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## **An Examination of the Efficacy of Border Control Measures to Curb Illegal Immigrants in South Africa**

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**Abstract:** Illegal migration is a contemporary global challenge and a threat to human security. The South African government has been grappling with curbing unlawful migration since the dawn of the century. The crisis has been propelled by the opening of borders since the end of apartheid and the porous nature of the country's borders. However, measures such as establishing border control management and installing border fences are hailed as attempts to curb the illegal migration crisis. This was conducted qualitatively. This study utilised securitisation theory to understand the plight of illegal migration. An extensive visit to primary and secondary data sources was conducted to understand what perpetuates the illicit crisis migration despite the measures in place to curb such. A thematic approach was adopted to analyse the reviewed data. Findings show that the measures to curb illicit migration are ineffective enough to put the last nail in the problem. The study findings further reveal issues such as a lack of coordination, corruption, and infrastructure, such as vehicles for patrol purposes, along the land borders. The study, therefore, recommends that the government use advanced technological equipment such as drones, erect electrical fences, and arrest and charge those who engage in corrupt activities.

**Keywords:** Illegal Migration; border security; border management; national security; human security.

### **Introduction**

The challenge of illegal immigrants is one of the most critical factors that a country should get rid of to maintain safety and security in the country. If the government fails to strengthen border security and boundaries, the state's safety will likely be compromised (Motau and Mdhluli, 2024). South Africa's political stability, together with its technological and economic advancements, has drawn a lot of foreign visitors. Ncube (2017) argued that most migrants in South Africa originate from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mozambique, Botswana, Malawi, Pakistan, and India. Ncube (2017) stated that the majority of undocumented immigrants are entering South Africa illegally from neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

South Africa has not yet fully embraced space technology to address its land border security challenges, even though nations like the United States of America (USA), India, Egypt, and Europe have welcomed its emergence as an alternative to traditional methods of safeguarding, controlling, and monitoring land borders (e.g., vehicle and foot patrols) Gadda and Patil, 2013; Shishkov, Hristozov, Janssen and Van den Hoven, 2017; Katara and Pokhriyal, 2017; Karamanidou and Kasperek, 2018).

Public-private partnerships, or PPPs, have also entered vital industries like the military and law enforcement. In certain developed nations, PPPs are increasingly being considered when formulating plans and approaches to deal with national security and law enforcement issues. Given the pivotal role adequate border security plays in minimising transnational criminal activities and further ensuring a greater sense of security for South African residents and other persons within South Africa's boundaries (Pukhova, Merkulina and Bashkov, 2021).

## Literature Review

### 1. Illegal Immigration

An illegal immigrant, according to the South African immigration act of 2002, is any foreign national who enters the Republic of South Africa without proper documentation by the immigration officer, violating the immigration act. However, Jackson and Hogue (2022) define an illegal immigrant as any foreign national entering the country illegally or legally but ending with an expired permit and not exiting the host country.

### 2. The Illegal Immigrants from a Global Perspective

A major worldwide concern, illegal immigration has a variety of intricate effects on both developed and developing countries. Globally speaking, a confluence of political unrest, economic disparity, violence, and inadequate governance systems frequently fuels irregular migration (Castles, de Haas, and Miller, 2014). Therefore, the issue of illegal immigrants in the country not only affects South Africa. Almost every country in the world is complaining about illegal immigrants in their country because these challenges threaten the country's national security and economic development. Botswana and Zimbabwe's experiences, in particular, provide important insights into the regional complexity of border administration, irregular migration, and governmental responses.

The border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, especially at Beitbridge, has turned into a hub for smuggling and unauthorised migration. After arriving in host nations, migrants frequently experience xenophobic violence, human trafficking, exploitation, and legal uncertainty (Tawodzera, 2018). Sometimes, unaccompanied minor illegal immigrants experience exploitation and sexual abuse by transporters during transit (Mabvurira and Motsi, 2020). Nevertheless, people migrate irregularly despite these hazards, highlighting the powerful pull factors linked to better economic prospects in South Africa and Botswana, as well as the significant push factors within Zimbabwe.

In contrast, illegal immigrants mostly use Botswana as a destination and transit country, especially from Zimbabwe and other nearby nations like Namibia and Zambia. Despite its small size, Botswana draws a lot of undocumented migrants due to its strong economy, political stability, and job possibilities, particularly in construction and agriculture (Campbell, 2003). In response, the Botswana government has implemented stringent immigration enforcement measures, including heightened monitoring, border barriers (like the electric fence along the Zimbabwean border), and regular deportations. According to Amit (2015), these strategies, however, have come under fire for neglecting humanitarian issues and migrant rights, as well as for not addressing the underlying reasons of irregular migration.

### 3. Causes of Illegal Immigrants in South Africa

Mlambo (2020) stated that the reason illegal immigrants choose South Africa as their destination country is due to its economic and political stability, religious and ethnic tolerance, and advanced infrastructure facilities. They knew that democratic South Africa had created new economic opportunities for people internationally and nationally. Other contributing factors to illegal immigration in South Africa are poverty, political instability, and civil wars; however, economic opportunity is the main factor that drives illegal immigrants to other countries. Scholars such as Moyo (2020) stipulated that the motive for illegal immigrants in South Africa is due to difficulties in attaining legal documents to enter South Africa; because of this, they feel left out and resort to human smuggling. According to Dithebe (2017), the difficulty for illegal immigrants is the

affordability of passports, and those with passports do not have enough money to file for visas; therefore, they enter the nation illegally because it costs them nothing or is less expensive than entering legitimately.

#### 4. Social Factors on Illegal Immigration

South Africa continues to face increased migration from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo due to poverty, political instability, and limited opportunities in these regions (Crush and Chikanda, 2014). In South Africa, migrant-host relations are now characterised by social conflicts, including xenophobia. According to Landau (2011), migrants are frequently held responsible for unemployment, crime, and overworked public services, which can result in prejudice and even violence. Mafa, Makhubele, Matlakala, Baloyi, Rabotata, Masilo, Kwakwa, and Mabasa (2021) argued that illegal immigrants experience social isolation due to a lack of trust from local communities.

#### 5. Economic Factors

Although migrants seek jobs in South Africa due to its comparatively stronger economy, the country's unemployment rate is already high, especially for young people (Peberdy, 2016 and StatsSA, 2021). This exacerbates competition for public services and employment and fuels anti-immigrant sentiment. However, economic push and pull factors continue to be powerful migratory drivers. The financial resources, infrastructure, and human capabilities of South Africa's border control organisations are severely limited. Ineffective interagency collaboration, inadequate training, and a lack of surveillance equipment all diminish effectiveness (Kole, 2019 and Dube, 2020). These limitations make proactive enforcement and control more difficult.

#### 6. Political Factor

Border security is compromised by corruption in border control organisations. Officials frequently engage in bribery, document fraud, and the facilitation of unauthorised entry (Mattes, 2014 and Munemo, 2020). As a result, public confidence in the immigration system is damaged, and state power is weakened. Migration policy is influenced by domestic political factors. During election cycles, governments frequently implement tougher border policies in response to growing populism and anti-immigrant sentiment (Misago, 2017 and Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012). Frequently, these reflexive actions are not sustainable in the long run.

#### 7. Border Management during the Apartheid Era in South Africa

During apartheid, South African border control and security were highly maintained by military forces due to the segregation policy to enforce border security. Furthermore, the borders were fortified to prevent the liberation movement's presence in the region, devoted to warring in the South African border to engage in guerrilla warfare. The South African Defence Force (SADF) and quasi-military South African Police (SAP) were institutions that performed this primary function of border control. Moreover, the police were responsible for facilitating and controlling the migration of people into and out of the country.

Border control was highly characterised by strict control and enforcement to protect the country from external threats, such as armed Guerrillas from neighbouring countries. In this era, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland, Botswana, and Lesotho Borders were fortified by an electric fence. The reason was that the apartheid government wanted to prevent attacks from the Guerrilla movement as they rebelled against apartheid. While they were trying to prevent cross-border crimes that would endanger national security (Dithebe, 2017 and Tau, 2020). Furthermore, the government used the Alien Control Act of 1991, which permitted them to arrest and deport illegal immigrants.

#### 8. Border Management Post Apartheid in South Africa

The demise of apartheid and a new dawn for democratic South Africa paved the way for the influx of international migration from all over the world due to an inclusive foreign policy. The influx of immigrants was because of the need for green pastures in developed countries. According to Jackson and Hoque (2022), new policies were introduced to facilitate the legal authorisation of goods and people, such as the Immigration

Act of 2002 and the Refugee Act of 1998. These acts allow non-South African nationals to get temporary permits for education or employment reasons. It is imperative to consider that only some immigrants can afford to get passports; therefore, this results in illegal entry into South Africa.

The emergence of the Immigrant Act of 2002 led to Illegal immigrants entering the country through the border fence (Mlambo, Adetiba and Thusi, 2022). Mlambo et al., (2020) stated that different political parties blamed the weakness of the borders and weak policies; as factors that contribute to the crisis of illegal immigrants hence, the need for technological advancement of border control, in this regard the challenge of illegal immigrants was just the government and media stunt to fortify the South African border security.

## 9. Border Management Policies and Regulations

### *Immigration Act of 2002*

The Immigration Act of 2002 was established to regulate the entry and departure of goods and people while providing legal authorisation in the Republic. However, the promotion of human rights in the South African constitution has led the government to deal with issues of immigration through the Immigration Act of 2002, so the following departments such as the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), South African Police Service (SAPS) and South African National Défense Force (SANDF) must perform their duties while promoting the respect of human rights based on cultural right (south African constitutional right of 1996). The act oversees the legal authorisation of visas to foreign nationals at the port of entry.

According to the government of South Africa, the immigration act of 2002 was established to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Regulate the entry of people into the country through recognised borders.
- ii. Border Patrol will deter illegal entry through the border fence.
- iii. To detect those who entered the country illegally.
- iv. And deportation of unauthorised citizens.

The act grants the South African police service the duty to check the identities of people who enter the country to detain and arrest those who violate the immigration act 2002. According to the act, before the deportation or conviction of the suspect, they should report to the Department of Home Affairs. According to the act, the permit is given to those who bring new skills to the country for educational purposes and visitation. According to Jackson and Hogue (2022), the government introduced this act to replace the Alien Act of 1991.

### *Border Management Authority Act 2 (2020)*

The Border Management Authority is a single authority for managing borders established under the Border Management Authority Act of 2020. According to President Cyril Ramaphosa, the act was established to ensure that immigration laws are upheld and enforced. Moreover, it ensures that foreign nationals enter and exit the country legally and are not prohibited from entering South Africa.

### *The Role of Border Management Policy*

According to the Border Management Act 02 of 2020, Border management necessitates using defence forces only. The act was established to fulfil the following: cooperating and coordinating border law enforcement activities with other state organs, border communities, or any other individual; facilitating and managing the lawful movement of people within the border law enforcement area and at the port of entry; and facilitating and managing the orderly flow of goods within the nation. The act is facilitated while considering the issues of constitutional rights and international law to avoid human rights violations.

They may also interrogate people about their entry or border crossings and make formal declarations. An officer can exercise power without a warrant if a competent person consents or the officer believes a warrant will be issued and the delay will likely defeat the warrant's object. Officers can conduct roadblocks, checkpoints, and routine inspections without a warrant at border law enforcement zones or ports of entry. However, the Commissioner must give written permission to perform such acts. Officers may conduct vehicle

stops, confiscate or detain objects, ask individuals regarding passage, and detain or arrest those suspected of breaking the Act during an inspection or search.

#### *The Role Played by Law Enforcement Agencies*

South Africa has law enforcement Agencies such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), the South African National Défense Force (SANDF), and the Border Guards. These agencies are crucial in regulating immigration and enforcing laws along the borders.

#### *The Role Played by the SAND*

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is responsible for defending and safeguarding the Republic of South Africa, its territorial integrity, and its citizens in compliance with the constitutional provisions and international law governing the use of force. This is stated in Section 200(2) of the South African Constitution. Protecting the South African Sea Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and foreign boundaries, as well as being ready and equipped to participate in military operations outside of South Africa's borders, are the two primary duties of the SANDF (Mathebula, 2018 and Jordaan, 2018; and Bester and Olivier, 2020).

#### *The Role Played by the SAPS*

The South African Police Service's (SAPS) responsibility is outlined in Section 205(3) of the Constitution, which states that the agency's primary goals are to prevent, combat, and investigate crimes. Together with maintaining and enforcing the law, the SAPS is also in charge of protecting South Africans' lives and property and maintaining public order. SAPS is authorised to conduct search and seizure operations on any person, establishment, place, vehicle, or aircraft at any time and place within South Africa under Section 13(6) of the South African Police Act to prevent the illegal movement of people and products over the country's borders (Dithebe and Mukhuba, 2018 and Vigneswaran, 2020 and Mthembu-Salter, Amit, Gould and Landau, 2014; Alfaro-velcamp and Shaw, 2016).

### 9. The Challenges of Border Management

Mangena (2020) and Letlape (2021) stated that the absence of strict border enforcement is why there is an influx of illegal immigrants in South Africa; however, corruption, political ties, and daily migration could contribute to immigrants without proper documentation. According to Ng'andu (2019) and Mangena (2020), porous borders are a problem which contributes to illegal immigration. Mamokhere and Chauke (2020) agree with Ng'andu and Magena that a porous border and management system are one of the reasons why illegal immigrants can enter the country. Mangena (2020) further states that the issue of illegal immigrants is corruption, whereby the border officials permit immigrants to enter the country without legal authorisation, and one reason not to implement strict border control is to prevent political conflicts.

Swaziland's border post is subject to various crimes, including the unlawful crossing of schoolchildren, dagga smuggling, cattle rustling, smuggling of products, illicit mining, and unfettered movement of persons. Commercial explosives smuggling between South Africa's Limpopo area and Zimbabwe has increased recently. Saleable explosives used in Zimbabwe's diminishing mining sector make their way into South Africa and are often utilised in violent crimes such as cash-in-transit robberies. Additionally, explosives are utilised in illicit mining operations in South Africa. The Limpopo River's poor border administration contributes to the smuggling of commodities like cigarettes and narcotics (Mamokhere and Chauke, 2020).

Mamokhere and Chauke (2020) further state that smuggling contraband cigarettes and narcotics into the country impacts tax collection. Illegal cigarette commerce is a concern since it causes gangs to battle each other using weapons to rob each other of cash and banned imports and exports. Corruption is one of the issues confronting the South African borders. Another issue that makes it hard for the government to keep the flow of illegal immigrants in check is an insufficient infrastructure that is poorly maintained at most border crossings. More importantly, border management lacks an efficient governance mechanism.

## 10. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the securitisation theory developed by Buzan, Weaver, and Wilde (1990) as the building block to understanding the illegal migration crisis. The idea of securitisation was developed at the Copenhagen School of Security Studies and Human Security Theory. The viewpoint of the theory holds that security is a cultural and social phenomenon that is "safe" in the language sense rather than a predetermined objective. To put it another way, issues are discussed, determined to be security threats, and then addressed with measures. They contend that security is social and that key players in defining and securing issues include the media, political figures, and international organisations. Furthermore, this viewpoint opposes conventional security tactics that limit their focus to military operations rather than broadening it to include security concerns like environmental degradation, human rights abuses, or economic crises (Mlambo and Adetiba, 2021).

Securitisation as a theoretical framework in the context of illegal immigrants and border security is helpful as it explains why countries adopt measures that aim to enforce or fortify border controls in response to perceived external threats. In this regard, evidence can be seen in establishing the Border Management Authority Act 2 of 2020, which led to the deployment of border guards to facilitate the authorised movement of good people and prevent possible threats to national security. According to Mlambo et al. (2022), the securitisation agenda encompasses terrorism, cross-border crimes, illegal immigration, human rights violations, diseases, and Natural hazards, thus threatening national security.

### *Human Security Theory*

A people-centred framework that is extremely pertinent to comprehending illegal immigration is offered by the human security theory. Human security prioritises safeguarding people from dangers, including poverty, political violence, environmental degradation, and lack of access to necessities, in contrast to traditional security methods that concentrate on defending state borders (UNDP, 1994). This change in viewpoint contributes to the explanation of why so many people turn to illegal migration, not just in search of improved economic prospects but also as a last resort in reaction to life-threatening circumstances back home. People feel forced to cross borders, even without legal license, in quest of safety and a more secure living due to problems including unemployment, armed conflict, political repression, and natural calamities (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007).

Furthermore, Human Security Theory draws attention to the grave dangers that illegal immigrants confront both on their way and once they reach their new nations. These include health insecurity brought on by substandard living conditions and restricted access to healthcare; legal insecurity brought on by a lack of documentation and legal protection; and personal insecurity brought on by trafficking, exploitation, and violence (Carballo and Nerurkar, 2001; Nyers, 2003). According to this viewpoint, undocumented immigrants are not only criminals but also weak people who want assistance and protection. Therefore, to address the underlying reasons of irregular migration, guarantee humanitarian aid, and protect the human rights of all migrants regardless of their legal status, Human Security Theory advocates for measures that go beyond border enforcement (Commission on Human Security, 2003). It advocates for both collaborative and caring governance in the countries of destination and preventive measures like international development, conflict resolution, and climate resilience in the countries of origin of migrants (Betts, 2011 and Kaldor, 2007).

## **Methodology**

The methodology used in this study was qualitative. The study was conducted using an exploratory design research methodology. This approach is used when there is a lack of information about issues or phenomena that have not been adequately explained because it is flexible and can change as the inquiry progresses. The authors used an exploratory research design. Therefore, the authors employed the non-probability sampling technique because not every member of the study's target population will have an equal chance to participate. This study deliberately sampled its population because it had a specific goal. Targeting specific present populations in advance is another standard procedure (Levy and Lameshow, 2013). To get useful data, the authors employed the snowball sampling technique in addition to participant recommendations. The target population of this study were DHA, SANDF, SAPA DPW. To reach individuals who were difficult to identify

through official channels, especially those with lived experiences or specialised insights pertinent to the study topic, snowball sampling was used in this study. By using this approach, the researcher was able to establish credibility with participants who lived on the borders and connect with people who had firsthand experience or an in-depth understanding of the topic.

The authors used primary and secondary sources to get data. Interviews were conducted with 15 participants. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data for this qualitative study. This is so that during the semi-structured interviews, participants can delve deeper into their responses and the topic of interest. The authors followed up on the open-ended questions with additional inquiries. In addition to this data collection strategy, the authors also examined secondary data sources, such as books, periodicals, journals, and media reports. Due to its accessibility and adaptability, the study used a thematic data analysis technique. The authors first read the transcripts several times to become acquainted with the facts. After that, we manually created the first codes by classifying related answers. The themes were developed utilising an inductive coding approach, which means that they came directly from the data.

## The Findings

### 1. Border Control Measures to Curb Illegal Immigrants in South Africa

During the interview, participants were asked to mention the key actors responsible for curbing immigration to South Africa. The responses of the majority of the participants were the same since all the participants mentioned that:

*“The responsible people who must make sure that there is no illegal crossing to South Africa are Home Affairs, South African National Defence Force, South African Police Services and Public Works and Infrastructure”.* (Participant, 1, 2, 3,4, 5, 6, 7,8 and)

The responses from the participants are consistent with Malatji (2020), who argued that border control is the responsibility of the following departments: All levels of the South African National Defence Force, the South African Revenue Service (SARS), the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Transport, the Department of Health, and the Department of Agriculture lack effective communication. Increased communication amongst agencies working in the same field is necessary to prevent the loss of important data about criminal activity and crime syndicates. Accusations of corruption stem from a lack of trust between the agencies involved in ground-level border control. Therefore, Participant 1 alluded to that.

*“To improve border management, government agencies must collaborate closely, share information, and conduct coordinated border patrols”.* (Participant 1)

Participant 2 indicated that.

*“The lack of resources contributes a lot to the illegal immigration to South Africa”.* (Participant 2)

Participant 5 mentioned that:

*“Insufficient Infrastructure: Many border posts lack modern facilities and technologies, such as scanners for cargo inspection or efficient lanes for vehicles”.* (Participant 5)

*“Lack of Coordination: Ineffective coordination between the South African Revenue Service (SARS), immigration services, and other stakeholders can create bottlenecks”.* (Participant 11)

The above claims are supported by Mlambo et al. (2022), who discovered that the Department of Border Control is faced with challenges such as illicit trade crime, drug syndicates, lack of infrastructure and

technology and lack of coordination and budget allocation. Therefore, these challenges make it impossible for the border Guards to perform their duties as they are not responsible due to a lack of resources. Letlape (2021) argued that the intelligence system is disjointed and does not include the police system, and thus, the police do not coordinate with SSA. This shows that coordination is needed, which is one of the challenges that makes the border personnel fail to successfully deter an illegal entry or exit of goods and people. Thus, South Africa is faced with inadequate intelligence, which makes it impossible to know precisely the number of illegal migrants that have entered South Africa. The authors further noted that the South African intelligence community need to communicate more effectively with each other; this emanates from the Detective Inspector (DI) as it does not share its intelligence with the State Security Agency (SSA), vice versa.

Letlape (2021) stated that the people who are responsible for border control, such as the South African Police Department (SAPD) and customs, are the one who hinders and threatens the effective way of controlling the borders due to their engagement in corrupt activities. Furthermore, lack of human resources, technology, and infrastructure and insufficient budget allocation are factors that hinder the effective management of borders. Thus, there are not enough border personnel to patrol the borders physically. The SANDF suffers from budget constraints and cannot afford as many aircraft as possible to support the patrol of the ground forces due to insufficient maintenance of contracts for servicing aircraft. Participant 7 stated that

*“Due to the lack of enough resources in our department, it makes it difficult to implement some of the initiatives to control the illegal immigrants in South Africa”.* (Participant 7)

*“The government allocate us a small budget compared to other departments, and we cannot be able to buy some other necessary equipment”.* (Participant 10)

Nkhoma (2021) found that there is a lack of funding for increased security and a staffing shortage for efficient border control at South Africa's landward ports of entry. The problem is made worse by insufficient surveillance monitoring systems and a lack of departmental coordination. The trafficking of people and goods, illegal immigration, and rhino poaching have all been made easier by the laxer border security. Furthermore, despite the SANDF's best efforts and limited resources, it is not possible to adequately patrol the entire border. According to the aforementioned, if border security forces are to be expanded, the SANDF will require equipment like mobility packages, land cruisers, troop carriers, command and control vehicles, ambulances, and logistical support vehicles. Consequently, the difficulty of having more people on the ground to conduct physical border patrols was highlighted as one of the issues that prevent border guards from carrying out their duties effectively and efficiently because they are understaffed.

## 2. The Effectiveness of the Border Control Measures

Nkhoma (2021) found that the South African borders are experiencing threats of human trafficking and Smuggling, livestock theft, drug smuggling, wildlife trafficking, smuggling of stolen vehicles and poaching. Thus, the Lesotho border is the most troubling border when it comes to livestock theft. However, Mozambique and South Africa are experiencing high challenges in smuggling vehicles. In terms of the author's findings, Colonel Gopane discovered that the Eswatini border is challenged by illegal border crossing, whereby he cited the unlawful crossing of the smuggling of dagga and illicit mining in the country.

Participant 13 stated that

*“Our borders are weak; that is why people are coming in and out as they please”.* (Participant 13)

*“There is no border fence between Zimbabwe and South Africa, and Zimbabweans are flooding into South Africa every day, which simply means our borders are weak”.* (Participant 15)

Therefore, the BMA was implemented in response to the need to secure the porous border that consists of all security sectors and beyond to play their role in the fight against the illegal movement of people and



goods that are dangerous to the health of the citizens and equipment such as weapons which are used to commit cash-in-transit robberies.

Participant 9 indicated that

*"The Border Management Authority is working hard to make sure that the control of illegal immigrants is taking place"* (Participant 9)

*"After the implementation of the Border Management Authority, the regular flow of illegal immigrants into South Africa has reduced"*. (Participant 11)

According to Dr Masiapato, who was interviewed by Lerato (2022), Several successes have been achieved by the border management authority in the following borders of Mozambique bordering Mpumalanga.

Those without authorised documentation, consisting of 205 people, were apprehended, and nineteen were arrested. Another success was achieved in the Free State border of Lesotho, whereby six (6) illegal people were apprehended, and one was charged with nicotinic that was in the tracks, and the contraband was confiscated. The border management authority has managed to recover stolen vehicles, seizing drugs and guns ever since it was established.

It is further revealed by Defence Web (2023) that the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has found hundreds of kilograms of drugs and several stolen vehicles along its borders. In one instance, smugglers and soldiers engaged in gunfire. The BMA has succeeded in its mandate to prevent the smuggling and trafficking of human beings and goods and prevent illegal cross-border movement (Handmaker and Nalule, 2021). The Border Management Authority (BMA) of South Africa carried out a coordinated, intelligence-driven operation to halt the smuggling of 443 young children, the oldest of whom was eight years old. Dr Masiapato revealed that, since April, the BMA has stopped more than 44,461 people from entering South Africa without authorisation, turned away 98,150, and deported 100,452 people who had overstayed their visas. At the nation's borders, 396 blasting cartridges and 279 high-value cars used in cash-in-transit robberies have been found and seized during the last seven months. The BMA confiscated 641 kg of dagga near the borders of Eswatini and Lesotho, as well as 19 mobile tower batteries and solar panels in Kosi Bay, Mozambique.

## Discussion

The study shows that things like economic instability, natural disasters, and political repression have a big impact on both regular and illegal migration in South Africa. This intricate interaction aligns with the results of Crush and Ramachandran (2014), who contend that enduring socio-political and economic disparities across borders are the reason behind the "migration crisis" that the Southern African region is still facing. Political unrest in nearby nations like Zimbabwe and Mozambique is one of these push-and-pull variables that has historically influenced migratory flows into South Africa (Crush, 2017).

The study also notes how South Africa's border management system is disjointed and ineffective, especially when it comes to essential agencies like the Department of Home Affairs and the South African National Defence Force not working together. Malatji (2020) emphasises that the lack of an integrated border control structure leads to inadequate intelligence sharing and operational inefficiencies, which is in line with this. The absence of cooperation among border-related organisations worsens corruption and lowers the efficiency of enforcement measures, claim Dodson and Crush (2015).

Poaching, trafficking, and car smuggling are among the security risks along South Africa's land borders that are highlighted in the study. These concerns are in line with Solomon and Kosaka's (2013) findings, which claim that transnational organised crime has made South Africa's open borders a breeding ground. The ongoing flood of illegal immigrants highlights institutional shortcomings, despite the Border Management

Authority's (BMA) attempts to arrest undocumented migrants and seize stolen items, which show modest success. Without structural transformation, enforcement actions frequently fall short of addressing the underlying reasons for irregular migration and border instability, as Moyo and Zanker (2020) contend.

## Conclusion

Political, economic, social, and global environmental crises drive migration towards South Africa, making it difficult to fully prevent illegal immigration in Africa. South African borders face challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, budget limitations, and corruption among border control personnel. Despite this, the Border Management Authority (BMA) has successfully prevented smuggling of people, drugs, and stolen vehicles. To reduce migration driven by economic hardship, the South African government and other African nations should invest in vulnerable countries experiencing crises and collaborate with leaders from migrant-origin countries to address political and economic instability. Regional cooperation through the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities like SADC and EAC, and bilateral agreements can help manage unregulated movement caused by disasters, conflicts, and famine. South Africa can also improve border security with technology such as drones and alarms, build physical barriers like electrical fences, and increase border patrols. Strict penalties for corruption among border officials are necessary to deter illegal activities. Additionally, socio-economic initiatives like job creation, education, and humanitarian aid (supported by UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP) are essential to addressing the root causes of migration and providing support for refugees and disaster-affected populations.

Future studies should explore regional comparisons, evaluate the effectiveness of the Border Management Authority (BMA), and consider migrants' experiences. Further research is also needed on the role of technology in border security and on how institutional reforms and policy changes are being implemented in practice. The study emphasises the necessity for integrated regional migration policies by pointing out that regional political, economic, and historical variables are what drive migration to South Africa. Because of inadequate interagency cooperation, which fuels corruption and lax enforcement, it also exposes significant inefficiencies in South Africa's border management. Furthermore, ongoing organised crime challenges to border security necessitate an integrated approach.

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