Russians are forcing themselves into the Berlin underworld.

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<sup>32</sup> Reitzes, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> A Stewart, "Migrant, minorities and security in Europe", *Conflict Studies* 252, 1992, p. 16.

Meanwhile, Canadian intelligence sources state that as legal and illegal migration from Russia to Canada has increased, so has Russian mafia activities.<sup>34</sup> In Russia itself, authorities are concerned with the relationship between migration, in general, and illegal immigration, in particular, and crime. Lieutenant-General Vladimir Kolesnikov noted that, in 1992, foreigners committed 530 crimes in Russia. By the end of 1993, the figure was just over 15 000.<sup>35</sup>

In November 1997, police in Ghana reported that they were investigating the murder of a police officer who had been investigating the involvement of illegal aliens in illegal diamond dealing. Subsequently, sixty illegal aliens were put on trial in Accra.<sup>36</sup> During the course of 1997-98, Angolan authorities launched Operation Cancer which resulted in the deportation of large numbers of illegal aliens from West Africa engaged in illegal diamond mining in Angola. Authorities in Botswana increasingly adopted a more coercive approach (arrests and deportations) regarding illegal immigrants during 1995 as a result of fears that this would result in locals losing access to job opportunities, as well as fears of the health risks posed by illegal immigrants, particularly after the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the former Zaïre. Similar reasons resulted in Zimbabwe adopting a tougher stance on illegal immigrants, especially those from West Africa and Nigeria, in particular.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Zambia - traditionally a migrant-friendly country - has engaged in mass deportations of illegal aliens after finding that many were involved in emerald smuggling rings situated in the copperbelt mines in central Zambia.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, Pakistan's traditional welcome to Afghan migrants was quickly replaced by suspicion and fear after it had been discovered that large numbers of these migrants were engaged in illegal small-arms trafficking that has exacerbated Pakistan's own security situation.<sup>39</sup> Ghimire<sup>40</sup> also points to the fact that migration in the third world results in deforestation, soil erosion and pasture degradation for the host country. This further exacerbates tensions between locals and aliens as a

<sup>34</sup> "Crime and migration in Eastern Europe", *Commentary: A Canadian Security Intelligence Service Publication*, 38, January 1994, pp. 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> KOPOBBEB 24 June 1994.

<sup>36</sup> "Aliens being questioned over death of police officer", *Panafrican News Agency*, 20 November 1997, <[www.search.nando.net/pl/webcgi/fastweb?getdoc+pana\\_archive+pana\\_archive+6504+18++%28zzzzz](http://www.search.nando.net/pl/webcgi/fastweb?getdoc+pana_archive+pana_archive+6504+18++%28zzzzz)>, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Human Science Research Council, *A research review of the policies surrounding the issue of the free movement of people across international borders with specific reference to southern Africa and the particular effect thereof on South Africa*, Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1995, p. 42.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>39</sup> MS Teitelbaum and M Weiner (eds), *Threatened peoples, threatened borders: World migration and U.S. policy* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> K Ghimire, "Refugees and deforestation", *International migration*, 32(4), 1994, pp. 561-9.

result of a dwindling resource base. Matters of survival increasingly take priority in the discourse between these two groups.

In the United States, McDonald<sup>41</sup> estimates the number of illegal immigrants residing in the country at five million, or two per cent of the total US population. Orozco<sup>42</sup> further notes that between 250 000 and 500 000 illegal aliens are added to this figure each year with serious repercussions for the country. The strongest case for the damage done by large numbers of immigrants has been made by the state of California. Wilson, the governor, has claimed that illegal immigrants and their families total nearly a million people in Los Angeles alone - making it a city of illegal immigrants the size of San Diego - that two-thirds of all babies born in public hospitals in Los Angeles are born to parents who have entered the US illegally, and that California devotes nearly ten per cent of its budget to federally mandated services for illegal immigrants and their families.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, Stalker<sup>44</sup> notes that, of the US \$5 billion cost that the state of California has to bear for hosting illegal immigrants, some \$1,2 billion is taken up by prison services - illegal immigrants comprise fifteen per cent of inmates in the state of California. California is not the only state in the US with this problem. In San Diego, 22 per cent of those arrested on felony charges were illegal aliens.<sup>45</sup>

This brief overview of the international experience with the impact of illegal immigration, once more casts doubt on the findings of the Reitzes article.

## 5.2 Illegal immigration: Its impact on the South African state

Contrary to Reitzes' view of a relatively highly educated illegal immigrant population, a survey of 6 348 illegal Mozambican households conducted by the Masungulo Project of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference in South Africa found that most do not have more than three years of formal education; and that most do not have other work skills outside those of subsistence agriculture.<sup>46</sup>

While one should be cautious about extrapolating these figures and making generalisations about the whole illegal immigrant population in South Africa, these

<sup>41</sup> WF McDonald, "Crime and illegal immigration: Emerging local, state and federal partnerships", *National Institute of Justice Journal*, June 1997, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> M Orozco, "Opportunities for all: Immigration to the United States", *Indicator South Africa*, 13(3), Winter 1996, p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> Teitelbaum and Weiner, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> P Stalker, *The work of strangers: A survey of international labour migration* (Geneva: International Labour Organisation, 1993), p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> McDonald, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Mozambican refugees in South Africa* (Pretoria: SACBC Masungulo Project, 1993).

results nevertheless have some applicability to the broader illegal immigrant population residing within the country. Three reasons account for this. Firstly, Mozambicans comprise the bulk of the illegal alien population in South Africa. Secondly, research findings by individual researchers and the Department of Home Affairs have arrived at similar conclusions regarding illegal aliens from countries other than Mozambique.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the push factors operating in the various countries of the region, are roughly similar, therefore leading to a similar type of illegal immigrant.

From the findings of the Masungulo Project it can be deduced that illegal immigrants would be competing with low-skilled South Africans in the job market. Such a deduction would find support in a study<sup>48</sup> conducted by the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI), a think-tank for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The study documented the presence of illegal aliens in the various sectors of the economy. In addition, it revealed that many workers feel that the presence of illegal foreign workers has a depressing effect on wages as a result of their accepting to work for long hours for low wages and their resistance to unionisation. This, union officials argue, contributes to local people having decreased access to employment and giving rise to resentment towards illegal immigrants that is then expressed in xenophobia.

According to the study, illegal immigrants are generally active in the following sectors of the economy:

- agriculture;
- hospitality (hotels and restaurants);
- construction;
- domestic; and
- informal trading.

In the food and agriculture sector, organisers of the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) have noted the presence of large numbers of illegal aliens working

<sup>47</sup> G Orr, "Migration to South Africa", paper read at the Witwatersrand Branch of the South African Institute of International Affairs seminar on *Migration: Sources, patterns and implications*, 6 May 1993; D Schutte, "Migration: The status quo and prospects for southern Africa", *ISSUT Bulletin*, 6/93, 1993; P Vale and H Solomon, "Migration and global change: Understanding the Taunani effect", paper read at the seminar on *Migration: Sources, patterns and implications*, hosted by the Witwatersrand Branch of the South African Institute of International Affairs, 6 May 1993.

<sup>48</sup> The author was contracted to this study as a consultant. The findings were reported in H Toolo and L Bethlehem, "Labour migration to South Africa", paper read at the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI) *Workshop on labour migration to South Africa*, Johannesburg, 31 August 1994.

on farms in the Northern Province, Mpumalanga and on the sugar plantations of northern KwaZulu-Natal. FAWU organisers claim that farmers employ aliens because they are cheaper - many work for shelter and a plate of food a day - and that they are, because of fear of exposure, resistant to union activities.

Officials of the South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) have detected an increased presence of illegal immigrants in the hospitality sector. This impression has been confirmed by officials of the Tea Room and Restaurant Industrial Council, who believe that the majority of these are Mozambican and Zimbabwean. As in the agricultural sector, SACCAWU organisers report that aliens are prepared to work for extremely low wages and that due to their vulnerability as a result of their illegal status, they are wary of embarking on industrial action. SACCAWU argues that this not only undermines their ability to fight for better wages and conditions, but also serves to depress wage levels of South African workers and results in a decrease in employment opportunities for South Africans. The example often cited here is Café Zurich in Hillbrow. The owner dismissed twenty South African waiters and replaced them with twenty Zairian workers who worked without being paid a wage, simply surviving on tips.<sup>49</sup>

Both the Construction and Allied Workers Union (CAWU) and the Construction Industrial Council have confirmed the presence of large numbers of undocumented immigrants in the industry and state that the majority of these are employed by subcontractors.<sup>50</sup> Since subcontracting has grown in recent years and accounts for eighty per cent of employment in housing construction, it is thought that foreign workers most likely are occupying a large portion of this labour market. CAWU organisers point out that subcontractors are difficult to organise and that the presence of vulnerable illegal immigrants contributes to incidences where these employers pay wages as low as R80 per week.<sup>51</sup>

A similar situation exists in the domestic sector. The South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) has reported an increase in the number of illegal aliens in this sector, most of whom are from Malawi and Zimbabwe. SADWU organisers also report that, since illegal immigrants are prepared to work for very low wages and are resistant to unionisation, employers prefer them to South Africans. Their presence has not only been detected in the suburbs, but also in the townships and rural areas.

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<sup>49</sup> This was recounted to the author by Mr Hilton Toolo, a researcher employed by NALEDI on 31 August 1994.

<sup>50</sup> Solomon, 1996d, pp. 10-1; Minnaar and Hough, p. 167.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



The presence of illegal aliens in the informal sector has furthermore elicited a great deal of concern from the African Chamber of Hawkers and Business (ACHIB). According to Lawrence Mavundla, ACHIB's president, there were an estimated 500 000 illegal immigrants plying their trade in the informal sector which represent forty per cent of the total number of informal traders in the country. Mavundla's claims seemed to be substantiated to a degree when in a single raid in September 1994, the Northern Transvaal police arrested 2 000 illegal Zimbabwean traders in and around the former Venda capital of Thohoyandou.<sup>52</sup> ACHIB argues that, because illegal immigrants do not pay import duties on their goods, they are able to sell these goods at far cheaper prices. In this way, local hawkers are losing their only source of livelihood.

The seriousness with which ACHIB views foreign traders can be seen in an incident that occurred in August 1994. ACHIB members marched through the Johannesburg city centre and assaulted all the foreign hawkers they could find. They also marched to the Hillbrow police station and demanded the immediate deportation of all such hawkers.<sup>53</sup> It should be noted that ACHIB marched not only because of lost economic opportunities, but also because of the increasing levels of involvement of illegal aliens in crime in Hillbrow. Latest figures also suggest that, if anything, the foreign involvement in crime in Hillbrow has increased. In March 1999, Senior Superintendent Johan Steyn, Commander of the Brixton Murder and Robbery Unit said that sixty per cent of all bank robberies and serious house burglaries in Hillbrow are perpetrated by illegal Zimbabwean immigrants.<sup>54</sup>

Given the current state of the economy, the negative impact of illegal aliens on the job market cannot be underestimated. In this context, it is useful to note that 34 per cent of South Africans are unemployed; that eighteen million South African citizens live in abject poverty; that fewer than seven out of every one hundred school leavers find employment each year; that the country's economy is shedding jobs at an alarming rate (116 000 jobs were lost in the first nine months of 1997); and that 53 per cent of South Africans currently live below the R301 per month poverty line.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, the impact of illegal immigration is not only confined to the sphere of employment. Illegal aliens also adversely affect the crime situation in South Africa. For instance, there has been a marked increase in the number of illegal immigrants engaged in three forms of commercial crime:

<sup>52</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 186.

<sup>53</sup> Solomon, 1996d, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> "Foreign robbers flood South Africa", *The Independent on Saturday*, 27 March 1999, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> H Marais, "Most of us have to borrow more money and we still can't pay our debts", *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1998, p. 28.

- "Kite-flying" which involves the fictitious telegraphic transfer of funds and the withdrawal of fictitious credits;
- the counterfeiting and sale of identity documents; and
- the utilisation of false identity and salary advice documents to purchase furniture on credit (especially hire-purchase transactions).<sup>56</sup>

Between January and November 1995, 152 aliens were involved in commercial crime to the value of R517 986 870 which, in turn, constituted 19,6 per cent of all commercial crimes over the same period.<sup>57</sup>

As a result, it should come as no surprise that a recent National Operational Police Policy document viewed illegal immigrants as "South Africa's number one enemy".<sup>58</sup> The document furthermore noted that illegal immigrants contributed to fourteen per cent of all crime committed in South Africa and that these crimes included diamond smuggling, small arms proliferation, narco-trafficking, car-hijacking, taxi violence, burglaries, stocktheft and involvement in political massacres by hiring themselves out as assassins.<sup>59</sup>

These are not mere allegations: there are hard facts to substantiate them. Between 1 January and 31 December 1996, the SANDF confiscated 150 AK-47 rifles, 181 rifles, 626 hand weapons, 489 home-made weapons, and 184 other weapons from illegal immigrants. Over the same period, the following narcotics were confiscated from illegal immigrants: 22 121 kilograms of dagga; 5 422 mandrax tablets; 110,2 kilograms of cocaine; 674 grey tablets. The following precious metals were confiscated from illegal immigrants: 69 kilograms of gold and 0,8 kilograms of other precious metals. Livestock recovered from illegal immigrants were: 1 013 head of cattle; 2 884 small stock; and 132 other stock. Over the same period, 36 262 illegal immigrants were arrested.<sup>60</sup> More recent figures suggest that this still holds true. Between 1 January and 31 March 1999, the SANDF arrested 18 628 illegal aliens. From these 255 stolen vehicles, 93 461 kilograms of dagga, 1 875 mandrax tablets and 859 head of livestock were recovered.<sup>61</sup> It is perhaps

<sup>56</sup> Fax to the author from Superintendent S Pretorius of the South African Police Service, 21 June 1996, pp. 2-3.

<sup>57</sup> Fax to the author from Superintendent S Pretorius of the South African Police Service, 21 June 1996, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> TJ Mofomme, "South Africa's number one enemy: Influx control on illegal immigrants", *National Operational Police Policy*, (nd).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel L Boshoff, "Briefing to the Second ISS Round Table", paper read at the *Second ISS Roundtable*, hosted by the Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, 18 February 1997, p. 26.

<sup>61</sup> *Operational Statistics of the SANDF for the period 1 January 1999 to 31 March 1999*, p. 1. <[www.mil.za/SANDF/Media/News%20Releases/operational\\_statistics\\_of\\_the\\_sa.htm](http://www.mil.za/SANDF/Media/News%20Releases/operational_statistics_of_the_sa.htm)>.

worth noting here that these figures do not include those of the SAPS or the Department of Home Affairs.

However, to these figures must be added a note of caution: the impact of illegal immigrants on crime would differ from province to province. Thus, while 37 per cent of all serious crime in Gauteng are committed by illegal aliens, the figure for Mpumalanga is twelve per cent, and for Cape Town it is a paltry 0,12 per cent.<sup>62</sup>

While the relationship between illegal aliens and crime is multifaceted, as indicated in the brief overview above, this article does not seek to expose the entire causal relationship. Rather, three facets of this relationship are examined, namely narco-trafficking, gun running and "assassins-for-hire".

In October 1994, police arrested five illegal aliens after a tip-off in connection with the biggest cocaine haul ever discovered in South Africa until then. The thirteen kilograms of cocaine that these aliens were caught with, was worth R5 million.<sup>63</sup> Narco-trafficking, international experience has indicated, holds serious political (where political favours are bought), economic (loss of productivity) and social (disruption of family life) costs.

According to Gamba, sixty per cent of all illegal immigrants entering South Africa from the Swaziland and Mozambican borders are entering the country armed.<sup>64</sup> De Monteclos<sup>65</sup> has found that, once inside the country, the weapons are either used in the commission of violent crime by illegal aliens, or are sold or rented out to South African criminal syndicates. Crime and the violence associated with it affect the economy in two ways. Firstly, rising rates of crime and violence reduce investor confidence. Secondly, state resources that would have been utilised for the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) now have to be channelled into the security apparatus of the state.<sup>66</sup>

A more ominous development has been the fact that there is increasing evidence of illegal aliens, especially those from Mozambique, serving as assassins-for-hire for various crime syndicates and legitimate businesses. In a recent case, Mr Luckson Mathebule, Mpumalanga MEC for Safety and Security, revealed that taxi

<sup>62</sup> Colonel B van Niekerk, "Illegal immigrants' impact on crime", paper read at the Institute for Security Studies Seminar on population movements into South Africa, Halfway House, 3 September 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 213.

<sup>64</sup> V Gamba, Internal staff report: Towards collaborative peace project field trip to Mozambique, Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal, 20 May 1996-9 June 1996, Halfway House: Institute for Security Studies, 1996, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> De Monteclos, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Solomon, 1996d, p. 10; De Monteclos, p. 13.

bosses in the province had hired forty Mozambicans as assassins to eliminate rival taxi bosses. The illegal Mozambicans had been hired on the basis that they would be much harder to track down than locally hired assassins.<sup>67</sup> This fact holds severe implications for South Africa's domestic stability.

It should be mentioned, however, that the involvement of illegal immigrants in crime in South Africa is not a concern of Pretoria alone. Governments in the region also view this with alarm. In an address to his fellow national commissioners, Zimbabwean Police Commissioner, Mr Augustine Chihuri, noted that thirty per cent of those Zimbabwean illegal immigrants repatriated from South Africa had committed a serious crime in South Africa.<sup>68</sup> Concern was expressed at the meeting that this would result in an increase in criminal activity in the host state.

Illegal immigration does not only adversely impact on employment opportunities and contribute to the soaring crime rates, but also has negative implications for the South African state in its provision of adequate education, health, housing and pensions to its citizens.

On the question of education, Minnaar and Hough vividly illustrate how bus-loads of Swazi and Basotho children cross into the country, using South African schools close to the border and thereby placing an inordinate burden on South Africa's already overstretched education resources.<sup>69</sup> De Monteclos further notes that this is not a phenomenon confined to South Africa's border regions. He notes that in the greater Johannesburg area, 80 000 children of illegal immigrants burden already overcrowded schools.<sup>70</sup>

It is also a disturbing fact that illegal immigrants bring with them diseases with epidemic potential that can be attributed to poverty.<sup>71</sup> The vast majority of these illegal immigrants arrive in poor health and are severely malnourished, and thus have little resistance to illness and disease. Aliens are therefore excessively susceptible to diseases such as yellow fever, cholera, tuberculosis and AIDS.<sup>72</sup> For instance, cases of malaria in the former Northern Transvaal and other cases of chloroquine

<sup>67</sup> Mzilikazi wa Afrika, "Taxi bosses hired assassins", *Mail & Guardian*, 12(21), 29 May-4 June 1998, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> A Chihuri, "Internal threats to southern African states and the role of regional police cooperation in addressing these threats", paper read at the SADC Regional Police Chiefs Meeting, Maputo, Mozambique, 18 June 1996, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 209.

<sup>70</sup> De Monteclos, pp. 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> J Head, "Transformations of the structure of poverty in the struggle for an effective HIV/AIDS policy", *Migration labour project: Working Paper Series* (Bellville: Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, 1992), p.12.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*; Solomon, 1996d, p.10.

resistance have been associated with the movement of illegal immigrants from Mozambique. In October 1990, Dr NG Crisp, the regional head of the former Department of Health and Population Development in the then Northern Transvaal announced that nineteen per cent of all Mozambicans entering South Africa had malaria.<sup>73</sup> In the same vein, Dr John Andrews, superintendent of the Impala Platinum Mine Hospital, estimated in April 1998 that ninety per cent of all Mozambicans have malaria and that a significant proportion also tested positive for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).<sup>74</sup>

The relationship between illegal immigration and epidemics is borne out in the Nsanje district of Malawi, fifteen kilometres from the Mozambican border, where cross-border migration has resulted in both sides of the border having roughly the same percentage of AIDS, malaria, cholera and tuberculosis cases.<sup>75</sup> In the case of AIDS, Schutte<sup>76</sup> makes a causal link between illegal immigration and the spread of HIV in South Africa. On the issue of AIDS, it is perhaps worth noting that in the interview with Louise, the illegal immigrant from Zimbabwe, she mentioned that several of the girls working with her had contracted AIDS as a result of being forced to have unprotected sex with "customers" by the owner of the brothel. This is by no means an isolated occurrence. According to Minnaar and Hough, in police raids of other brothels where prostitutes who were illegal immigrants were found, there was a high incidence of HIV infection.<sup>77</sup>

Illegal immigrants burden South Africa's health services in two ways. Firstly, they arrive in South Africa and seek medical assistance from local hospitals and clinics. Secondly, they spread certain diseases to South African citizens and thus further tax South Africa's overburdened health infrastructure as these South Africans also have to seek treatment for their illnesses. But the impact of illegal immigrants on the health system also has certain economic costs to the country, which relate to the loss of productivity.

The increasing influx of illegal immigrants contributes to unlawful squatting in South Africa. Most aliens arrive in South Africa destitute, jobless and homeless. The result is that the vast majority find their way to squatter areas. It is estimated that eighty per cent of illegal aliens reside in informal housing settlements and squatter camps.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 111.

<sup>74</sup> Fax from Ms Marie Wentzels, Senior Researcher, Human Sciences Research Council, 8 April 1998.

<sup>75</sup> H Solomon, "Changing patterns of migration in southern Africa", in M Venter (ed.), *Migrancy and AIDS* (Cape Town: Medical Research Council, 1994b), p. 22; Head, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Schutte, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 214.

<sup>78</sup> Schutte, p. 9.

PLANACT (a service organisation that undertakes, among others, social studies) has found that twenty per cent of hostel dwellers and inhabitants of informal settlements in Gauteng are Zimbabwean and Mozambican. This not only indicates the extent of migration to South Africa, it also reveals a further burden on the RDP. The government does not only attempt to provide services and upgrade facilities in squatter areas, but is also trying to provide houses for all South Africans. However, as Schutte<sup>79</sup> notes, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the alien and the citizen in a squatter community. Thus, illegal immigrants are benefiting from the facilities and housing provided under the RDP, at the cost of the South African taxpayer.

There is also evidence emerging that illegal aliens contribute to the incidences of fraud and corruption which have come to characterise South Africa's pension pay-outs. In June 1998, detectives from the Fraud and Corruption Squad operating in Pongola in northern KwaZulu-Natal near the Swaziland border, arrested 57 Swazis between the ages of sixty and seventy for illegally trying to draw pensions. According to detectives, they had crossed into South Africa and had been illegally drawing pensions for some months.<sup>80</sup> This is not unique to Swazis operating in northern KwaZulu-Natal. Other research has indicated that citizens from Lesotho also illegally claim pensions on a monthly basis using fraudulent documentation in the Free State.<sup>81</sup>

The combined cost of all these pressures on the South African fiscus is difficult to estimate. However, Colonel Brian van Niekerk, National Coordinator of Border Control and Policing in the SAPS, argued that illegal immigrants cost South African taxpayers R1 985 million to host in 1994.<sup>82</sup> This figure was arrived at by estimating that approximately five million illegal immigrants were residing in South Africa and that each was costing the state an approximate R397 per annum to maintain.

Even accepting that this is a rough estimate and that five million may be too high (if one accepts the lower HSRC figure mentioned above), the fact is that the costs of hosting a large illegal immigration population do not constitute a net gain as Reitzes argues, but are probably amounting to hundreds of million of rands. To this must be added the deportation costs of illegal immigrants to their respective

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> Siphso Khumalo, "57 Swazis held for alleged pension scam", *The Daily News*, 12 June 1999, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Minnaar and Hough, p. 210.

<sup>82</sup> B van Niekerk, "The impact of illegal aliens on safety and security in South Africa", *ISSUP Bulletin*, 7/95, 1995, p. 5.

countries of origin. In 1997, it cost South Africa R200 million to deport some 173 000 illegal immigrants.<sup>83</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to see the costs of immigration simply in terms of rands and cents. There are also certain political costs that relate to domestic political stability and foreign policy considerations.

The need for an effective immigration policy that clearly distinguishes between alien and citizen and between legal and illegal immigrant was emphasised in the case of Marcel Dube. It also highlighted the severe political risks, both domestic and international, posed by a failure in an effective immigration policy.

Marcel Dube was the head of technical services at the Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC) for two years. This job gave him access to South Africa's nuclear secrets: the AEC is the custodian of the inventory of nuclear bomb-grade uranium, as well as the nation's technical agency for the administration of nuclear safeguards. In 1997, however, it was discovered that Marcel Dube had allegedly forged his citizenship and that he was an illegal immigrant from Zimbabwe.<sup>84</sup> South African and Western intelligence circles, it was reported, expressed concern that Dube might sell the expertise he acquired to some "rogue" state.

At the domestic political level, there is increasing evidence that illegal immigrants are forming organisations (sometimes in conjunction with legal immigrants and refugees) and that these have a negative impact on internal stability. In the Winterveld, two such organisations are the Crisis Committee and the National Immigrant Workers' Association (NIWA).<sup>85</sup> In the former Eastern Transvaal, the Concerned Refugees and Immigrants of Mozambique (COREIMO) was formed.<sup>86</sup>

COREIMO was established in October 1994, by Doctor Sibuye, the founder and current president of the organisation. COREIMO is ostensibly a relief organisation set up to assist Mozambican immigrants and to help them in obtaining permanent South African identity documents. However, various non-governmental organisations expressed fears that the National Party was in the process of providing identity documents to illegal immigrants from Mozambique as a way to boost its performance in the October 1995 municipal elections. These fears were

<sup>83</sup> Des Parker, "Immigration policy cause of xenophobia", *The Daily News*, 22 June 1998, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> *Mall & Guardian*, 14(25), 26 June-2 July 1998, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> M Reitzes and S Bam, "The political, economic and social impact of immigrants in South Africa: Findings from a Winterveld case study", *Briefing Document* (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1996), p. 7.

<sup>86</sup> Mondii waka Makhanya, Mozambican exiles get IDs from NP, *Mall & Guardian*, 10-16 February 1996, p. 7.

exacerbated by the fact that Dr Sibuye, COREIMO'S president, was a National Party organiser and that the organisation was run from the National Party office in Bushbuckridge. COREIMO planned to go national and to open branches in other areas where Mozambicans are present.<sup>87</sup> In 1997, COREIMO opened a branch in Alexandra township.

The relationship between COREIMO and the National Party is not unique, as a similar relationship began to emerge between the NIWA and the Pan Africanist Congress.<sup>88</sup> Should this phenomenon become widespread, the implications of between 2,5 and 4,1 million illegal immigrants participating in South African elections (in whatever form) might severely distort the results of elections (especially at local government level) and this, in turn, might have serious implications for political stability in the short to medium term.

Illegal immigrants contribute to South Africa's internal instability in other ways as well. Threatened with deportation - viewed by illegal immigrants living in the Winterveld as "intimidation and harassment" - there is increasing evidence that these illegal immigrants are turning to violence with regard to the state security apparatus. Thus, in an incident at Orange Farm, illegal immigrants ambushed units of the police and army and warned of similar action in the future which "will be more severe because we want to inflict as much damage to deter them from harassing us".<sup>89</sup>

It is thought that two reasons account for this newly found confidence among illegal immigrants. Firstly, they have ready access to weapons. Mozambicans, for instance, are known to cross the border with their weapons and then hiding it in a weapons cache either for use or sale at a later stage. Secondly, as several of South Africa's neighbouring states have undergone or are undergoing long periods of civil war, many illegal immigrants have skills related to warfighting and, as such, believe that they are capable of sustaining an armed response against the South African state.<sup>90</sup> Whether this is true or not, it holds severe potential implications for South Africa's future stability.

Illegal immigration also poses severe risks to South African foreign policy. Two recent cases illustrate the point well. The first case relates to the exiled Nigerian Wole Soyinka's National Liberation Coalition (NALICON) that established Radio Democrat International on 12 June 1996 in South Africa. Broadcasts were

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> Reitzes and Bam, p. 7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Mr Jakkie Potgieter, Senior Field Researcher, Institute for Security Studies, 8 April 1998.



made from the Sentech facilities and the radio station beamed out anti-Abacha sentiments to Nigeria. Legal and illegal immigrants were involved in the running of the radio station. These broadcasts served to undermine efforts on the part of the South African government to play the role of mediator between the Abacha regime and various Nigerian opposition groups. Nigerian policymakers questioned South Africa's alleged impartiality as mediator, since it did not stop the radio station from continuing its broadcasts, in addition to the fact that Nigerian opposition groups were known to raise money in South Africa.<sup>91</sup>

The second case relates to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Soon after the fall of Mobutu Sese Seko and the capture of Kinshasa by Kabila's forces, four generals loyal to Mobutu arrived in South Africa claiming refugee status. They were General Pena Baramoto, the former head of Mobutu's presidential guard, General Nzimbi, General Mambo and Admiral Mavwa. While their case for refugee status was still being processed, Aziz Pahad, South Africa's Deputy Foreign Minister, announced that Kabila's government wanted these generals back to stand trial for corruption. South Africa's human rights obligations under the 1961 UN Convention, however, prevented Pretoria from handing them to Kinshasa until their claim to refugee status was proven to be unfounded. This caused friction between Kinshasa and Pretoria at a time when South Africa aimed to foster stronger ties between the two countries.

While the tedious process of the verification of refugee status continued, the generals set up the National Front for the Liberation of Congo with the sale of R32 million worth of cobalt which they had in their possession shortly before fleeing Kinshasa. The group aimed to hire mercenaries and to launch military attacks from southern Congo, Zambia and Angola in order to seize the mineral-rich Katanga (Shaba) and Kasai provinces and to get these to secede from the rest of the Democratic Republic of Congo by military means. The planning for this intervention and the hiring of mercenaries were done while the generals were in South Africa awaiting their refugee status claim.<sup>92</sup> It hardly needs to be said that tensions between Kabila's Congo and South Africa escalated over this period. The end result was that the generals were denied refugee status, but before they could be repatriated to Kinshasa, they had left the country. This case clearly illustrates how illegal immigrants utilise the loopholes in South Africa's refugee legislation to their own advantage. After the rebellion of the Banyamulenge Tutsis against Kabila's government had begun on 2 August 1998 with the support of Rwanda and Uganda, Generals Baramoto and Nzimbi and Admiral Mavwa supported Kabila.

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<sup>91</sup> H Johnson, "Whispering in Abacha's ear", *New African*, 364.

<sup>92</sup> N Kanhema, "Zairian generals to 'go rebel'", *City Press*, 18 July 1997.

Taken together, these cases vividly illustrate how illegal immigrants contribute to South Africa's domestic instability and how they can adversely impact on foreign policy goals and stability in the region.

## 6. CONCLUSION

When attempting to examine the impact of illegal immigration on South Africa, one of the first questions which needs to be answered, is how many illegal aliens there are. The argument presented in this article suggests that there are between 2,5 and 4,1 million illegal immigrants. They, it was argued, exacerbate South Africa's spiraling crime rates, strain the country's fragile social services and further contribute to South Africa's growing ranks of the unemployed. Illegal immigrants, however, are also the victims of violence perpetrated against them by South Africans. These attacks against migrants are intimately related to the rising tide of xenophobia in the country. In this regard, it was noted that 65 per cent of respondents in a Human Sciences Research Council survey indicated that illegal immigration was "bad" or "very bad" for the country.

In this way, the article sought to highlight the impact of illegal immigrants in a nuanced way: portraying them as both victims of insecurity and as agents of insecurity. In doing so, both the human security and state security dimensions of the impact of illegal immigration were examined. The analysis clearly points to the necessity of a realistic immigration policy that seeks to bridge the security concerns of the illegal immigrant and those of the state. The formulation of such a policy would therefore need to have two elements - to protect South Africa and its citizens from the negative impact of illegal immigration and to formulate a policy that is human rights friendly.

## APPENDICES

**TABLE 1**

**WHETHER THE INFLUX OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IS A GOOD OR A BAD THING ANALYSED BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

<b>Educational levels</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>			
Higher than grade 12	8	81	9	2
Grade 12	12	72	12	4
Grade 8-11	18	64	12	6
Grade 7 and lower	18	58	18	6
No school	15	59	14	12

**TABLE 2**

**WHETHER THE INFLUX OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IS A GOOD OR A BAD THING ANALYSED BY RACE**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>			
Blacks	21	56	15	7
Asians	14	65	18	3
Coloureds	5	77	9	9
Whites	1	93	5	1

TABLE 3

### WHETHER THE INFLUX OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IS A GOOD OR A BAD THING ANALYSED BY LANGUAGE

Language	Uncertain	Neither	Bad	Good
	Percentage			
Afrikaans	5	6	85	4
English	2	11	80	7
Both	2	11	81	6
Northern Sotho	7	11	50	33
Other African Language	9	16	49	26
Zulu	10	18	50	22
Southern Sotho	8	18	54	20
Xhosa	4	14	71	11
Tswana	3	14	56	27

TABLE 4

### WHETHER THE INFLUX OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IS A GOOD OR A BAD THING ANALYSED BY POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT

Political party	Good	Bad	Neither	Uncertain
	Percentage			
African National Congress	22	60	9	9
Pan Africanist Congress	25	56	18	1
Inkatha Freedom Party	20	51	18	12
National Party	6	82	7	5
Freedom Front	0	94	6	0
Conservative Party	0	88	8	4
Democratic Party	5	78	12	5
Refuse	10	64	18	8
Uncertain	9	70	13	9

TABLE 5

**WHETHER THE INFLUX OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IS A GOOD OR A BAD THING ANALYSED BY PROVINCE**

Province	Good	Bad	Neither	Uncertain
Percentage				
Northern Cape	3	78	8	11
Western Cape	3	81	14	2
Mpumulanga	8	60	26	6
Eastern Cape	10	79	6	5
KwaZulu-Natal	14	64	15	7
Free State	16	70	11	3
Gauteng	18	56	16	10
North West	30	56	12	2
Northern Province	37	56	3	4

TABLE 6

**WHAT IS YOUR VIEW IN GENERAL ON THE SO-CALLED ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS THAT COME TO SOUTH AFRICA FROM OTHER COUNTRIES? DO YOU THINK THESE PEOPLE ARE: VERY WELCOME, WELCOME, NEITHER, UNWELCOME, VERY UNWELCOME, UNCERTAIN.**

	Percentage
Very Welcome	3,2
Welcome	12,7
Neither	7,0
Unwelcome	35,8
Very unwelcome	37,8
Don't know	3,6